

## **Obituary for a Mountain Champion: Lawrence Hamilton, 1925–2016**

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## Obituary for a Mountain Champion: Lawrence Hamilton, 1925–2016

Larry Hamilton, our dear friend, ardent colleague, and champion of the mountains, died on 6 October 2016, following a short illness, near Charlotte, Vermont. Through his association with UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, Project 6 (mountains), he was in touch with founding members of the International Mountain Society from the mid-1970s and remained active in leadership or advisory positions until recently. He was also an accomplished scholar and emeritus professor who authored countless scientific and technical publications. In particular, Larry brought his unique global expertise in mountain forestry and watershed management to this process. This was exemplified 5 years later in the seminal book *Mountains of the World: A Global Priority* (Messerli and Ives 1997), for which he was the lead author of the 2 chapters on these key topics.



Lawrence S. Hamilton. (Photo courtesy of Linda Hamilton)

In 1986 he arranged for the East-West Center, University of Hawai'i, to make a vital financial contribution to the second Mohonk Mountain Conference and participated as a member of its organizing committee. This international conference, held at Mohonk Mountain House, New Paltz,

New York State, set the stage for working with Maurice Strong and formation of the "Mountain Mafia" (MRD 1987). It led to the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit and the pivotal insertion of the "mountain chapter" (13) in Agenda 21. Larry was also instrumental in developing conservation networks for mountains, particularly Tropical Montane Cloud Forests, for which he co-organized 3 landmark international symposia and multiple technical workshops on mountain protected areas and connectivity conservation.

Larry's sudden death and his outstanding lifetime achievements have already been highlighted by his many colleagues within the orbit of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), together with an extensive obituary in the *New York Times* (NY Times 2016).

The Mountain Mafia benefitted immensely from Larry's participation as a core member, culminating in his invitation, with Bruno and Jack, to participate in the United Nations special assembly on 11 December 2001, for the declaration of 2002 as the International Year of Mountains.

### Bruno and Beatrice's recollection of Larry's last visit to Switzerland

Larry and Linda came to our house in Zimmerwald a little more than a year before his death. Despite his 90 years, with Linda and Beatrice, we were able to make an excursion in the Swiss Alps, this time to the Binntal in the Canton of Valais. We stayed in the same hotel we had chosen many years earlier. We were astounded that Larry was able to travel from Vermont to Zimmerwald, and then to the Alps, walking for several hours each day. This exceptional courage and stamina was no doubt aided by Linda's presence, although it certainly reflected the determination that Larry demonstrated throughout his life. We never suspected that he would no longer be with us little more than a year later.

We also visited the World Nature Forum in Naters—a visitor, study, and congress center then still under construction for the UNESCO World Heritage Swiss Alps Jungfrau–Aletsch (<https://www.jungfrau-aletsch.ch/en/worldnatureforum-en/>). Here Larry was impressed by all the publications available, ranging from accounts of the glaciers in the region—some longer than the glaciers in the Mt Everest region of Nepal—to Alpine floras and descriptions of traditional Alpine villages. The official opening of this new center, with representation from the Swiss government, occurred on 22 September 2016—an appropriate present for both Larry and Linda.

This was followed by declaration of 11 December as International Mountain Day.

Larry's production of his newsletter, *Mountain Protected Areas UPDATE*, with 89 issues up to early 2016, has had a worldwide impact.

The foregoing commentary, however, relates to documents, references, publications, conferences, and group actions. We remember Larry through his personal attributes: conviviality, friendship, commitment, passion, joy, persistence, loyalty, persuasion, and mentorship. It was always memorable to walk in the mountains with him, participate in organizational or scientific meetings, or hear his enthusiastic and committed voice over the telephone.

We personally, along with the mountains and the mountain people, have lost an adept and committed stalwart advocate. Our love and deepest sympathy are extended to his wife, Linda, whose personality matches that of Larry's, and who was always there to ensure that he achieved so many important and vital objectives.

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