IN MEMORIAM

MERRITT RANDOLPH HELFERRICH

The members of the Thirty-First Alaska State Legislature honor the life and accomplishments of Merritt Randolph Helferrich. Born in Hartford, Connecticut, he grew up in Bath, Pennsylvania and Marlborough, Connecticut. As a child and as a young man, he traveled overseas with his family on charitable missions. At home an array of guests from around the globe were welcomed to the dinner table and living room.

Merritt was a 61-year resident of Alaska. But in truth, Merritt was a citizen of the world. He was a restless spirit and intellect who had no patience for the parochial and provincial. He served with distinction as a research administrator at the University of Alaska’s Geophysical Institute, having a career as a resource and mentor that has yet to be matched. His childhood and professional experiences were expressions of a life marked by global exploration, community engagement and cultural innovations.

An explorer at heart, Merritt spent a year in Denmark learning to silversmith. He hiked the Coast-to-Coast trail in England, the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain and the Milford Track in New Zealand. Merritt and his partner made the first hot air balloon flight ever from Utqiaġvik. Merritt spent time on T-3 Fletchers Ice Island, Banks Island, at Resolute, Inuvik, a variety of the Antarctic stations as well as participating in the first commercial transit of the Northwest Passage aboard the SS Manhattan. A Fellow of the Explorers Club, “Helfferich Glacier” is named in his honor.

While he lived globally, Merritt acted locally. A founder of Fairbanks Women in Crisis, Counseling and Assistance, he also served on the Alaska Women’s Commission, as a credit union President and initiated the Fairbanks North Star Borough Chena Riverfront Commission, serving 10 years as its chair. Through Innovation Consulting, he propelled public-private partnerships focusing on science and public policy and tribally controlled education in Alaska. His “Humor in the Workplace” workshops were a must-attend at professional development conferences across the United States.

Merritt is survived by his beloved wife of 33 years, April Evalyn Crosby, daughters Deidre Alida Helfferich and Tryntje Bronwyn Helfferich, sisters Deborah Helfferich Scranton, Alice Helfferich Orsini and Honora Helfferich Seidler.

The members of the Thirty-First Alaska State Legislature extend sincere condolences to the family and many friends, colleagues and admirers of Merritt Helferrich. His passing leaves a void in the social and cultural life of Alaska, yet his legacy is one that our state can treasure for decades to come.