



**Stuart A. Northrop**  
(1904–1994)

Stuart Alvord Northrop, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Earth & Planetary Sciences, University of New Mexico, died on January 21, 1994, aged 89, in Albuquerque. Stu was born on March 14, 1904, in Danbury, Connecticut, attended Robert College in Istanbul, Turkey (1921–23), and received his Bachelor's (1925) and Doctoral (1929) degrees from Yale University. He arrived at UNM in 1928 as Assistant Professor and acting Chairman of the two-man Geology Department. He was Chairman from 1929 to 1961, served a year as acting Dean of the Graduate School, and returned to the Department as Research Professor until his retirement from the faculty in 1969. Even after retirement Stu was an active Emeritus Professor, conducting research, publishing, and maintaining a friendly presence in the Department until declining health a few years ago confined him to his home. His passing, after almost two-thirds of a century in New Mexico, breaks perhaps the last link directly connecting the geological community and study of New Mexico geology in the 1920s and 1930s with that of today.

Stu's scholarly interests ranged widely but focused especially on paleontology, mineralogy, and New Mexico's earthquake history. In paleontology, an early major contribution was a 300-page study of the Silurian paleontology and stratigraphy of the Gaspé peninsula, Quebec (his doctoral research, published as Geological Society of America Special Paper 21, 1939). Work with colleagues at the U.S. Geological Survey in the 1940s through 1960s resulted in stratigraphic studies and/or geologic maps of the Nacimiento Mountains (1946), Las Vegas Basin (1946), and east Colfax County (1949, 1953) in New Mexico as well as areas in Colorado, always with close attention devoted to the fossils. In 1950, Stu coorganized the 4th Field Conference of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontologists, a grand tour of most of the state's best vertebrate sites. The guidebook contained articles by Stu and by three of America's most renowned vertebrate paleontologists—A. S. Romer, E. H. Colbert, and G. G. Simpson, the latter a classmate of Stu's at Yale. Numerous publications by others in the 1950s through 1970s contained lists of fossil taxa identified by Stu; perhaps because of administrative work and other interests, he produced no detailed descriptions of New Mexico faunas or taxa. Ten species of fossils have been named in his honor, however, based mainly on specimens from Quebec or New Mexico that he made available to other workers for study. Stu's wide knowledge of New Mexico paleontology culminated in *New Mexico's fossil record* (1962), based on presentation of UNM's 8th Annual Research Lecture the previous year, and in *Bibliography of New Mexico paleontology* (with B. S. Kues, 1981). Stu also contributed much paleontological information to *Geology of Sandia Mountains and vicinity* (with V. C. Kelley, NMBMMR Memoir 29, 1975).

In mineralogy, Stu's enduring achievement was his *Minerals of New Mexico*. Published first as a UNM bulletin (1942), it was published as a book (1944) and then reissued in a considerably revised

and expanded second edition (1959). This widely known, much-praised, and much-used book is a tremendous compilation of information, not only on New Mexico mineral occurrences, but on mining history, mineral utilization from prehistoric times on, and the geology of the state. It has served as the basic reference on the subject for decades and is only now in the process of being revised and updated. Stu also produced several publications on turquoise, including an 86-page treatise, *Turquoise and Spanish Mines of New Mexico* (UNM Press, 1975).

Also, from the 1940s through the 1960s, Stu was New Mexico collaborator in the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey's Seismological Field Survey, helping to provide detailed information on New Mexico earthquakes. He published a summary of the state's earthquake history (1976) as well as several other papers documenting local earthquakes.

To all who knew Stuart Northrop well, the word "editor" almost instantly comes to mind. He was meticulous in his attention to the written word and served as Editor for the UNM Publications in Geology series, several New Mexico Geological Society (NMGS) guidebooks and special papers, and for a few NMBMMR volumes as well. His abiding interest in the history of geological studies in New Mexico resulted in a 152-page history of UNM contributions in geology (1966) and a 78-page history of the NMGS (1969). Altogether, Stu's record of about 100 published works spans parts of seven decades, from 1928 to 1986, an unusually long period of scientific productivity. He participated extensively in the NMGS, as a founding member in 1947, third president (1949–1950), and in other roles, and was made an Honorary Member in 1962.

Stu's contributions to the UNM Department of Geology during his long tenure as Chairman were profound. He laid many of the foundations of the present department, including the creation of the MS and PhD programs, the construction of the department's building, which now bears his name, and the addition of several young faculty who served their entire subsequent careers at UNM and who themselves are now Emeritus Professors (Sherm Wengerd, Paul Fitzsimmons, Wolf Elston, and Roger Anderson). He also established the Geology Museum, taught thousands of students in his historical geology, paleontology, and stratigraphy courses, and guided the graduate research of 14 MS students. Stu was a kind, generous, gentlemanly scholar, always ready to share his vast knowledge of New Mexico geology. The legacy he has left his students, colleagues, and the State of New Mexico is a large one.

Stu is survived by Ivah, his wife of 63 years, their daughter June, three grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, a nephew, and their families. He will be missed by all of us.

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