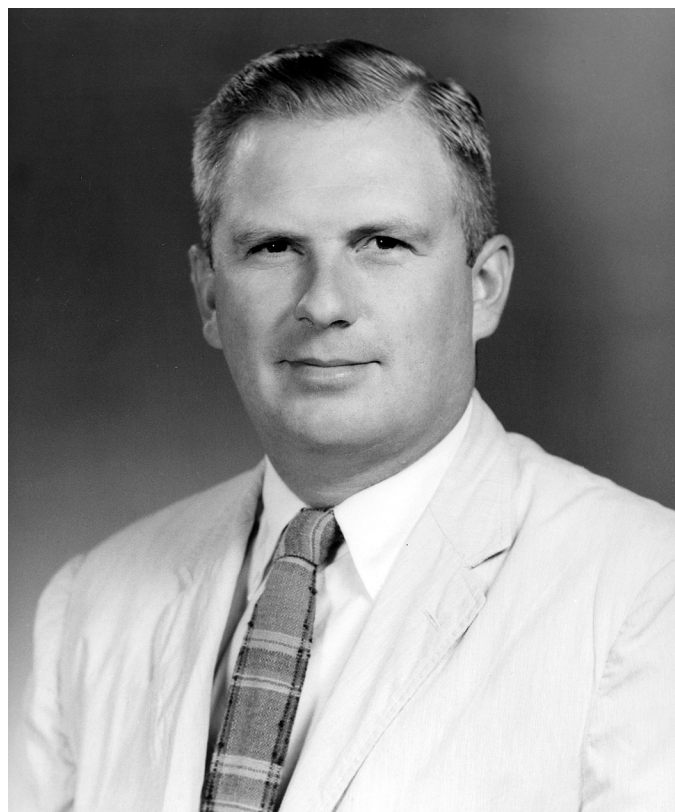


RICHARD HARRISON RAGLE (1923–2013)

Richard Harrison (Dick) Ragle was born on 11 June 1923 and died on 13 May 2013, just 30 days before his 90th birthday. His life contained many facets, and few of his friends were aware of the full scope of his activities. He attended the Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire, from 1938 to 1941. He left to join the American Field Services, Middle East Forces, which took him to North Africa, where he served with the British 8th Army in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and the Royal Air Force (RAF) Regiment from February 1942 to December 1943. He then served with the U.S. Navy as a Naval Aviator from 1944 to 1948. His experience included flying a wide variety of U.S. Navy aircraft from land and from aircraft carriers, as well as seaplanes and helicopters. When the Korean War broke out, he again served in the U.S. Navy Reserve Air Corps from 1950 to 1958. From 1960 to 1968, he was part of Naval Reserve Research Company 1–7. His service in World War II brought him many awards, including the American Area Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the U.S. Navy Good Conduct Medal, and the African Star with the Eighth Army Clasp. He was also awarded the British War Medal with 1939–1945 Star and the French Colonial A.F.S. Ribbon for his service with the Free French Forces.

Dick's long-term interest in the Arctic and Antarctic guided his academic studies. His introduction to the polar regions was due in part to his acquaintance with Admiral Richard E. Byrd, who was a patient and friend of Dick's father, Dr. Benjamin H. Ragle. Dick received his BA in Geology and Chemistry from Middlebury College in 1952 and his MS in Geology from Dartmouth in 1958. He also studied at the University of Minnesota, and in 1953–54, he was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Oslo and the Norsk Polarinstitut in Oslo, Norway.

I first met Dick in 1953, when he worked under contract with the Stanford Research Institute in Northwest Greenland on surficial geology of the Thule Peninsula; this work was done in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey. From 1954 to 1960, he was a geologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Snow Ice and Permafrost Research Establishment (SIPRE); this organization was renamed in 1964 as the Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory (CRREL). In 1954, Dick was assistant leader of an expedition on the Greenland Ice Sheet that traveled inland from Thule at 77° N and revisited sites measured in 1952 and 1953. He took to this new element like a duck to water. In 1955, he was assistant leader of the follow-up, a six-man expedition that extended measurements for 2000 km. The 1955 expedition re-measured sites (pits 3–4 m deep) for the first 193 km (120 miles) along a route that went from Thule inland to the center of the ice sheet and then south to 70° N and west to the French Central Station and out to the west coast. Our weasels were cached at the French Camp VI for later use by the Expédition Glaciologique Internationale au Groenland (EGIG). Dick was in charge of the altimetry



Richard Harrison (Dick) Ragle.

program; he used two Paulin System altimeters and always maintained one stationary while the other was moving. Over the entire traverse, his reduction of data was close to values obtained by GPS re-measuring at selected sites in 2013.

Dick conducted a SIPRE school on the ice sheet in 1956 for people going to the Antarctic Ice Sheet. He then led SIPRE Expeditions in North Greenland (1958) and the Antarctic deep drilling project on Ross Ice Shelf (1958–59). In 1958, he led a team that rescued 13 military personnel from a crash on the Greenland ice cap, transporting the airmen 435 km across the ice to safety. For this rescue, Dick was awarded the U.S. Army's highest civilian award, the Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service. In 1960, he was in charge of the Ward Hunt Ice Shelf drilling project of the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA) and the SIPRE South and South-Central Greenland Expedition.

From 1960 to 1974, he worked again with AINA as chief pilot and leader of the Ice Field Ranges Research Project, based mainly at the AINA Kluane Lake Research Station. He conducted a wide range of research projects that included glaciology, investigations of the effects of the 1964 Alaska earthquake, and management of the projects at Kluane Lake. It is of interest that the scope of his flying included operations on aircraft carriers and high-altitude ski landings on Mt. Logan.

From 1974 to 1977, Dick was a senior geologist at the consulting firm of Dames and Moore in Anchorage, Alaska. He was involved with the environmental and physical analysis of ice forces on facilities at Prudhoe Bay, as well as logistically important characteristics of seasonal ice formation. From 1977 to 1979, he was assistant director for Operations at the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory at Barrow, Alaska. He again served as a consultant with Northern Technical Services in Anchorage as well as a private consultant. In addition to his research and operational activities, Dick enjoyed teaching and did it frequently during his life. He was a Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America and the Geological Society of America.

Dick Ragle was a quiet man of many talents, a reliable friend and a skilled craftsman; he made beautiful wood products such as custom-made cabinets. In 2011, he moved from Alaska to Vermont with his wife Harriet. His daughters, Wendy, Hillary, and Holly, and stepson Edward also survive him.

*Carl S. Benson
Professor of Geology and Geophysics, Emeritus
Geophysical Institute, University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775, USA
benson@gi.alaska.edu*