

In Memoriam

Professor James R. Benbrook

Professor James Benbrook passed away on February 7, 2014 after a courageous battle with Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. The University community will remember Jim as an outstanding teacher, an excellent researcher, and a person devoted to serving the Department, College, and University. During his illustrious, 40-year career, he taught courses at all levels with the same enthusiasm and attention to detail. Many of the graduate students he mentored went on to have distinguished careers in their chosen fields. In recognition of his outstanding teaching, Jim won a University Teaching Excellence Award in 2008. As further testament to his teaching excellence, his classes were generally filled to room capacity. His students liked his teaching style and learned much from him. One of his most significant contributions to teaching was developing a course in electronic devices and their applications, a course he loved to teach and taught for over 30 years.

Jim served two three-year, highly successful terms as Chair of the Department of Physics and was Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee for many years. He also spent time as a member of the departmental personnel, executive, space, and shop committees for a number of years. Even when he was not contributing by serving on committees, he was always eager to work for the good of the Department in whatever way he could. Jim was a real Cougar fan, and he served as Faculty Representative to the National Collegiate Athletic Association and as chair of the University of Houston Athletic Advisory Board.

Jim was a member of the Space Physics Group, and his research spanned quite a variety of topics. Using high-altitude balloon or rocket flights, he studied cosmic ray muon intensity and angular distribution, both above ground and underground. He investigated electric fields at high altitude due to thunderstorms and the electromagnetic radiation spectrum of lightning at high altitudes. Jim was an electronics expert *par excellence*, having responsibility for development of analysis software for all experiments, as well as electronics design, fabrication, and calibration for all flight hardware and ground station support equipment, including digitization hardware for computer interface. He was a super-tech as well as an excellent physicist.

Jim was much more than a valued colleague to us. He was a dear friend, and he will be sorely missed.