

David M Hite Obituary

David M. Hite passed away in January 2024 in Bend, Oregon. He was 84 years old. At an early age he was deeply interested in the sciences, especially geology. David earned his undergraduate degree in Geology from Oregon State University and his MS and Ph.D. degrees in Geology from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. David's geologic area of greatest interest was sedimentology and basin analysis.

Upon completing his Ph.D. in 1967, Dr. Hite went to work for ARCO (formerly Atlantic Richfield Company) in their research laboratory at Plano, Texas. Here he was quickly recognized as a fine geologist but also a gregarious and fun-loving man. These attributes were utilized in later years by the company in selecting him to lead the company's college recruiting efforts for new geologists and managing the training program for new recruits. This program was designed to ensure that the new recruits were exposed to the concepts used in the field of petroleum geology. David personally led field trips to teach the skills necessary to be an effective petroleum geologist.

Whether in his customary professorial tweeds or rugged field wear, David had great physical presence and could usually be found with his signature pipe both indoors and out. The pipe would exude clouds of aromatic smoke as he lectured or pointed out interesting outcrop features in his deep, sonorous voice.

While working at ARCO's Plano, Texas lab David did field work in the Canadian Arctic Islands, Alaska, California, and the Rocky Mountains. Directly after the discovery of Prudhoe Bay in 1967, he was sent to the Brooks Range to learn more about the Sadlerochit formation, which is the primary producing zone at Prudhoe Bay. Months of effort in the mountains revealed the stratigraphy and sedimentology of the unit. This knowledge was essential in planning the production of this fourteen-billion-barrel field.

In 1979 David was transferred to ARCO's Alaska office as District Geologist for northern Alaska. Initially he was assigned to the North Slope. Shortly thereafter he was given the title of Province Exploration Manager for the Bering Sea, a previously unexplored area with no prior drilling. Here he was chairman of the COST well program that had twenty-two participating companies. In that role David also interacted with both the indigenous villages along the coast and various Federal agencies through the initial phases of the project. Subsequently, he managed ARCO's exploration program in the Bering Sea. Following this assignment he was named Exploration Manager for the Lafayette, Louisiana office. He was later transferred back to Anchorage where he served as manager of the newly formed Geoscience Operations Group, which was staffed by a variety of highly skilled geoscientists assisting exploration groups in Alaska. He then managed another newly formed group called the ANWR (Arctic National Wildlife Refuge) Evaluation group. This group's assignment was to reevaluate ARCO's understanding of the area's geology. In 1992 David retired from ARCO and began his work as an independent consulting geologist. In this capacity, he consulted for major oil and gas companies doing work in Alaska as well as independents and energy utilities. He also consulted for a number of State and Federal agencies and Alaska Native Corporations evaluating their respective subsurface potential.

David served as a member of the National Academy of Sciences Polar Research Board. and was a member of the National Research Council Committee on the cumulative environmental effects of oil and gas activities on Alaska's North Slope. David was co-editor/author of AAPG Volume 104 on the oil and gas fields of the Cook Inlet Basin, Alaska. He was also active in the Alaska Geological Society serving a term as President as well as Chairman of two conventions.