

John Rold (1927–2012)

State Geologist of Colorado

by Lee Gerhard

Rarely has so honest and forthright a man had such a positive influence on so many.

Born a rancher's son in the depths of the Great Depression, John grew up surrounded by wildlife amidst rural ambience and heavy work near Salida, Colorado. Losing his father at an early age, John shouldered the responsibilities of being the man around the house.

After World War II, John continued his education at the University of Colorado. He accidentally took a course in geology and enjoyed it, eventually earning a master's degree. As a lifelong outdoorsman, he succumbed to the lure of a profession that offered challenging work in the wilds of the earth.

John was appointed the State Geologist of Colorado in 1969, rebuilding a geological survey after a 30-year hiatus. John Rold thrived on professional details. His standards for his Survey were high, and he insisted that those who opposed his conclusions be equally detailed, or they lost.

When John concluded that a proposed development was too risky, no one ever successfully argued against his conclusion. His honesty did not necessarily win friends and caused much legislative trouble for the Colorado Geological Survey, but it did earn him the respect of all. Because of John, lives and property were spared inevitable disaster.

Recognition by his peers with the highest award of the American Institute of Professional Geologists (of which he had been president), the Ben Parker Medal, was a fitting climax to a career of public service, a triumph for honesty, competence, and high ethics.

John's other awards are too numerous to list but include the AIPG John T. Galey Sr. and Honorary Membership awards, the AAPG Public Service and Honorary Membership awards, and the Rocky Mountain Association of Geologist's Distinguished Service to Earth Science award.

Those who knew John will always picture him with his Stetson, jeans, boots, and pipe...the original cowboy from Salida. We miss him greatly.



*Left to Right: Colorado State Geologists
Vince Matthews, Vicki Cowart, and John Rold*