

*At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on December 6, 2022,
the following tribute to the life and service of the late Cornelius Searle
Hurlbut, Jr., was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.*

CORNELIUS SEARLE HURLBUT, JR.

BORN: June 30, 1906
DIED: September 1, 2005

One of the most important mineralogists of the twentieth century, Cornelius “Connie” Searle Hurlbut, Jr., spent more than half a century teaching, researching, and extensively writing about gems and minerals. Recognized for his expertise in the crystal structure of minerals and his many contributions to the knowledge of pegmatite mineralogy, he is probably best known for his work on multiple editions of *Dana’s Manual of Mineralogy*, which is universally regarded as the most complete and important book on the science of mineralogy of the twentieth century.

Professor of Mineralogy, *Emeritus*, at Harvard, Hurlbut died at his home in Lexington, Massachusetts, on September 1, 2005, at the age of 99. Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, on June 30, 1906, Hurlbut was the son of Cornelius S. and Marion A. Hurlbut. He graduated with a B.A. from Antioch College in 1929 and with his A.M. and Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1931 and 1933, respectively. Hurlbut trained under the Harvard professor Esper S. Larsen and wrote his dissertation on the Bonsall tonalite occurring in San Diego County, California. Hurlbut joined the faculty at Harvard in 1932 as a petrologist. However, in 1934 his focus turned to mineralogy after he was enlisted by then Mineralogical Museum Curator and Professor of Mineralogy Charles Palache to assist in teaching Harvard’s introductory mineralogy course. After Palache retired in 1940, Hurlbut took over teaching this course, which he continued to teach until retirement in 1972. In 1954, he became full Professor of Mineralogy. Hurlbut served as chair of Harvard’s Department of Mineralogy and Petrology from 1949 to 1960 and as a Visiting Professor at Boston College from 1974 to 1977. Hurlbut married Anne Dawson in 1932 and they had three children, Neil, Patricia (Patty), and Marcus (Marc), before she passed away in 1954. He married his second wife, Margaret Richards Carver, in 1956 and they spent nearly half a century together before she predeceased him in 2003. He is survived by Patty and Marc and by six grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Hurlbut was a prolific writer who contributed to public and scientific knowledge about

gems and minerals throughout his life. In 1941, he was responsible for a completely rewritten and updated fifteenth edition of *Dana's Manual of Mineralogy*. He authored three more updated editions in 1952, 1959, and 1971, and, even after retirement, he co-authored with Cornelis Klein another three updated editions, in 1977, 1985, and 1993. Hurlbut did not confine his written contributions to strictly scientific tomes. In 1968, he authored *Minerals and Man*, a wonderfully picture-laden book for the general public, which the American Library Association chose in 1969 as one of its annual most notable books. In this more accessible vein, Hurlbut also revised Dana's *Minerals and How to Study Them*, largely rewriting the text alone in 1949 and updating it with W. Edwin Sharp in 1998.

Hurlbut had demonstrated an interest in gems as early as the 1940s, when he joined the Gemological Institute of America's Educational Advisory Board. After retirement, his research focus and interest moved firmly from mineralogy to gemology and he started to publish on the subject. In 1979, he co-authored (with George Switzer) the book *Gemology*, which essentially stands as the first textbook on the subject. He co-authored the second edition of this text with Robert Kammerling, which was published in 1991. Hurlbut stayed involved with gemological research right up through his 100th year, serving on the editorial board of *Gems and Gemology*, the quarterly journal of the Gemological Institute of America, from 1981 until his death in 2005.

Hurlbut's work in mineralogy, gemology, and education garnered him many honors and distinctions throughout his career. One of the earliest and most significant was having a mineral species named in after him. The mineral hurlbutite, a calcium beryllium phosphate new to science, was discovered at the Chandlers Mill Quarry in Newport, Sullivan County, New Hampshire, and named in 1952 by the contemporary mineralogist Mary Mrose to recognize Hurlbut's contributions to mineralogy. In 1954, he was named a John Simon Guggenheim Fellow for Earth Science. Hurlbut was also a longtime member of Geological Society of America and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He served as the secretary of the Mineralogical Society of America (1945–1958) and later its president (1963). In 1966, the National Association of Geoscience Teachers presented Hurlbut with the Neil Miner Award, which recognizes individuals “for exceptional contributions to the stimulation of interest in the Earth sciences.” In 1993, he was awarded the Carnegie Mineralogical Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the field of mineralogy by individuals or institutions.

Among Hurlbut's lesser-known accomplishments were his pursuits of tennis, which he continued well into his nineties, and of poetry—he might be unique as a poet of the science of crystallography! As we remember this much-loved and respected man's noteworthy contributions to science, we shall end with one of his whimsical mineral-inspired compositions:

CRYSTAL PROBLEMS

When first I studied crystals
I didn't have the knack
Of three dimensional thinking:
This skill I seemed to lack.

I'd turn and twist the crystal round
In hope that I could see
At least one axis or a plane
Of crystal symmetry.

The prism, pinacoid and dome,
The rhombic pyramid
All looked the same to me,
No matter what I did.

But now I've studied long and hard,
And think I'm somewhat wise,
For in no length of time at all
The cube I recognize.

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Keutsch
Raquel Alonso-Perez
Charles Langmuir, Chair