



Robert B. Erwin (1928 -1999)

Dr. Robert B. Erwin, retired director of the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey and professor emeritus of geology at West Virginia University, died of an apparent heart attack Tuesday, October 12, at age 71. He was found dead Tuesday afternoon in his favorite chair with a crossword puzzle on his lap at his farm home on Canyon Road. Erwin had suffered from cardiovascular disease for many years.

The son of Joseph A. and Mabel A. Erwin, he was born on March 19, 1928 in Burlington, VT. He married JoAnn John of Morgantown in 1956 and they had four children: Kirsten L. of Upper Darby, PA, Lorelei A. of Morgantown; Matthew B. of New Jersey and Jessica F. of Burlington, VT. Mrs. Erwin and all four children survive him as well as a brother, Karl W. Erwin, MD, of Garland, TX; and two sisters, Ruth Ryan of Burlington, VT and Collis Carr of North Carolina.

Erwin served on active duty in the U.S. Navy from 1946 to 1948 and in the USNR from 1948-1957. He graduated with a B.A. in zoology from the University of Vermont in 1952 and received a Sc.M. from Brown University in 1955 and a Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1959, both in geology. From 1959 to 1961, Erwin was employed as an exploration geologist by Texaco in New Orleans. From 1961 to 1964 he taught at St. Lawrence University. He joined the staff of the West Virginia Geological and Economic Survey in 1964 as a geologist and was soon named director of research. He became Assistant State Geologist two years later and was appointed director and State Geologist in 1969 and concurrently Professor of geology at WVU. He took early retirement from those positions in 1988 due to declining health.

Over his professional career, Erwin authored numerous professional publications and was an active member of several major geological organizations, including the Geological Society of America, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the American Institute of Professional Geologists, and the Association of American State Geologists. He held numerous offices within those organizations over the years and received a number of honors and awards from them for his long and distinguished service. An avid fisherman, Erwin pursued that life-long passion during his retirement.

At his request, his remains were cremated and no services were held.

