



TWIN BRIDGES — Edward Thompson Ruppel, of Twin Bridges, died at home on June 27, 2014.

Ed, whose life's work focused on the mountains of Montana and Idaho, was born Oct. 26, 1925. He graduated from Twin Bridges (Montana) High School in 1943. After graduating from Twin Bridges High School, Ruppel joined the Navy, and in 1945 entered the V-12 Officer's Training Program. He served on the PC-802, a patrol craft in the China service area. After serving his country, Ed returned to Montana to start his college career. He graduated from the University of Montana in 1948, from the University of Wyoming in 1950, and from Yale University, where he earned his Ph.D. in geology in 1958.

He then spent 30 years with the U.S. Geological Survey, and produced major geological studies in Yellowstone National Park, east-central Idaho and southwest Montana. During his time at USGS, Ruppel served as the Chief of the Branch of Central Environmental Geology, supervising 70 earth scientists engaged in the geologic and related studies in the 13-state Central Region of the Rocky Mountain and High Plains.

Ruppel left the USGS in 1986 to accept the position as Director and State Geologist of the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology. Ed believed, fundamentally, in the importance of a state geological survey. He saw very early the opportunity to be involved with the USGS in the launch of the Co-GEOMAP (now STATEMAP) program that, in turn, has underpinned so many of the MBMG's own geologic and hydrogeologic programs. He authored more than 50 significant geologic maps and professional publications. In addition, Ruppel wrote two popular geologic guides: "The Gold Mines of the Virginia City Mining District, Madison County, Montana," and "Along The Great Divide: The Rocks and Their History Along the Continental Divide Trail between Montana and Idaho."

After his retirement from MBMG in 1994, Ruppel continued to conduct field research in the Snowcrest Range in southwest Montana, including mapping and resource studies of the Virginia City mining area, mapping the geology of the Continental Divide Trail, and research for Princeton University on the Beaverhead meteor impact region. In 1992, Ruppel received the first Tobacco Root Geological Survey Award for excellence in Field Work and in 1996 he received an Honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Montana. In 2013, the Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology awarded Ruppel the Uuno Sahinen Silver Medallion, a lifetime achievement award given to an eminent geologist each year.

Ruppel was a Certified Professional Geologist with the American Institute of Professional Geologists, a senior fellow of the Geological Society of America, and fellow with the Society of Economic Geologists

and a member of the Tobacco Root Geological Society, Montana Geological Society, Colorado Geological Society and the Geological Society of Washington, D.C.

He was a devoted husband to his beloved wife of 58 years, Phyllis Tanner Ruppel of Twin Bridges. She survives him, as do his four children, Lisa Ruppel Benenson (Joel) of New York, David Edward Ruppel (Jill) of Colorado, Douglas Thompson Ruppel (Sandy) of Arizona, and Kristin Tanner Ruppel (Jack) of Montana, and nine grandchildren – Anya Benenson, Zach Ruppel, Alexa Ruppel, Jacob Ruppel, Will Benenson, Madison Ruppel, Jessica Ruppel, Frank Ruppel, and Ruby Waller.

Compiled by John Metesh, Director and State Geologist, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology