John Winton Erwin
Professor Emeritus of Geophysics, University of Nevada, Reno


During his studies at the Colorado School of Mines, John worked for Anaconda Copper Company and Phelps Dodge Corporation. Following graduation, he worked for Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan, and later for ASARCO in its Salt Lake City office and at its exploration projects in Arizona, Missouri, Nevada, Utah and other western states. Beginning in 1961, he was employed by Hercules Aerospace Company in Salt Lake City, Utah, as part of the design team for the Sprint anti-ballistic missile.

In 1964, John joined the faculty of the Mackay School of Mines of the University of Nevada as a professor of geophysics and as a researcher with the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology. On his retirement in June 1985, he was named Professor Emeritus. Professor Erwin published numerous works in the geophysical field. After his retirement from UNR he continued to teach mathematics at Truckee Meadows Community College and Western Nevada Community College.

John was the first in his family to graduate from college. He valued and encouraged education as evidenced by the twenty-four (and counting) college, graduate and doctoral degrees earned by his children and grandchildren, eight of the degrees awarded by the University of Nevada.

Erwin was a registered engineer in the State of Nevada, a member of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers, the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration, the Arizona Geological Society, the Geological Society of Nevada (serving as Chairman in the early 1970’s), and the Marina Bay Yacht Club, Richmond, California. Proud of his service as a United States Marine, he belonged to the Navy League and was a life member of the American Legion. For many years he was a member of the Masonic Golden Lodge F & AM/50, St. John’s Presbyterian Church and the First Congregational Church, Reno, NV.

Mr. Erwin was predeceased by his wife Patricia Jane in 2007. He is survived by sons James W. Erwin, Thomas P. (Molly) Erwin, John A. (Sherri) Erwin, and daughters Susan M. (Brian) Buckley, Debra Ann (Pete) Padgett; fourteen grandchildren, two step
grandchildren, eleven great grandchildren, and former daughters-in-law Cheryl L. Ehrke and Michelle F. Hall.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at 2:30 p.m. on Friday, October 25, 2013, at Mountain View Mortuary, 435 Stoker Avenue, Reno, Nevada, followed by a Military Internment Service at Mountain View Cemetery. Contact Mountain View Mortuary for details 775 788-1299.

In lieu of flowers the family requests that memorials may be made in John’s name to the Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering, Mail Stop 162, University of Nevada, Reno 89557.

Professor Erwin enjoying an old school look at gravity in the Silver State.