It is with deep regret that we report the sad demise of Professor Pettijohn, the great sedimentologist and Honorary Fellow of the Society. Although he passed away on 23 April 1999, the Society came to know of this fact only last month. It is a serious lapse on our part not to have taken notice of the passing away of so eminent a geologist and paying our tribute. Generations of Indian geology students have derived inspiration from reading his famous book on Sedimentary Rocks which first appeared in 1949.

Prof. Pettijohn visited India in 1958 and gave a series of lectures on sedimentology at the invitation of the Geological Survey of India. There are very few who remember of this early visit. When the Society decided to elect him as an Honorary Fellow as a mark of its high appreciation of his contribution to our knowledge of geology, Prof. Pettijohn recalled this early visit and the hospitality and generosity of Indian geologists who took him round some of the Precambrian terrains of India. He had hoped to make another visit but time slipped away without providing him another opportunity to visit India. Shri. S.M. Mathur of the Geological Survey recalls taking Pettijohn on a field trip to the Son valley and his identification of Auden's 'cryptozooon' as stromatolite.

In the present day development of geology with its array of complex analytical equipment, computers and the like, Prof. Pettijohn again and again reminded us that we should always return to the outcrops to continue and renew our conversation with the earth. Fieldwork and mapping, he repeated more than once, should remain the major foundation of our science. He said 'it is from the field we got our problems and to the field we must return to check their solution'. The field according to him 'was the proper place to teach geology – any kind of geology' and that stratigraphy and mapping was at the heart of all
geology. The petrographic microscope he considered as powerful enough tool to extract valuable details from thin-sections of rocks.

He watched with regret stratigraphers, palaeontologists and mineralogists being replaced in university geology departments by isotope chemists, spectroscopists, geochemists and the like. Field courses and many other traditional subjects were dropped. According to him 'They became like a doughnut – a lot of exotic field around the periphery and nothing in the middle'.

Receiving the prestigious Penrose Medal of the Geological Society of America in 1975, he said:

I am after all a geologist, not a physicist or chemist. My prime concern is rocks, for these are the stuff of which the earth is made. I have to ask myself, therefore, what does this paper tell me about the outcrop in front of me? All too often the answer is not much. Have we in our enthusiasm for the new methods of data collecting forgotten our primary goal? Is it that we have expensive tools looking for a problem rather than a problem requiring an answer by whatever means that are appropriate? The older generation among us are now training a new generation without that field background, without which one cannot distinguish the fundamental from the trivial – the meaningful from the meaningless.

Many of the modern day generation of earth scientists who have discarded field work as not much of consequence are likely to ignore and belittle the wise counsel of the veteran geologist who remained unrepentant till the very end and wished that direct observation in the field and mapping should remain the major foundations for our science. He wrote his autobiography and gave the title – 'Memories of an Unrepentant Field Geologist'. Whatever be the assessment of the earth scientists of the present day, no one will deny that Pettijohn was one of the great masters of geological science who influenced a generation of geologists in the study of sedimentary rocks.

Geological Society of India pays homage to this great savant known throughout the world as the father of Sedimentary Petrology.

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