

HUGH W. NASMITH (1923–2001)

By Stephen Bean, Geoff Buck and Heinrich Heinz



Hugh Nasmith was born and raised in Port Perry, Ontario and moved to the west coast for RCAF pilot training at Patricia Bay, Victoria, BC during World War II. After the war, he attended the University of British Columbia and obtained his BAsC in Geological Engineering in 1949, followed by a Masters in Engineering Geology from Washington University (St. Louis, Missouri) in 1951.

After graduation he accepted a position with the BC Department of Mines in Victoria and conducted extensive geological mapping in the Okanagan Valley. His "*Late Glacial History and Surficial Deposits of the Okanagan Valley* (BC Department of Mines, 1962, reprinted 1981)" reflected his strong interest in the Pleistocene geology of BC. Hugh also assisted Atholl Sutherland Brown write the chapter on "Physiography and Glacial and Recent Geology" in the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines Bulletin 54 "Geology of the Queen Charlotte Islands British Columbia" (1968).

In 1958, Hugh joined RC Thurber & Associates (now Thurber Engineering Ltd.) where he worked as an engineering geologist on many large dams including Mica and Revelstoke and a variety of transportation projects including the Alberta Resources Railway, pipeline river crossing studies for Alberta Natural Gas, and BC Hydro transmission line assessments. He was also involved in natural hazard mitigation projects, most notably the Port Alice debris flow slide protection works on Vancouver Island. He worked extensively in terrain analysis and groundwater assessment and supply.

Hugh loved field trips and wrote numerous guidebooks. One of his favourite trips was "Engineering Geology of the Southern Cordillera of British Columbia" for the 24th International Geological Congress held in Montreal in 1972 for which he wrote a 34-page guidebook.

Hugh was an excellent writer and his bestselling book, *Suit Is a Four Letter Word* (BiTech Publishers, 1986) is still an important reading on professional liability. Hugh also co-authored "The Emergence of Engineering Geology in British Columbia" with Doug VanDine and Charles Ripley, which can be found in the BC Ministry of Energy and Mines Open File 1992-19 ("Pioneering Geology in the Canadian Cordillera"). In retirement, he co-authored (with Chris Yorath) *The Geology of Southern Vancouver Island: A Field Guide* (Orca Books, 1995).

Hugh served on associate and subcommittees of the National Research Council Canada - NRC. In 1982, he became a Fellow of the Engineering Institute of Canada.

Hugh was married to Doris (Dorie) and together they raised three children; Paul (Musician and Accountant), Dugald (Actor and Adventure Tour Guide) and Patricia (PhD in Biochemistry). His leisure time was spent sailing around the Gulf Islands with the family.