*In Memoriam***James Merritt Harrison**

1915–1990

Canada lost one of its best known “scientific ambassadors” and earth scientists in the death of James (Jim) Merritt Harrison following an unfortunate cycling accident that left him in a deep coma from which he never recovered. He passed away at the Ottawa Civic Hospital on Friday, July 6, at the age of 74. He was still pursuing an active career at the time of his accident, and his sudden loss is a tremendous blow to the scientific community.

Jim Harrison was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, in 1915. He received a B.Sc. degree from the University of Manitoba in 1935. After two field seasons as an assistant on field parties of the Geological Survey of Canada and two years as a chemist, he returned to the University of Manitoba for graduate work specializing in geology. He transferred to Queen's University and obtained his M.A. degree in 1941 and his Ph.D. in 1943. The course of his productive career led to numerous additional academic awards including honorary doctorate degrees from the University of Manitoba (1965), Queen's University (1967), McMaster University (1967), University of Calgary (1967), University of New Brunswick (1971), and Carleton University (1976).

Immediately following completion of his studies at Queen's, he joined the Geological Survey of Canada as a field geologist and carried out investigations in various parts of the Precambrian Shield, mainly in northern Manitoba before 1949 and afterward in the iron ranges of Labrador, which were just coming under development. His talents were recognized quickly, and he became Chief of the Precambrian Division in 1955 and Director in 1956. During this period, he led the Survey into new scientific fields and it enjoyed one of its most successful periods. In 1964 he was appointed Assistant Deputy Minister (Research) in the Department of Mines and Technical Surveys, where he assumed responsibility for the scientific activities of the entire department. Later his title was changed to Assistant Deputy Minister (Mines and Geosciences) in the new Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. In 1972 he was named Senior Assistant Deputy Minister.

While playing a major management and science policy role in the Canadian Public Service, Jim Harrison extended his intellectual and personal talents to the benefit of many national and international bodies. He was President of the Geological Association of Canada (1960–61), Regional Vice President of the Society of Economic Geologists (1962), first President of the International Union of Geological Sciences (1961–64), President of the International Council of Scientific Unions (1966–68), and President of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (1969–70).

Jim's contributions as a scientist, public servant, and born leader were recognized on many occasions, not only by the honorary degrees mentioned previously. He received the Kemp Memorial Gold Medal from Columbia University for “outstanding contributions to geological science in the field of public service” (1963). He was elected a Foreign Associate of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences (1965), elected an Honorary Fellow of the Geological Society of London (1965), received the Gold Medal of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (1966), awarded the Blaylock Medal of the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (1966), received the Logan Medal of the Geological Association of Canada (1969), and received the Outstanding

Achievement Award of the Federal Public Service (1970). In 1971 he was named a Companion of the Order of Canada.

Leaving the Canada Department of Energy, Mines and Resources in 1973, Jim Harrison went on to “service to the world.” From 1973 to 1976, he created training programs and promoted science, particularly in developing countries, while Assistant Director General for Science and Technology for Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in Paris. Returning to Ottawa in 1976 as a consultant in natural resources and science policy, he advised an array of international institutions and foreign governments while traveling to over 30 countries. He continued to further the ideals and activities of Unesco through membership in and Chairmanship (1985–88) of the Canadian Commission for Unesco.

Jim Harrison developed a deep knowledge and understanding of Canada's North, and he continued to use his global knowledge and people skills to benefit the northern people. He was a member of the Science Advisory Board of the Northwest Territories from early 1981 and its Chairman from 1982. He guided the Science Advisory Board through its incorporation as the Science Institute in 1985 and continued as its Chairman until early 1989. During this period, he was awarded the R.C. Wallace Medal of the University of Manitoba (1987), and he was Montgomery Fellow at Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, in the USA (1988).

He published 65 scientific and technical papers that constitute the formal record of his research, which ranged from his earlier petrological and geological works to issues of science policy.

Jim married Herta Boehmer Sliter in 1944. They had one stepson, Norman Sliter, two grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

Jim Harrison was a truly remarkable person. His scientific and leadership skills, his integrity, his vision, and his warmth and desire to help others took him to the national and then to the international stage. There he earned the love and respect of people around the world who will be forever grateful for his accomplishments. □

*Charles H. Smith
September 1990*