JACK WILLIAM SHIRLEY
(1929–2004)

By Steven Shirley
Bangkok, Thailand

Jack William Shirley was born May 4, 1929, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. In 1947, he graduated from Central High School with honors and then graduated in 1952 from the University of Oklahoma (OU) with a B.S. degree in geology. While at OU, he was president of Delta Chi Fraternity and was a Distinguished Military Graduate.

Jack served in the U.S. Army from 1951 to 1953 as 1st Lieutenant and C.O. 78th Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squad. On January 1, 1952, Jack met the love of his life, Amy Arline, and for the next five months he commuted from his postings to court her until June 7, 1952, when they married. In 1953, he returned to OU, where he pursued graduate studies.

Jack entered the petroleum industry in 1954 as a geologist with Continental Oil with stops in Midland, Casper, Chickasha, and Lafayette. Jack’s temporary assignment in Lafayette turned into a 48-year stay when he hired on with Marr Co. as a district geologist in 1956, working his way up to area manager, exploration manager, and senior executive. In 1984, he hung out his own shingle as a consulting geologist with Amy at his side as secretary and comptroller. This allowed Jack to continue to pursue his passion, service to others. One thing that set Jack apart and that he displayed throughout his life was his sincere belief that there was always time to volunteer to help others.

He had a love for his chosen profession and its advancement with young people. Jack was a member of the OU School of Geoscience Alumni Advisory Committee, where he strove to keep the curriculum relevant so OU graduates would be valuable additions to the profession. He was an active member of the Lafayette Geological Society, Dallas Geological Society, Houston Geological Society, AAPG, AAPG Division of Professional Affairs (DPA), AAPG Division of Environmental Geoscientists (DEG), and Society of Independent Professional Earth Scientists (SIPES).

He was never satisfied with sitting on the sidelines so he waded in, volunteering to serve on the Gulf Coast Association of Geological Societies (GCAGS) publication Transactions as associate editor (1966), editor (1974), and assistant editor (1990). He also served the GCAGS as secretary (1980–1981), Convention Committee liaison (1980), and chair of the convention Poster Committee (1999), and received the 2000 GCAGS Distinguished Service Award. For AAPG he was on the 1981–1986 Boy Scout Committee, 1988–1989 Industry Liaison Committee, Public Committee, and the 1993–1995 DEG Advisory Board, and was chair of the 1986–1989 Youth Activities Committee. He was the 2002 chair of the SIPES General Convention. I have fond memories of going with my dad to AAPG and GCAGS conventions across North America as a kid, in the days before class action suits, when kids were allowed on the exhibition floor. I can remember him taking me by the hand and showing me the tools of the trade and introducing me to his friends and cohorts, passing on his excitement for his profession. We continued to go together over the years as I followed in his footsteps as a geologist. In later years he had to take a few more cigar breaks, but I could always find him sitting and talking shop.

His spirited involvement in the community included both church and civic activities. Jack and Amy were charter members of Grace Presbyterian Church, where he served as elder, church school superintendent, moderator session, Building Committee chair, Board of Trustees chair, Commissioner 113 General Assembly PCUS (Presbyterian Church U.S.), and as a lay minister for 20-plus Presbyterian churches. He was a chair of the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Political Action Committee. Jack was active with the Boy Scouts of America, serving as Cub master, Scout master, Council commissioner, Council vice president, and Troop Committee chair.

One of his greatest joys was service as a Rotarian. He was a member of the Rotary Club of Lafayette, District Governor District 6200, member of several Rotary International committees, Task Forces and International President’s representative, recipient of Outstanding Rotarian awards from Lafayette Rotary Club and District 6200 and the Rotary Foundation’s highest international award, Meritorious Service Award and Distinguished Service Award, which is only presented to 50 Rotarians worldwide each year. As members of his home Rotary district would say, he was “Mr. Rotary.”

Jack’s greatest pride was his family. He always lit up when talking about family. He considered himself blessed to share 51 years of life’s journey with his lovely wife Amy. They loved and raised three sons, Mark, Scott, and Steven, and one daughter, Susan. For those that knew Jack, the shine in his eyes since 1988 was his three granddaughters. He always had a picture handy and was ready to update everyone on their exploits, be it a grand slam in a softball tournament in Australia or a great piano or dance recital.

Even while in the hospital the day before he passed away, his encouragement of others was evident. The night before he was hospitalized he attended a school performance a neighbor was performing in, and from his hospital bed he asked Amy to...