BROOKS, James Elwood James Elwood Brooks, beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, teacher and friend, was born May 31, 1925 and died peacefully at home September 13, 2019. Jim was the only child of Helen and Elwood Brooks. After growing up in Salem, Indiana, he served in the U.S. Navy in WWII. Jim was a third generation teacher and carried on the family tradition of education. He held a B.A. from DePauw University, an M.S. from Northwestern University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Washington. While at DePauw, Jim met the love of his life, Eleanore, and married her June 18, 1949. Jim began his career at Southern Methodist University in 1952 and was still an employee on the day of his death. Jim Brooks came up through the ranks at SMU, beginning as an Instructor in the Department of Geological Sciences. In the following years, he not only taught, but he served as a geological consultant for Gulf Oil Corporation and DeGolyer and MacNaughton. He was an expert on the ancient of the Qattara Depression, Egypt. By 1962 he was Chairman of the Department, which developed a Ph.D. program under his leadership. In 1969, he became Associate Provost and was then elevated to Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs in 1972. In 1980-1981, he served as SMU President ad interim. He lived the university at every level. He held teaching and administrative positions all the way up the university ladder. His teaching and other activities won recognition and awards, including the prestigious American Association of Petroleum Geologists Presidential Award. His reputation led
him to be recruited to help other universities and
diverse educational and civic organizations across
the world. In all of his positions, he never lost his
empathy and concern for students or for the faculty
that he fostered and mentored. His sage advice and
distinguished example disclosed his true character.
A gentleman at all times, the arc of his experience,
his focus, his integrity, his professionalism, and his
good humor served the university and all of its
constituents very well. In 1965, he joined the Board
of Trustees of the newly formed Institute for the
Study of Earth and Man (ISEM) at SMU, whose
purpose was to support interdisciplinary studies
especially among the Earth Sciences, Archaeology,
and related fields. He served as ISEM's president
from 1981 until 1996. ISEM not only supported
research by students and faculty but also organized
industry roundtables and conferences, hosted
international speakers on a variety of topics, and
partnered with museums and other cultural
organizations. From 1996 he served as Vice-Chair of
the ISEM Board. As a result of friendships and
relationships built over the years, in 1989 Jim was
one of four key people in bringing the highly
successful Ramses the Great Exhibit to Dallas. In
2017, ISEM established the James E. Brooks Award
for Faculty Excellence. Jim traveled the world with
SMU and ISEM projects. After being introduced to
Egypt by Fred Wendorf in 1967, he would return
there over a dozen times. Later, Ellie would join him
in his travels. Destinations included almost every
continent of the world. Their mountain home in
Colorado provided their respite and a place for many
friends and family to visit and benefit from an added
side of free geology lessons. His mind remained
sharp even as Jim became more physically frail and
his mobility more restricted. His opinions and
observations were continually sought, to the extent
that staff meetings were frequently held at his house.
in the last years of his life. Jim enjoyed giving and serving his entire life. He served on many boards including Dallas Museum of Natural History, Boy Scouts of America, Hockaday School, and many more. He was honored by many organizations and received numerous awards and accolades. Jim is preceded in death by his wife, Eleanore. He leaves behind his three daughters, Nancy Allender, Kathy McCabe, and Lynn Nolen, his seven grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. He will be most remembered for the love of his family, his passion for teaching and learning (even when you didn’t want to be taught), and his delightful wit. He will be missed by his family and the thousands of students, friends, and colleagues whose lives he touched. Jim is most appreciative to the dedicated and compassionate caregivers the last two years of his life. A celebration of his life will be held at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas, TX at 1:00 October 2, 2019. Memorial gifts may be made to ISEM at SMU, P.O. Box 750274, Dallas, TX 75275-0274.