

ADVERTISING



Dip into the area's talented and diverse labor pool.



[Find out how.](#)

The Seattle Times Company

NWclassifieds | NWsource | seattletimes.com



LOCAL NEWS

Home delivery
Contact us
Site map

Traffic | Weather | Your account

Movies | Restaurants | Today's events

Tuesday, July 26, 2005 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

UW professor's expertise was clouds

By **Sandi Doughton**
Seattle Times staff reporter

By all accounts, Peter Hobbs didn't often merge his fascination for storm clouds with his passion for opera — particularly Wagner. But if he had, it's easy to imagine the scene: the bespectacled University of Washington professor in his research plane, flying through a maelstrom while "Ride of the Valkyries" plays in the background.

In more than 40 years at the UW, Dr. Hobbs embarked on many scientific adventures worthy of a dramatic musical score.

He was the first to use a research aircraft to study the plume of an erupting volcano, heading for Mount St. Helens within a few hours of its 1980 explosion. He and his crew flew through the pitch-black smoke from burning Kuwaiti oil fields after the first Gulf War. Stomach-churning forays into thunderstorms and cyclones were the bread and butter of his work to understand how rain and snow form inside clouds.

As Dr. Hobbs battled pancreatic cancer, he finished a new edition of the nation's top meteorology textbook and continued mining data from his final research program: an effort to better understand the way storms and mountains interact to give the Northwest its characteristic winter weather.

Dr. Hobbs died yesterday at his home in Beaux Arts, a community near Bellevue on the shore of Lake Washington. He was 69.

His discoveries about ice crystals in clouds are a cornerstone of modern weather-prediction models, said UW meteorologist Cliff Mass, a former student of Hobbs' and his longtime running partner. Dr. Hobbs also studied the role of aerosol pollutants in dampening the effects of global warming. His measurements in Kuwait quelled fears that smoke from the oil fields might change the planet's climate.

Just last year, he reported the largest raindrops on record: nearly-grape-sized globules over Brazil and Marshall Islands.

"Peter was undoubtedly the leading airborne meteorologist of his generation," Mass said. "His range of subjects was amazing."

Born in London in 1936, Dr. Hobbs has said he moved to Seattle after his training because it is "the cloud capital of the world."



Dr. Peter Hobbs, leading airborne meteorologist

- [E-mail article](#)
- [Print view](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Most e-mailed](#)
- [Most read](#)
- [RSS](#)

Marketplace

[Jobs](#) | [Autos](#) | [Shopping](#)

[Homes](#) | [Rentals](#) | [Post an ad](#)

ADVERTISING

- Today
- Archive
- Advanced search
- Home
- Local**
- Eastside
- Snohomish Co.
- Politics
- Education
- Columnists
- Nicole Brodeur
- Danny Westneat
- Sherry Grindeland
- Inside The Times
- Here and Now
- Nation / World
- Business / Tech
- Editorials / Opinion
- Columnists
- Sports
- Entertainment
- Comics / Games
- Living
- Pacific Northwest Magazine
- Travel / Outdoors
- Real estate
- Obituaries
- Special reports
- Photojournalism
- Corrections
- Archive
- Alerts / E-mails
- Marketplace
- Jobs
- Autos
- Homes
- Rentals
- Shopping
- NWsource
- Personals
- Post an ad
- Services
- Your account
- Contact us

NWsource shopping

Local sales & deals
Search retail ads

Submit listings
Send us news tips
Seattle Times store
Advertise with us
RSS feeds
Wireless
Newspapers In Education
Home delivery

When he arrived in 1963, most meteorological research was conducted indoors, with cloud chambers and controlled environments. But Dr. Hobbs wanted a natural laboratory.

For several years, he and his students set up camp on the Blue Glacier, perpetually in the clouds 8,000 feet up Mount Olympus. Then he scrounged up his first aircraft: A World War II Douglas B-23 Dragon, once owned by Howard Hughes and used in movies.

An early project to boost rainfall in Eastern Washington by seeding clouds as they passed over the Cascade Mountains didn't pan out. But Dr. Hobbs became a master at acquiring aircraft and patching together federal grants to keep his projects going, said UW climate researcher John M. Wallace. His persistence and prestige helped propel the UW's Atmospheric Sciences Department to the top ranks worldwide, Wallace said.

Dr. Hobbs is survived by Sylvia, his wife of 42 years; sons Stephen, Julian and Rowland; three grandchildren; his mother; and three siblings.

Sandi Doughton: 206-464-2491 or sdoughton@seattletimes.com

Copyright © 2005 The Seattle Times Company

 [E-mail this article](#)

 [Print this article](#)

 [Search archive](#)



Get home delivery for \$1.95 per week

[More local news headlines...](#)

ADVERTISING

Colorado Technical University Online
TAKE YOUR CAREER TO NEW HEIGHTS

**Graduate in 15 Months;
CTU Online makes it possible**

Click anywhere on this ad to view program information.

Undergraduate Programs

- Bachelor's (BSBA) in Information Technology
- Bachelor's (BSBA) in Management
- Bachelor's (BSBA) in Human Resource Management
- Bachelor's (BSBA) in Marketing
- Bachelor's (BSCJ) in Criminal Justice

Graduate Programs

- Executive Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master's (MSM) in Information Systems Security
- Master's (MSM) in Information Technology Management
- Master's (MSM) in Project Management

LEARN MORE

ADVERTISING

DeVry University
Earn a degree from an accredited university.

Associate Degree

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Today's featured ads
Strands Home Furnishings: 2 free lamps offer!

Fall sale at Swansons Nursery: up to 50% off

Kenwanda Golf Course: \$10 after 5 pm daily

More ads

Don't miss it

Win a \$250 back-to-school shopping spree

Enter to win

Save up to 70% off ski and snowboard equipment this weekend at SkiBonkers.

Get extra savings at the Seattle Premium Outlets Labor Day Sale.

[Shopping events](#)

[Create sale alert e-mails](#)

[Store guides](#)

[Grocery coupons](#)

[Travel deals](#)

Looking for a car?

[seattletimes.com home](#)

[Home delivery](#) | [RSS feeds](#) | [Low-graphic](#) | [Search archive](#)

[Site map](#) | webmaster@seattletimes.com | [Contact us](#) | [Privacy statement](#) | [Terms of service](#)
[NWclassifieds](#) | [NWsource](#) | [Advertise with us](#) | [The Seattle Times Company](#)

Copyright © 2005 The Seattle Times Company

[↑ Back to top](#)