

## **A Brief History of EARTH SCIENCE at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown**

**Department Motto: ILLEGITIMI non CARBORUNDUM**

Pitt-Johnstown was first established way back in 1927, located in the heart of Pennsylvania's bituminous coal mining region. But the teaching of Geology began here many years later, in 1970, with the advent of a single 3-credit course, "Explorations into Geology," taught by instructor Harold C. Fry, assisted by Earl Mueller who had earned an M.A. at main campus (Mueller became geography instructor the next year). The "Explorations" course included 2 hours of lecture and 1 hour of recitation each week. Harold (Hal) Fry had received the M.S.T. degree from Cornell University.



**Harold Fry at left.**



**William Brice with student, Jeff Mazur.**

Dr. William Brice came aboard as an Assistant Professor in 1971, having just completed his M.S.T. (1968) and PhD (1971) at Cornell University. Bill had completed a B.S. (1958) at the University of Florida and the Dip. Ed. (1965) at the University of Tasmania. Hal Fry had been at Cornell a few years before and was still in contact with one of his professors, Dr. Art Bloom, who was also one of Bill's professors. In the fall of 1970, Hal had mentioned to Dr. Bloom that UPJ was looking to increase the geology faculty. Dr. Bloom passed that information on to Bill who then applied for that position. After an interview in January 1971, Bill was hired and took his position on the faculty in September 1971. After Brice joined the faculty, five additional courses were added to the earth science curriculum. The course list now included:

Explorations into Geology  
Mineralogy  
Our Restless Earth

Physical Geology  
The Exploration of Space  
Oceanography

While teaching at UPJ, Hal Fry continued work on his dissertation at Penn State. In 1973 he was promoted from Instructor to Assistant Professor (he went on to finish his doctoral work in

1975). Nine courses were now offered, including new classes in Petrology, Stellar Astronomy, The Solar System, and Introduction to Meteorology. In 1973 and 1974, Brice and Fry prepared guidebooks and led field trips for the Pennsylvania Earth Science Teacher's Society.



An extensive mineral collection was presented to the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown Monday by Dr. and Mrs. Bryan V. Fluck of Ebensburg in memory of their late son, Eric. Accepting the gift on behalf of the university is Dr. William Brice (third from left). Also taking part in the presentation is Lisa Fluck (right), the couple's daughter.

## Geology Collection to UPJ

The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown received the beginning of a museum geology collection Monday afternoon.

An extensive mineral collection containing approximately 500 rock specimens was presented to the university by Dr. and Mrs. Bryan V. Fluck of Ebensburg in memory of their son, Eric. It will be known as the Eric Fluck Memorial Collection.

Eric died accidentally Sept. 19, 1971. At the time, he was a student at Central Cambria High School. He had been active in the Johnstown Rocks and Minerals Club, and had an extensive personal collection.

Dr. Fluck, who is director of the Admiral Peary Vocational-Technical School at Ebensburg, said in making the presentation:

"We wanted it to be in a place where a lot of people could use and appreciate it. We plan to expand on it in the future."

**Dr. Brice Accepts**  
The collection was accepted on behalf of the university by Dr. William Brice, assistant professor of earth and planetary sciences. The collection will be under the control and direction of the UPJ geology department.

Dr. Brice said that eventually the collection would be displayed for the public. He added:

"Right now, we don't have the space to display a collection this large, but we are seeking adequate facilities. The collection is magnificent, and we think the public should have an

opportunity to see it."

The collection also will be used in geology courses offered at UPJ.

Dr. Brice said that most of the specimens came from North America, but there were samples from all over the world. Some of the pieces, he said, could not be purchased and there was no way of placing a monetary value on the collection.

**Basis for Display**  
The collection will form the basis for a museum display which eventually will be or permanent exhibit. Dr. Brice said that a number of pieces were too rare to be handled by students and could be studied only under glass.

Dr. Fluck said the family felt deep appreciation to the local minerals club and this was one of the considerations in keeping the collection in the Johnstown area.

**Somerset '53 Class**  
SOMERSET — Members of the Class of 1953 of the former Somerset Joint High School will plan a 1973 reunion at 7 p.m. Sunday at the Cambria Savings building.

In the fall of 1972, the department received a very extensive mineral collection donation. Dr. and Mrs. Bryan Fluck of Ebensburg, donated the collection in memory of their son, Eric. This formed the core of the Department's display of rocks and minerals.



Dr. Brice with Bryan and Maryann Fluck in 1984.

Additional courses were added in 1974, and Merle B. Lauer, an expert gemologist, came aboard as an adjunct to teach "Gems and Gemstones." The expanding course list now included:

The Solar System

Physical Geology

Introduction to Meteorology

Earth Materials

Explorations in Geology

Rocks and Minerals

Hydrology

Stellar Astronomy

Mineralogy

Petrology

Soils

Oceanography

Gems and Gemstones

Lauer's 3-credit course "Gems and Gemstones" was developed mainly for students who wanted more geology, but did not have the chemistry, physics or math needed for the second-level geology classes. The course included gem identification in both rough and finished states, environments of gemstone formation, economics of gems, and practical work in producing a finished stone. The gemstone class was popular with students and local hobbyists, and helped UPJ fill a need in continuing education for the local community (Brice & Lauer, 1977).



**Merle Lauer in his class April 1986. Note the use of two 35mm projectors. The geology and astronomy classes were very well illustrated.**

As further outreach, Professor Brice also taught a night class in Somerset during the Fall of 1976, inspiring new students to come to UPJ to study geology; including Glenn Johnson, who went on to a wonderful career in the oil and gas drilling world and currently lives in Singapore

In the early 1970s, Dr. James Miller, who later taught at Missouri State University, taught in the Department 1973-74, and Dr. Kenneth Lister was on the faculty 1974-75. Each taught for one year before the third tenure-track position was filled.

Uldis Kaktins joined the department in 1975, having just completed his Ph.D. at Boston University. By 1976 both Hal Fry and Bill Brice had been promoted to Associate Professor, and along with Assistant Professor Kaktins added new courses, including:

- |                                       |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Environmental Geology                 | Prehistoric Life   |
| Hydrology                             | Structural Geology |
| The Surface of the Earth              | Historical Geology |
| Sedimentation and Stratigraphy        | Economic Geology   |
| Physical Aspects of Land Use Planning | Independent Study  |



**Uldis Kaktins (left) and Hal Fry (right) at the Field Conference of Pennsylvania Geologists (c. 1976). Teresa Smith (back to camera).**



**Bill Brice (left) and Merle Lauer (April, 1986)**

In the summer of 1975 and again in 1976, the Department had field trips to the western part of the U.S. during which the students had the opportunity to visit some of the National Parks in Utah and Arizona. The trips were made possible through Merle Lauer who had contact with Ralph and Richard Howe of Bluff, Utah, who helped us with the trip.



**The 1975 group near Paria, Utah. Standing (l-r) Paul Bucceri, Pat Buell, Jeff Mazur, and Pat Sendlosky. Seated (l-r) Dennis Mehall, Merle Lauer (Instructor), Ed Fiffick, Linda Pearson, George Katrancha (wearing hat), Sharon Wilt, Jean Usnik (back), Sally Dick (M.D. – Adult Student), Shirley Sholtis, Betty Blasko, Dr. William Brice.**



**Part of the 1976 group at the trail-head for the hike down into the Grand Canyon.**

Standing (l-r): Dr. Uldis Kaktins, Dr. Hal Fry, Mike Layton, John Ninesteel, Judy Kestermont (later Mrs. John Ninesteel), ??, ??, James Horrell, Larry Shaffer. Front row (l-r): Jan Sutila (?), Janet Furst, Donna Knepper. Additional students on the trip: Connie Bray, Richard Mickinak, Martha Shannon, Teresa Smith, Joan Suboleski.

By 1980 the department was offering 25 courses, an amazing and challenging accomplishment for three professors, truly “iron men” in a city formerly known for its steel production. Only 2 of the 25 courses were 1-credit labs. And all of the faculty did both the lecture and laboratory for their classes. This meant that for a 4-credit class, there was a total of six hours of class time.

In 1983 all three faculty members attended the 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Field Conference of Pennsylvania Geologists, headquartered in Danville, PA. The field trips focused on the Silurian Depositional History and Alleghanian Deformation in Pennsylvania’s Valley and Ridge. Dr. Fry represented the department at the 1984 conference in Wyomissing, PA.

By 1983, Uldis Kaktins had been promoted to Associate Professor. The faculty worked hard to bring about a major change for the department – the formal B.S. degree in Geology. Before that time students could obtain a B.S. degree in Natural Sciences with a *concentration* in Geology, or they could attend main campus in Pittsburgh for their final two years where the Geology degree was already available. Professor Brice in particular worked tirelessly to justify the formal Geology degree for the department. In 1983 he was quoted as saying:

**“I’ll stack our best geology students at UPJ against the best geology majors anywhere.”**

And this was proven by the success of our UPJ students who attended various geology field camps. Quite often the UPJ students would be the top student in the field course and be invited back the following year as the Teaching Assistant.

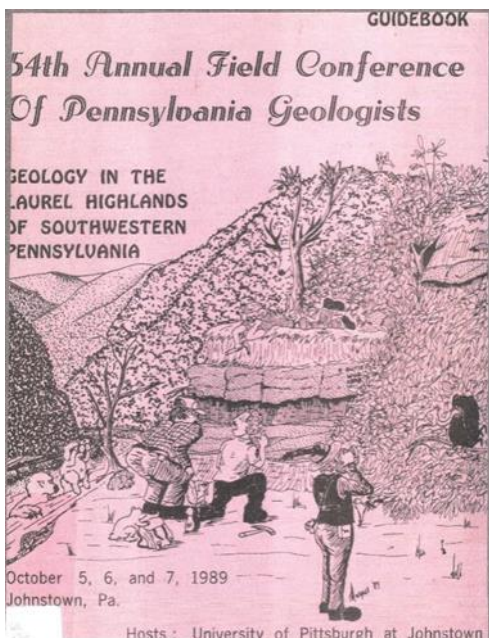
Brice continued to promote the annual spring geology field trip, lasting from 4 to 6 weeks at a cost of \$800 to \$1200, which gave serious students practical experience as geologists. He pointed out that 4 or 5 of the department’s “quasi-geologists” were finishing and going on to good graduate schools in the field each year.

A detailed alumni update was available for 1985, the year the department acquired an Apple IIe computer and dot matrix printer! This equipment was immediately put to use to support several classes. Geology Club officers were Jeff Kelly (President), Scott Gallaher (VP), and Dave Tercek (Treasurer). During the winter term of this year, Hal Fry taught the first course in Invertebrate Paleontology. The previous summer Professor Brice brought a large collection of fossils donated from Cornell University. In the spring, our Dr. Fry and Dr. Brown of the Biology Dept. took students on a field trip to the Caribbean. The summer of 1985 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> year that Dr. Brice taught summer geology classes at his *alma mater*, Cornell. That year the department was also evaluating course requirements for the geology concentration, in preparation for the new Geology degree. Professor Brice's early efforts to establish the formal B.S. degree in Geology were at last rewarded in 1986.

Teresa McConnell began work with the department when she was hired in April, 1987 as stockroom supervisor for the Departments of Chemistry and Geology & Planetary Science. Ms. McConnell earned the B.S. in Geology at IUP and had done graduate work in petroleum geology at the University of Colorado. She also gained valuable experience working for several years with an exploration company. Teresa has advised numerous students and taught many courses for the department, including Oceanography and the general geology classes.

Geophysics was first taught here in 1988, by Jon J. Dickinson, an adjunct instructor of physics. He had an M.S. degree in Geophysics from the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh. Before coming to UPJ he had taught geophysics to undergraduate students for five years. The geophysics class was a major investment for the department as it involved acquiring diverse field equipment. Although some geology departments try to teach geophysics without using field gear, UPJ students get excellent "hands on" experience with a magnetometer, resistivity gear, electromagnetic probe, and seismic refraction gear.

In 1988 Bill Brice was promoted to full Professor. The following year, UPJ Geology hosted the Field Conference of Pennsylvania Geologists, with emphasis on local geology and the major floods of Johnstown. Professors Fry and Kaktins wrote a detailed article for the conference book on the three historic floods: 1889, 1936, and 1977.



**Cover of the field guide in 1989. People represented studying and photographing the outcrop are (l-r) Dr. Uldis Kaktins, Chris Laughrey (former UPJ student and member of the Pennsylvania Geological Survey, retired), and Dr. William Brice.**

After the retirement of Harold Fry, John (Jack) Beuthin joined the department in 1992 as an Assistant Professor. He had earned a BS degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and an MS and PhD at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Beuthin served as the Department Chair for a number of years.

Beginning in 1993, Dr. Brice began a four-year term as Chair of the Natural Science Division, which at that time had a faculty of around 70. During this period, several people taught in the department to replace most of the classes Dr. Brice was teaching, especially the mineralogy and Igneous/Metamorphic Petrology. Among those were Mark Evans, of Westmont, who was here from August of 1995 until May of 1996. He is now (2019) at Central Connecticut State University. He was here from August 1995 until May 1996. Others who came in temporarily during that four-year period were Dr. Robert Altamura and Dr. William Sangrey.

UPJ alum Michael Layton took over teaching Geophysics in 2002, while working at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in Rockville, MD. He had earned his M.S. in Geology at the University of South Florida in 1981. After Mike was promoted to NRC management and temporarily transferred to Atlanta, Neil Coleman began teaching geophysics in 2008. He is also a UPJ alum, having graduated in 1977 and then completed the M.S. in Geology at the University of South Florida in 1979. Neil had retired in 2010 from his work supporting two federal advisory committees at NRC.

After Jack Beuthin left the department to head to the Midwest, Carrie Davis-Todd joined the department as chair. Dr. Paul Washington joined the faculty soon after that. After Davis-Todd left for Baldwin Wallace Univ., Paul Washington assumed the duties as chair and he held that position until his departure. Dr. Christopher Coughenour joined the department as the new Chair in 2013. Dr. Ryan Kerrigan came aboard the following year.

After Dr. Brice retired in 2005, his position was filled by Dr. Chris Kopf who stayed until 2007. Uldis Kaktins retired in 2008. Both he and Brice became Emeritus Professors and continued their lifelong passions in research and publication. Kaktins contributed to two major papers on the 1889 flood. He was lead author of a work in the *Pennsylvania History Journal* and co-author of another published in 2016 in the journal *Heliyon*. Kaktins passed away just a few weeks after the 2016 paper appeared in print, and just days after he had been interviewed about the work by the *Johnstown Tribune*. A sustaining scholarship has been established in his name.

In 2017 the department hosted (with IUP) the Field Conference of Pennsylvania Geologists, with our faculty contributing write-ups for the field book and providing lectures at outcrops, including a talk by Steve Lindberg at a fine outcrop of the Loyalhanna Limestone.

### **Who has chaired the department over the years?**

Christopher Coughenour (2013 to present)

Paul Washington (2011 to 2013)

Carrie Davis-Todd (now at Baldwin Wallace Univ.)

Jack Beuthin 1996 spring; 2008

Uldis Kaktins 1994, 1996 (fall)

William Brice 1988, Assoc. Professor & Dept. Coordinator (also chaired the Division of Natural Sciences from 1993-1997)

Harold Fry 1975 to 1980

**Here is a snapshot of the geology faculty and the courses they offered during 1999-2000.**

**Faculty:** John (Jack) D. Beuthin (Chair), William Brice, Uldis Kaktins

**Adjunct Faculty:** Steve Lindberg, Teresa McConnell, Dennis Miller, and William Sangrey

**Courses taught:**

Astronomy I	Well Logging
Stellar Astronomy	Introduction to Geochemistry
Physical Geology	Economic Geology of Ores
Meteorology	Economic Geology of Nonmetals
Historical Geology	Introduction to Geochemistry
Explorations in Geology	Geology of Soils
Explorations of Space	Geologic Field Methods
Oceanography	Land-Use Planning
Environmental Geology	History of Geologic Thought
Prehistoric Life	Introduction to Invertebrate Paleontology
Planet Earth	Introduction to Solid-Earth Geophysics
Mineralogy & Optical Mineralogy & Petrography	Well Logging
Sedimentation and Stratigraphy	Structural Geology
Hydrology	Geomorphology
Hydrogeology	
Report Writing & Computer Applications in Geology	

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**Geology faculty and the courses they offered during 2002-2005.**

**Faculty:** John (Jack) D. Beuthin (Chair), William Brice, Uldis Kaktins

**Adjunct Faculty:** Steve Lindberg, Teresa McConnell, Sean Sherlock, and Michael Layton

**Courses taught:**

Astronomy I – The Solar System	Hydrology
Stellar Astronomy	Hydrogeology
Physical Geology	Geomorphology
Meteorology	Structural Geology
Historical Geology	Sedimentation and Stratigraphy
Explorations in Geology	Geology of Soils
Explorations of Space	Geologic Field Methods
Intro to Physical Oceanography	Introduction to Solid-Earth Geophysics
Environmental Geology	History of Geologic Thought
Prehistoric Life	Introduction to Paleontology
Igneous and Metamorphic Petrology	Mineralogy & Optical Mineralogy
Internships	Directed Research
Report Writing and Computer Applications in Geology	



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## Current Geology Faculty (as of 2019)

**Christopher Coughenour**, Assistant Professor and Dept. Chair

PhD, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- Geoscience, September, 2009

BS, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

- Physics, June, 2004 (Pennoni Honors College)



Dr. Coughenour has served at Pitt-Johnstown since 2013. Prior to his arrival at UPJ, he served as full-time faculty member at The Evergreen State College for 3 academic years. He is a quantitative geoscientist by training and experience, with a focus on physical Earth surface processes (sedimentology, geomorphology, and stratigraphy). Most work has been oriented towards exploring fluvial-tidal sedimentation in both modern and ancient regimes. This has also included time-series analysis of cyclic deposition (with emphasis on long-term trends in the Earth-Moon system deduced from ancient tidalites) and the sedimentology/paleoecology of several Late Cretaceous vertebrate-bearing systems. Field work has been conducted in Alaska, the central Appalachians, Argentina, and several other locations. Member of the team of geologists and paleontologists that discovered the mega-dinosaur *Titanosaurian sauropod* known as *Dreadnoughtus* in 2005. Dr. Coughenour has served as an invited peer reviewer for several journals, including "Geology", "Geo-Marine Letters", "Geoscience Frontiers", and "Astrophysics and Space Science". For his efforts in the classroom he was named the Phi Eta Sigma Teacher of the Year Award, 2017 for Pitt-Johnstown.

Courses taught: Sedimentation and Stratigraphy, Geomorphology, Environmental Geology, Geologic Field Methods, and more.

Current research:

- Understanding depositional processes in areas strongly influenced by both tides and stream flux. Also, understanding the possible differential signature of these processes as preserved in semidiurnal tidalites. Primary project in Cook Inlet, Alaska.
- Probing cyclicity of tidally influenced deposition in the ancient record and using Paleozoic and Precambrian tidalites to explore constraints on past lunar distance and length of day.
- Integrated analysis of depositional systems and sequence stratigraphy of Carboniferous sequences in western Pennsylvania, from thin section to basin-scale (includes student-centered research)
- Fluvial systems evolution in the Appalachian Plateau, anthropogenic issues and ancient variables. Includes collaboration with colleague N. Coleman and students on probing the South Fork, Little Conemaugh Watershed.

**Other interests:** Regional cooking styles from different parts of the world, music, cross-country skiing, and landscape photography

Favorite quote: "We are trying to prove ourselves wrong as quickly as possible, because only in that way can we find progress." — Richard P. Feynman

Favorite book: "*Into the Wild*" by Jon Krakauer

Favorite fossil: *Dreadnoughtus schrani* (that was a lot of work...)

Favorite rock: Loyalhanna Limestone (a cross-bedded calcarenite)

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## Ryan J. Kerrigan, Assistant Professor

PhD, 2011, University of Maryland

MS, 2004, University of Minnesota

BS, BA, 2002, Bridgewater State University



Semester and year first teaching or working at UPJ: Fall 2014

Courses you have taught over the years: Structural Geology, Mineralogy, Igneous and Metamorphic Petrology, Historical Geology, Fossil Fuels, Physical Geology, and Report Writing.

Degrees, years attained, and schools attended:

**University of Maryland, College Park, MD** **2011**

*Doctor of Philosophy:* Geology

*Dissertation Title:* Reaction rates and textural development of hydrolysis reactions in the system MgO-SiO<sub>2</sub>-H<sub>2</sub>O

*Advisors:* Philip Candela and Philip Piccoli

**University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN** **2004**

*Master of Science:* Geology

*Thesis Title:* The relation of sulfur speciation and color in lazurite solid solution

*Advisor:* James H. Stout

**Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, MA** **2002**

*Bachelor of Science:* Geology, *Bachelor of Arts:* Chemistry, *Minor:* Geography

Any personal info that you wish to share, such as research/teaching special interests, hometown, things you love to do, family info, etc.:

### Current Research:

- Field mapping, petrological and geochemical analyses of hydrothermally altered ultramafic bodies in the Piedmont of the Appalachian Mountains to assess disequilibria reactions, kinetics, and resource enrichment as well as determining the provenance of intertectonic ultramafic bodies
- Examination of high-pressure granites containing magmatic epidote in the Pennsylvanian Piedmont to determine their provenance and their relationship with regional magmatic bodies

- Field mapping, petrological and geochemical analyses of pegmatites and their interactions with diverse varieties of country rock
- Delineating geochemical reaction gradients in the field to extrapolate fluid flow and alteration history of metamorphic rocks deformed during orogenesis

**Other Information:**

- I love Boston sports and enjoy fishing, smoking meats, and doing yardwork.

Favorite book: The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway

Favorite fossil: graptolites Favorite mineral: watermelon tourmaline Favorite rock: eclogite

Favorite quote: "Success can be found at the crossroads of hard work and opportunity."

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**Teresa McConnell, Instructor**

BS, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Geology Field Camp at Northern Arizona University



As a native of Johnstown, I attended Westmont Hilltop High School. Being in love with rocks my whole life, I majored in Geoscience at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and received a B.S. degree in Geology. I attended field camp at Northern Arizona University where I mapped in the San Francisco Peaks area and the North rim of the Grand Canyon, a place I have visited many times since. After graduation I worked for five years in Boulder, CO for Martin Exploration Management Corporation, a division of Martin Oil Service as an Exploration and Wellsite Geologist. I took graduate courses at the University of Colorado and worked on a thesis on the thermal maturation of petroleum.

I began work at UPJ in the Fall of 1987 as the Chemistry Stockroom Supervisor and curator of the Geology Rock Collection and Geology lab assistant. At that time there were three full-time tenured professors in the Geology Department; Bill Brice, Hal Fry and Uldis Kaktins. I taught Inorganic Chemistry Lab and Chemistry for Nurses Lab. I was responsible for ordering all supplies and chemicals and lab preparations. In 1994 I left my position at UPJ to concentrate on raising my 3 children. I returned in 1995 as a permanent adjunct professor in Geology and have since taught Soil Geology Lab, Explorations in Geology, Environmental Geology, Oceanography and Physical Geology. I was a Geology Department student advisor for many semesters and advisor for the Habitat for Humanity Spring Break trip.

Throughout the years I have worked with Boy Scouts of America, Learning Lamp, UPJ's



Summer Fun Program, Earth Balloon, STEM and Penn Highlands Community Library teaching children and adults about the Earth and its rocks and minerals. It was during these years I became known as “the rock lady.” I am a member of the West Hills Community Church where I participate in many volunteer activities. In addition to being a geologist, I am a United States Figure Skating gold test medalist and professional figure skating coach. My favorite books are “Annals of the Former World” by John McPhee and the Bible. As a native of Johnstown, I am fascinated by the history of the city and have great-great grandparents and other relatives who died in the 1889 Johnstown flood. I have written a book on the history of the Johnstown Figure Skating Club. I love to hike and garden and currently live with my husband Bill on a 75-acre farm that keeps us very busy. I am blessed to have been able to pursue my passion for rocks and ice skating throughout my career. I have travelled to all 50 states and around the world but my favorite past-time now is playing with my 4 grandchildren. I am a geologist and rocks, rock my world.

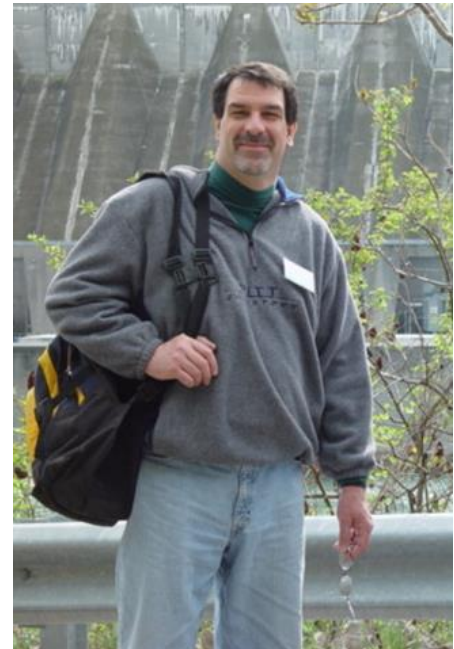
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**Steve Lindberg, Instructor**

M.S. at SUNY Stony Brook, 1983

B.S. Earth and Space Science/Secondary Education, 1978

I completed my undergraduate studies at Waynesburg College, Pennsylvania in 1978, earning a BS in Earth and Space Science / Secondary Education and then completing a Masters Degree at SUNY Stony Brook, Long Island in 1983. During the summer of 1978 I worked as a geologic field assistant for the USGS, mapping regions in western Idaho and the Snake River Plain. After teaching high school Earth Science for several years in New York, my wife Marilyn and I moved to Johnstown in the summer of 1984 where I began teaching Earth and Space Science, Geology and Astronomy at Westmont Hilltop School District. We have two daughters; Amanda and Jessica, both born in Johnstown.



In January 1997 I was offered an adjunct teaching position at the University Of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and began teaching Meteorology as an evening course. Within a few years my teaching responsibilities included additional courses of introductory Astronomy along with Stellar and Solar Astronomy. Not long after starting at Pitt-Johnstown, Professor Uldis Kaktins asked me to assist in the teaching of the Geologic Field Methods course; which I continue to do.

In 2012 I decided to retire from Westmont Hilltop and public education; this allowed me to begin offering courses during the day and assume a more traditional teaching schedule at Pitt-Johnstown. My classes are now scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday sessions, usually offering at least two different courses each semester. I have been a member of the *National Association of Geoscience Teachers* since the early 1990's, and have twice served as president for the associations eastern section. In 1992 I was awarded the *Outstanding Earth Science Teacher for Pennsylvania* by the National Association of Geoscience Teachers. As a member of the

*Geological Society of America*, I attend the northeastern section meetings on a regular basis with our geology students.

During my years at Pitt-Johnstown I have taught the following courses:

Meteorology	Prehistoric Life
Explorations of Space	Stellar Astronomy
Principles Of Astronomy	Solar Astronomy
Geologic Field methods	Earthquakes and Volcanoes
Physical Geology, Physical Geology Lab	
Student Teacher Field Supervisor; Secondary Science Majors	

Favorite book: *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*, by paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould.

Favorite quote: *"I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself, I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself now and then in finding a smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary, while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."* --- Isaac Newton

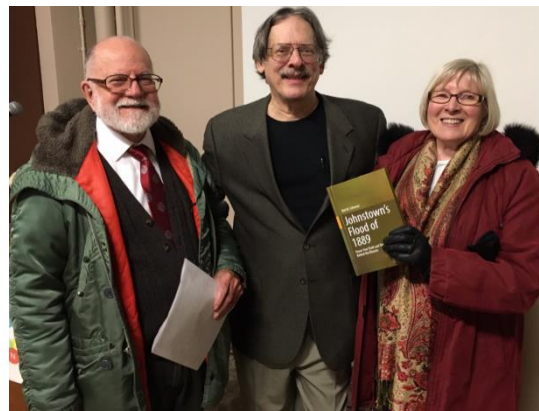
Favorite fossil / rock / mineral: Ammonites, Andesite, Anything Fluorescent!

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**Neil Coleman**, Geophysics Instructor    Professional Geologist (PA) and NRRPT Emeritus  
M.S. Geology, Univ. of South Florida (1979)  
B.S. Natural Sciences (magna cum laude), UPJ (1977)  
Master's Thesis: Gravity Investigation of Basement Structure in NW Peninsular Florida

Served as a Senior Staff Scientist for two federal advisory committees, the Advisory Committee on Nuclear Waste and the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards. Retired in 2010 from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in Rockville, Maryland. A Navy veteran from 1971-1975, he served on the carrier USS Constellation. Has numerous peer-reviewed publications, including lead authorship (with Victor Baker) of a chapter in the 2009 book "Megaflooding on Earth and Mars."

In 2018 published a book on the 1889 Johnstown Flood. Has served as a peer reviewer for journals that include *Geology*, *JGR*, *GRL*, *Health Physics*, and others. Research interests



Coleman (center) with Bill & Heather Brice (11/2018)

include the safety of the nation's dams, geophysics, the geology and paleo-hydrology of Mars, and research with colleagues on the watershed of the Little Conemaugh River.

Favorite book: "*Brief Answers to the Big Questions*," Stephen Hawking

Favorite fossil: *Eurypterus*

Favorite quote: "Ignorance ain't so much not knowin' things as it is knowin' so many things that ain't so!" Josh Billings, pen name of 19th-century American humorist Henry Wheeler Shaw

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### **Emeritus Professors and Founders of the Geology Department**

#### **Emeritus Professor William Riley Brice**

PhD, Cornell University (1971)

Dissertation: 1971, Subsolidus phase relations in the system magnesium carbonate-calcium carbonate-strontium carbonate-barium carbonate.

M.S.T., University of Tasmania

B.S., University of Florida

#### **Emeritus Assoc. Professor Uldis Kaktins**

PhD, Boston University (1975)

M.S., Syracuse University

B.S., Boston University

b. Jun. 10, 1942 d. Jul. 2, 2016

#### **Assoc. Professor Harold Chester Fry, Jr.**

D.Ed, Penn State University (1975)

M.S.T., Cornell University

B.S., Shippensburg State College.

Sgt., US Marines, Korean War

b. Feb. 7, 1930 d. Dec. 1, 1995

Interred Richland Cemetery (SCE)



**Campus winter scene**

**(c. 1976-77)**



**William R. Brice, Ph.D. - Professor Emeritus** of Geology and Planetary Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown with degrees from the University of Florida, University of Tasmania (Australia), and Cornell University (Ithaca, New York). For many years he was a member of the summer faculty at Cornell University and he has served as a visiting scholar at universities in Tasmania and Brazil. In the fall of 2005, he was a faculty member on the Semester-at-Sea 100-day voyage around the world with 700 students.

Brice has received several academic and professional awards and has published or presented over 100 articles and papers on a wide range of topics including mineral geochemistry, geoscience education, biographical studies, history of geology, and the history of the oil industry. He is the author of "Cornell Geology through the Years", and "Gilbert Dennison Harris - A Life with Fossils". His book, "Myth, Legend, Reality; Edwin Laurentine Drake and the Early Oil Industry" (2009) received two awards for oil history excellence; The John A Mather Award (Friends of Drake Well) and The Yellow Dog Award (Parkersburg Oil & Gas Museum). He was the founding president of the Petroleum History Institute and former editor of PHI's "Oil-Industry History." He has appeared on PA-Books, a program of the Pennsylvania Cable Network (PCN). In September 2013 he was an invited speaker at the 2nd BraNobel Conference in Stockholm, Sweden; one of only four invited from the United States. In 2018 he was awarded the Mary C. Rabbitt Award for the History of Geology by the History and Philosophy Division of the Geological Society of America in recognition of his contribution to the history of geology. From 2016-2020, he served as the Editor for the International Commission on the History of Geological Sciences (INHIGEO).

University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown:

Professor Emeritus	2005-Present
Professor	1988-2005
Chairperson, Division of Natural Sciences	1993-1997
Associate Professor	1976-1988
Assistant Professor	1971-1976

Brice's latest book: "*Myth, Legend, Reality - Edwin L. Drake and the Early Oil Industry*"

Professional website: <http://www.williamrbrice.com/>

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In Memoriam

**Emeritus Associate Professor Uldis Kaktins**

Dept. of Geology & Planetary Science, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown



**Professor Kaktins on the river!**



**Kaktins and wife Nina at his retirement party.**

Uldis Kaktins passed away at his home on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, after surviving cancer for three years. He was born in war-torn Riga, Latvia, at the height of WWII, and his family made their way to the United States while he was a child. He grew up in Boston where the family put down new roots, and Uldis worked hard to get an education. The Vietnam War interrupted Uldis' graduate studies when he was deployed to Vietnam. He wrote a thesis by hand on the floor of his Bachelor Officer's Quarters. He began teaching in Pitt Johnstown's Department of Earth & Planetary Science in 1975 and retired in 2008 after a long and rewarding career.

Emeritus Professor Uldis Kaktins is a beloved professor who touched the lives of thousands of students and inspired hundreds to pursue careers in geology, hydrology, and other fields in the earth sciences. Hydrology and flood studies were his passions, always focused on fieldwork. He was lead author of a 2013 paper about the 1889 Johnstown flood, published in the *Pennsylvania History Journal*. His latest paper on the 1889 flood was published in the journal *Heliyon* on June 16, 2016, the result of more than five years of research. Excerpts from that paper may be found in this conference guidebook. Uldis summarized the findings in an interview with a Johnstown reporter just days before his passing. "You still hear all of the time that there was supposedly so much rain that their dam would've been over-topped no matter what. That's simply not the case – and now we have the scientific facts to prove it."

Uldis and Hal Fry wrote an article for the 1989 Field Conference of Pennsylvania Geologists. Their article reviewed the three historic floods that have struck Johnstown, in 1889, 1936, and 1977.



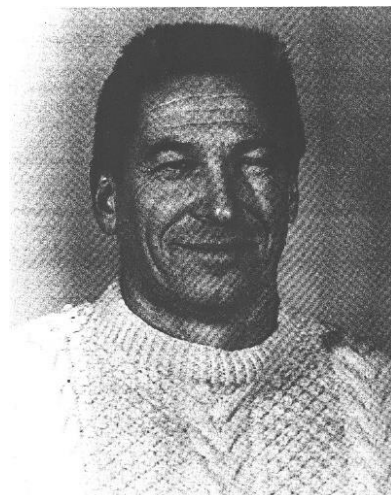


## In Memoriam

### Associate Professor Harold Chester Fry, Jr.

Dept. of Geology & Planetary Science, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown

Harold C. Fry, Jr. was born in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, February 7, 1930. In his youth he was an Eagle Scout, and served as a sergeant in the U.S. Marines during the Korean War. He earned his B.S. from Shippensburg State College (now Shippensburg University) in 1960, his Master of Science for Teachers from Cornell University in 1963, and his Ed.D. from Penn State in 1974. He had earlier attended the United States Naval Academy. After teaching in both the Harrisburg and Carlisle School Districts, he came to UPJ in 1969. In 1970 he conducted research titled "Limestone Border Conglomerate in the Vicinity of Bowmansdale." Fry was the sole full-time member of the Geology & Planetary Science Dept. until 1971.



Fry was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor in 1975 and served as head of the Department from 1975 to 1980. He was the Coordinator for UPJ Earth & Space Secondary Education majors from 1977 to 1991. He was a long-time member of the National Association of Geology Teachers (now National Association of Geoscience Teachers) and served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Eastern Section/NAGT from 1969-1975. He was a founding member of the Storm Water Management Subcommittee to the Tri-county Flood Committee and served as President and Treasurer of the Greater Johnstown Watershed Association.

Dr. Fry taught a wide range of courses while at UPJ, including oceanography, paleontology, meteorology, structural geology, physical and historical geology, and environmental geology. He was involved with several student trips to the western US and to Jamaica. In 1989 he did research on the floods of Johnstown with Dr. Kaktins. Fry retired in 1992 after 22 years of teaching. He was active in the East Hills Kiwanis Club and also co-owned a business, *Knit'n Rail*, of Geistown.

Harold Fry died December 1, 1995 after a short illness. He was survived by his wife, Ruth; two sons, Andrew William and Michael Robert; daughter Marianne (Mrs. Robert K. Sweet); and brother Dorsey H. Fry of Camp Hill.

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#### List of Previous Geology Faculty

Katrin Monecke (as of 2019, Assoc. Prof. of Geosciences, Wellesley College)

Carrie Davis-Todd (as of 2019, Assoc. Prof. at Baldwin Wallace Univ.)

Paul Washington

Merle B. Lauer

Michael Layton

Jack Beuthin

Dennis Miller

Jon J. Dickinson

William Sangrey

Sean Sherlock

Kenneth Lister

James Miller

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to the UPJ library staff for providing access to archive material, including now rare course catalogs from 1970 onward. Our current faculty provided key recollections for this history, which will be a living document to be updated over time. Special thanks to Professor Emeritus William Brice, one of the three founders of our department, for his many years of devoted and inspirational teaching in geology, and for his remembrances of the early history of geology at UPJ.

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**GEOLOGISTS never die, they just recrystallize.**

(January 2020)