



Meredith E. Ostrom: NECROLOGY

Meredith E. “Buzz” Ostrom was born in Rock Island, Illinois, in 1930. He graduated from high school in 1948 and entered Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1952. In the tradition of his grandfather Dr. Louis Ostrom, and father, Dr. Meredith L. H. Ostrom, who also attended Augustana College, he enrolled in a pre-medical curriculum. However, due to the influence of Professor Fritiof Fryxell, a neighbor during his middle and high school years, he switched from pre-medicine to geology in the middle of his junior year. In 1952 he entered the graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he earned a master’s degree in 1954 and a doctorate in 1959. His major study areas were geology, chemistry, and biology.

Ostrom began his professional career with the Illinois State Geological Survey in 1953 where he worked on subsurface mineral resource problems, oil and gas records, coal resources and mining, and nonmetallic mineral resources. In 1959, he joined the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey (WGNHS), a special missions unit of the University of Wisconsin-Extension. As Assistant State Geologist, he had charge of both mineral and water resources investigations. In 1964, Buzz was appointed Associate State Geologist and, in 1972, State Geologist and Director of the WGNHS. He was also a professor in the UW-Extension Department of Environmental Sciences and an adjunct professor in the UW-Madison Department of Geology and Geophysics. Under Buzz’s leadership, the WGNHS saw significant growth in the areas of regional geologic mapping and Precambrian mineral potential, delineation of groundwater resources, and the completion of modern topographic mapping in the state. He was active in a wide variety of university, state, and national affairs and served as past-President of the Association of American State Geologists (AASG) as well as chair of a National Academy of Sciences Advisory Committee to the U. S. Geological Survey. He was a Fellow in the Geological Society of America and the Society of Sigma Xi, and a member of the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the American Institute of Professional Geologists. Ostrom retired from the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey in September 1990 and was elected to Honorary Membership in the AASG in 1991.

Buzz’s retirement from geology led to a whole new “career” in music. He led two jazz bands, played piano as a volunteer at the UW Hospital, and became very involved in the Madison Jazz Society. He and his wife Ann attended numerous jazz concerts and danced at every opportunity. Those state geologists who attended the Ohio AASG Annual Meeting in 1994 were privileged to hear Buzz play the piano and more than hold his own with a professional ragtime band at Tony Packo’s in Toledo.

Buzz passed away on November 11, 2010. He is survived by his wife, three married sons, and four grandchildren.