

# James Elwood Brooks

1925 - 2019

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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.