

## Remembering Jack Ives (15 October 1931–15 September 2024)

Authors: Sicroff, Seth, and Byers, Alton C.

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## Remembering Jack Ives (15 October 1931– 15 September 2024)

**Seth Sicroff<sup>1</sup> and Alton C. Byers<sup>2\*</sup>**

\* Corresponding author: [alton.byers@colorado.edu](mailto:alton.byers@colorado.edu)

<sup>1</sup> Mountain Legacy International, 511 W Green Street, Ithaca, NY 14850, USA

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research (INSTAAR), University of Colorado at Boulder, 406 Westridge Drive, Elkins, WV 26241, USA

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It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Jack D. Ives (John David Ives) on 15 September 2024 at the age of 92, following complications resulting from a fall.

Jack led an exceptionally distinguished career as a geomorphologist and glaciologist before broadening his interests to include topics usually associated with human geography, development, and natural hazards. His early research focused on the onset of glaciation, the dynamics of glacial movement, and avalanche mapping. Jack and his wife Pauline explored large tracts of Northern Labrador in the process, and Jack always emphasized his great indebtedness to Pauline for her support, assistance, and advice. Later projects ranged from the first scientific study of glacial lakes and glacial lake outbreak floods in the Himalayas to the development of community-based trekking tourism in Lijiang (Yunnan, China) and innovative student and faculty exchanges between the University of Colorado and China, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Jack's trajectory from working-class schoolboy to the pinnacle of his field was launched by a thirst for adventure. He was born in Grimsby, a fishing port in Lincolnshire, UK. In his teens, he enlisted on two trawler trips that took him through Arctic Norway and to 78°N in the Barents Sea. This experience fired his enthusiasm for mountains and the Arctic. It also prompted him, as an undergraduate, to organize the University of Nottingham's first Arctic reconnaissance, prevailing on his trawler friends to provide free transport to northern Norway. For the next three summers (1952–1954) Jack led a series of expeditions to the Vatnajökull area of Iceland, undertaking studies on the dynamics of glacial movement. These expeditions entailed close contact with isolated Icelandic sheep farmers, from whom Jack learned the importance of considering local people's appreciation and knowledge of their own history and environment. In the course of these recreational and scientific adventures, he learned an array of lessons that came to shape his work as a pioneering mountain geographer.

In 1954, Jack married Pauline Cordingley, and they emigrated to Canada, where Jack earned a doctorate in

geography at McGill University. He then became director of the McGill Subarctic Research Laboratory. His memoir *The Land Beyond* (2010) focuses on his research expeditions in Labrador-Ungava during this time. Following these adventures, Jack was appointed assistant director and then director of the Federal Geographical Branch. In this capacity, he organized 7 interdisciplinary expeditions to the then barely known Baffin Island, which form the core of his award-winning monograph, *Baffin Island: Field Research and High Arctic Adventure, 1961–1967* (2016). Among Jack's many lasting achievements was the establishment of the Glaciology Section of Canada's Geographical Branch in 1965—the first such center for glaciological research, still in operation as a unit within the Geological Survey of Canada.

In 1967, Jack moved to Boulder, Colorado, as full professor of geography and director of the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research. There he founded and edited the quarterly journal *Arctic and Alpine Research* (now *Arctic, Antarctic and Alpine Research*), and directed ground-breaking projects in the Colorado Rockies, which included avalanche forecasting, mountain hazards mapping, and studies on the ecological impacts of cloud seeding. From 1974, he played a seminal role in the design and implementation of the mountain division of the Man and Biosphere Programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) and also dedicated considerable time lobbying for a Niwot Ridge Biosphere Reserve, which UNESCO designated in 1979. From 1968 to 1975, he collaborated with the eminent German geographer Carl Troll, who had recently founded the International Geographical Union's Commission on High Altitude Geocology. Jack succeeded Troll as president of the Commission, a task that drew him increasingly into international mountain affairs. From 1972 to 1992, he alternated the presidency with his close colleague Professor Bruno Messerli of the University of Bern, Switzerland. Their deep friendship paved the way to close working relationships with UNESCO, the United Nations University (UNU), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In brief, Jack transitioned from the fields of geomorphology and glaciology to a combination of physical and human geography, similar to Troll's proposed field of “geoecology.” His attention was drawn increasingly to human impacts on the environment, mountain hazards, sustainability of mountain livelihoods, and highland–lowland linkages.

At Boulder, and later at the University of California at Davis, Jack advised and mentored a remarkable group of international graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who subsequently involved him in their research and development projects in Nepal, northern Thailand, Ecuador, China, and nearly every major mountain system in the world. Many of his students remember with great fondness the frequent dinners and gatherings at Jack and Pauline's home in Boulder or Davis, highlighted by Pauline's fabulous cooking and slide shows from either Jack's or a student's most recent field expedition.

In 1980, Jack and others founded the International Mountain Society (IMS) which, with support from the UNU, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and others, launched Jack's second journal, *Mountain Research and Development* (MRD), in May 1981. The mission statement of the IMS, and by extension of MRD, reflects Jack's priorities: "[To] strive for a better balance between mountain environment, development of resources, and the wellbeing of mountain peoples." Together, Pauline and Jack published MRD for two decades. In 2000, MRD was transferred, along with stewardship of the IMS, to the Centre for Development and Environment, University of Bern. Since then, MRD and the IMS have been of critical importance in fostering international inter- and transdisciplinary research directed toward formulating solutions to the range of environmental and social problems threatening mountains worldwide.

A watershed achievement in Jack's career was the organization of the two Mohonk Mountain Conferences, particularly Mohonk II in 1986, which focused on the "Himalaya–Ganges Problem." The resulting monograph, *Himalayan Dilemma: Reconciling Development and Conservation* (Ives and Messerli 1989), is credited with derailing a popular development theory of the time that blamed highland farmers for impending catastrophic deforestation, flooding, poverty, and political destabilization. A notable supporter of the Mohonk conferences was Maurice Strong, Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), or "Earth Summit," held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 1992. With Strong's active collaboration, Jack and his team of mountain colleagues led the successful effort to include their "Mountain Agenda" as Chapter 13 of the Earth Summit's action plan, *Agenda 21*. A key element of the Rio+5 follow-up was the 500-page *Mountains of the World: A Global Priority* (Messerli and Ives 1997), which drew heavily on the MRD's archive of more than 550 published articles, as well as "the accumulation of 18 years of editorial experience and the sustained record of publication, participation in mountain field research, training exercises and conferences" (Ives 1998).

Chapter 13 emphasizes the need to include and recognize the invaluable knowledge and experience of mountain people in scientific research, development, and hazard mitigation projects, and, for more than three decades, has guided international investment in development and conservation in impoverished mountain regions. Ten years after UNCED, the United Nations declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains. One year later, the UN designated December 11 as the annually observed International Mountain Day.

Jack was a fine storyteller with a remarkable memory, and over the years he established a large, unique library and archive of mountain-related books, maps, and photographs. He was also an outstanding photographer, with a knack for capturing unusually beautiful images of mountain people (always with their permission), mountain landscapes, and replicates of historic images with his beloved Hasselblad medium format camera (Figure 1). Following his retirement to Canada in 1997, he produced four significant monographs: *Himalayan Perceptions* (2004, 2006), *Skaftafell in Iceland: A Thousand Years of Change* (2007), *Sustainable Mountain Development: Getting the Facts Right* (2013, 2022), and *Baffin*

**FIGURE 1** Jack D. Ives with his Hasselblad medium format camera. Photo by Matthias Winiger



*Island: Field Research and High Arctic Adventure, 1961–1967* (2016).

Jack took adventure seriously: energy, willingness to accept challenge, persistence, flexibility, and comradeship (and collegiality) were critical to his unparalleled accomplishments. He remained close friends with the family of Ragnar Stefánsson in Iceland, whom he first encountered on his expeditions in 1952 (Ives 2007), as well as with a large number of his former graduate students. Jack had a strong moral sense and, from 1968, personally assisted Tibetan and Bhutani refugee families with export enterprises and their children's education. One of his beneficiaries earned two medical degrees and returned to Darjeeling to practice gynecology in an underserved community (Ives 2013).

Jack continued to support and participate actively in research and development projects carried out by his 55 former graduate students, as well as dozens of other colleagues from around the world. He remained a mentor to many of his students, sending them historic photographs, books, maps, or anything within his vast archives if he thought they would be of any assistance to their projects. His contributions to mountain studies earned him numerous honors, including two Distinguished Career Awards from the Association of American Geographers in 2000, the King Albert Mountain Award in 2002, the Patron's Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 2006, the Knight's Cross of the Order of the Falcon from Iceland in 2007, and the Sir Edmund Hillary Mountain Legacy Medal in 2015.

In summary, Jack's career was both a harbinger and an icon of the new unified field of montology, the study of all aspects of mountainous regions, including highland–lowland linkages. He contributed the lexical research that led to the inclusion of "montology" in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Having started his career at a time when mountains were treated as marginal landforms or engineering challenges to be overcome, he helped raise awareness of their centrality to every human concern, whether environmental protection, political stability, social equity, economic prosperity, recreation, or spiritual inspiration. Jack led from the front, a pathfinder alerting us to the challenges and opportunities confronting us in a

period of environmental uncertainty and global change. We are fortunate and grateful for his leadership, his guidance, and his comradeship in this great adventure.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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