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

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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.

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.
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.

REFERENCES

