## The contributions of William "Bill" Aubrey Cobban

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Bill COBBAN is an extraordinary biostratigrapher, paleontologist, and geologist, and in a career that has spanned nearly 60 years, he has fundamentally changed our understanding of the Upper Cretaceous Western Interior. William Aubrey "Bill" COBBAN was born Dec. 31, 1916 in Great Falls, MT. He attended the University of Montana in Missoula, and in 1940 went to work for Carter Oil Company (now Exxon) as a geologist, stratigrapher, and map maker. In 1946, Bill attended Johns Hopkins University, receiving his PhD in 1949. His U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) career began in 1948 with field work on the Cretaceous bentonite deposits of southeastern Montana and northwestern South Dakota.

During those early years at the USGS, Bill worked with John B. REESIDE Jr., the father of Western Interior biostratigraphy. modern Throughout his years with the USGS, Bill also spent a great deal of time in the field and collaborating on publications with friends and geologists James GILL and Glenn Scott. These three spent most of their career collecting, mapping, and publishing on the geology, stratigraphy, and the invertebrate fauna of the Western Interior Upper Cretaceous marine sediments. The invertbrate collections that these geologists harvested are unequaled, and their research of these fossils changed our perspective of the ancient world and its inhabitants.

Throughout the last 60 years, Bill has also collaborated with respected paleontologists such as the late John "Jake" Hancock, Stephen Hook, Glenn Izett, Erle Kauffman, W. James Kennedy, E. Allen Merewether, John D. Obradovich, Ireneusz Walaszczyk, and many others including the authors. During this time,

Bill has continued to collect, research, and publish extensively on the Western Interior. Bill is responsible for naming and defining most of the 71 Upper Cretaceous ammonite zones of the Western Interior, for dating most of the Late Cretaceous bentonite layers (along with John OBRADOVICH), and correlating the Western Interior with the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts. These zones are recognized and used worldwide in discussions of the Upper Cretaceous. Bill has had four ammonite genera and 17 species of invertebrates named in honor of him; two more are currently in the works. He has named at least 35 genera, 2 subgenera, 214 species, and 11 varieties of ammonites along with 18 species of inoceramids. He is a disciplined researcher who has authored and co-authored more than 300 papers on the invertebrates, biostratigraphy and geology of the North American Late Cretaceous. At 90, Bill continues research and publishing.

Beginning in the 1950's and up to the present, Bill has produced seminal works including publications on the ammonite fauna and stratigraphy of the Colorado Group of northern Montana (with C. E. ERDMANN and others), the cephalopods of the Mowry Shale (with John B. REESIDE, Jr.), a phenomenally detailed study of the Pierre Shale at Red Bird, Wyoming (with James GILL), the definitive study on dimorphism in scaphitid ammonites, the stratigraphy and ammonite fauna of the Graneros Shale and Greenhorn Limestone near Pueblo, Colorado (with Glenn Scott), numerous monographs on Late Cretaceous ammonites, especially his exhaustive studies on the ammonites of New Mexico (with W. James Kennedy and Steve HOOK), the correlation of the ammonite zones of North America to Europe (with W. James

KENNEDY and Jake HANCOCK), and the integration of ammonite and inoceramid biostratigraphy (with Ireneusz WALASZCZYK and Peter HARRIES).

Bill's knowledge and passion for ammonites and Cretaceous stratigraphy is unequaled; and it is his continued commitment to the Western Interior Cretaceous invertebrate fauna that is important to everyone who studies Cretaceous geology. Bill has received many well deserved honors during his long career, including the Meritorious Service Award (1974), the Distinguished Geologist Pioneer Award (1985), the Paleontological Medal (1985), the Distinguished Service Award (1986), and the Raymond C. Moore Paleontology Medal (1990). In 2004, he was honored by the participants of the 6th Cephalopods Past and Present Symposium for his unselfish, meritorious, lifetime work on the Late Cretaceous ammonites of North America. In August, 2006, a symposium entitled 'The Paleontology, Geology, and Stratigraphy of the Western Interior Late Cretaceous Seaway; A tribute to the life of W. A. "Bill" Cobban' was held in Colorado to honor him for a lifetime of dedicated

work in geology and paleontology. And in 2007, he was given the Dallas Peck Award for a lifetime achievement of scientific excellence in the US Geological Survey's geologic division.

The collections Bill has helped assemble for the USGS represent the fauna from almost every Upper Cretaceous biozone and locality within the Western Interior, the Gulf and the Atlantic Coastal Regions. However, it is his work on ammonites, his collections from nearly 70 years, and his meticulous organization of these collections that still inspire continued research and publications. Bill is currently working on organizing the extensive Cretaceous invertebrate collections at the USGS Denver Federal Center, and co-authoring several new manuscripts on the Late Cretaceous ammonites of the Western Interior.

Bill has been an unselfish teacher to anyone who visited him at the Denver Federal Center. He has inspired many people to choose paleontology as a career or as a hobby. If not for Bill COBBAN, our understanding of the Western Interior and its correlation with the rest of the Cretaceous world would be much poorer.



W. A. Bill Cobban on an outcrop of Pierre Shale in South Dakota 2001 (photo by Neal L. LARSON)

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