

Charles “Chuck” Ratte’ (1927-2019)

Charles “Chuck” Ratte’, Vermont’s 11th State Geologist, passed away peacefully at home on February 20, 2019. He was 91 years old. Chuck was born in Brattleboro, Vermont in 1927, served in the US Marine Corps in 1945, then went on to receive a bachelor’s degree in geology from Middlebury College (1952), a master’s degree from Dartmouth College, and his Ph.D. from the University of Arizona (1963). He married his wife Judith in 1955.

Chuck and his family returned to Vermont in 1963 where he held a position at Windham College for 13 years. He served as a professor and department chair and pioneered student programs in Spain and the Caribbean. From 1976 to 1991, Chuck served as the Vermont State Geologist where his contributions to the Geological Survey and to Vermont’s citizens will be remembered. He transferred the responsibilities of the VGS from the University of Vermont to the Agency of Natural Resources in 1976, then in 1989 he shepherded the redefinition of the Geology and Mineral Resources Division through the legislature. The resulting statutory responsibilities have guided the Survey ever since and impacted all of us who succeeded him.

Chuck is also known in Vermont for his work on nuclear waste which led to restrictions of nuclear waste disposal siting in our state. One student recalled that Chuck marshalled an army of students and professors to implement the local bedrock mapping projects that emphasized the inherent limitations for siting such a disposal facility in Vermont. Chuck initiated the state bedrock map project which was completed in 2011 and supported preservation of the Chazy Reef at Isle LaMotte.

Chuck is fondly remembered for his love and knowledge of geology, skinny dipping in the local swimming holes, and support and encouragement of his colleagues. Chuck was a mentor and friend to many in the geologic community and will be missed.