

## Thomas Hendrix: 1933 – 2023



On Sunday October 8<sup>th</sup> Tom Hendrix passed away, and the GVSU Geology Department lost one of its most distinguished faculty members in the unit's history. Tom came to GVSU in 1978 as Professor of Geology after 18+ years of service as a faculty member in the Indiana University Geology Department. A few of our pre-1978 alumni who attended Indiana's summer field camp in Montana should remember Tom as a field instructor and associate camp director.

During his 17 years at Grand Valley, Tom continued his dedication to providing the best in undergraduate education for both science majors and our general education students. Tom's excellence in the Environmental, Physical and Historical Geology courses conveyed the importance of science to all and was a source of new majors. Our geo-alumni from the 1978 to 1995 era fondly remember his upper-level courses in structural, field methods, global tectonics, and seminar, as do the students of research projects under his direction. Tom's field trips for these courses were memorable for the observational challenges he presented, and the training to solve 'problems' in the field as well as the lab. Few of our majors were ever aware that during Tom's graduate-student years he worked as a field geologist (Bethlehem Steel, U.S.G.S., Northern Pacific RR, and Fremont Mining Co.) in roles from mapping to mineral evaluation/exploration, and field party chief for a summer in British Columbia. These experiences contributed greatly to his talent as an applied 'field professor.'

Twice during his GVSU years Tom served as Chairman of the Geology Department (1979-1983, 1990-1993), and his leadership was especially crucial during his first term as it was the time of economic downturn. His later leadership helped achieve the department's long-time goal of reaching a more effective faculty-staffing level,

including the Department's first female professor. For the Chairs that followed, Tom's chairmanship was a model from which they became better administrators.

His teaching excellence at GVSU was recognized in 1986 with his award as Outstanding Teacher, and again in 1993 with the Michigan Association of Governing Boards' Outstanding Professor Award. During summers from 1978 through 1984 Tom continued to run western U. S. field courses, first by continuing Indiana University's "Introductory Geology in the Field" in Montana (for entering freshmen, including attendance by some of his colleagues' daughters!), and then as Director/Professor of the University of Oklahoma's summer field camp in Colorado, 1983 and 1984. Some of these western trips also allowed Tom time for continuing field research projects as well as family adventures.

Tom's most significant recognition for his contributions to Earth Science education and the Geology profession came in 1994 with the prestigious National Association of Geology Teachers (NAGT) Neil Minor Award. His dedication to undergraduate education also is reflected in his professional research, service, and interest in student athletics. Most of his 20+ journal articles, laboratory workbooks, field guides, reviews, and media projects dealt with aspects of Earth Science education. And even his reports on field research projects were educational guides for his peers. Geologists who were already experienced in the geology of Montana, Southern Indiana, and Baraboo, Wisconsin, found attendance in a Hendrix field trip to be a new 'learning experience.' At the same time, Tom chose the National Association of Geology Teachers as his professional service activity, and from 1964 to 2023 established an enviable record of work and dedication to that organization: committees, panels, Editor of the *Journal of Geological Education* (1969 – 1972), East Central Section VP (1973) and President (1974), NAGT National VP (1973) and President (1974), founder/director of the Summer Field Course Scholarship Program (1974 – 1978) which also benefited several GVSU geo-majors with summer camp scholarships (and we hope more in the future), as well as participation in other NAGT and AGI projects and programs. Just how deep Tom's commitment was for NAGT is reflected in the fact that this past July (2023), NAGT announced its outstanding undergraduate Teaching Assistant Awards, thanks to funding by a donation by Tom Hendrix.

Tom's service record in terms of committees and task forces at both Indiana and Grand Valley would take up pages, but of those many activities his interest in athletics deserves special mention. As an undergraduate at Franklin and Marshall College, Tom played varsity football. He was a life-long Phillies baseball fan, and you can't live in Indiana for two decades without loving basketball! These interests carried over into Tom's Campus service, and the last active GVSU committees he served on included GVSU's Faculty Athletics Representative to the GLIAC (1983 – 1991), The GVSU Athletic Hall of Fame Committee Chairman (1985-1991), and the Golf Course Committee (1992 – 1993). In the early 1990's, the loyal GVSU football fans, Tom and Nina trekked to North Dakota to see GVSU play North Dakota State, the then reigning Division II football champs, and attended the game with alumna Patty Videtich – GVSU won the game, and Tom recruited Patty to join our faculty. The man even worked during football games!

Our feeling of loss is offset by great appreciation for all of Tom's contributions via his service to others, the good memories of his empathy for students, his role-model professionalism, and the sense of humor he expressed through many stories from his storehouse of experience. The Geology Department's faculty, alumni, and students express our condolences to the Hendrix family – Mike, Susan, Lori, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren.