

WILLIAM D. HARDEMAN

1915-1987

William D. Hardeman, State Geologist of Tennessee from 1952 until 1969, died suddenly on April 22, at his lake-side home in Old Hickory, Tennessee. He was 72.

Bill Hardeman was a lifelong resident of the Nashville area. He was born on March 4, 1915, in historic Traveler's Rest, the home built in 1799 by his maternal great, great grandfather, Judge John Overton. The house, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is now a museum.

Bill was educated in Nashville area schools, attending Robertson Academy and the old Wallace Preparatory School. He took his bachelor's degree in geology from Vanderbilt University, where he was captain of the baseball team, in 1937.

After his graduation he spent a field season as assistant to Dr. W. B. Jewell, then head of the Vanderbilt Geology Department, doing mineral exploration work in Newfoundland.

According to Bill this consisted mostly of rowing a dory around the rugged coastline and up the rivers in an area then virtually uninhabited and road less, and he attributed much of his later prowess as a long-ball-hitting golfer to the powerful shoulder and arm muscles he developed that summer. Another summer was spent traveling through Europe, hiking and staying in youth hostels in Germany, where he received an ominous foretaste of future trouble by observing at first hand the activities of the Hitler Youth and other Nazi organizations.

Resuming his education, Bill entered graduate school at Vanderbilt, where he took his Master's degree in 1941. His thesis was on insoluble residues from Silurian rocks of Central Tennessee, a technique then much in vogue as a correlation tool and adjunct to regional stratigraphy.

Following his second graduation from Vanderbilt, Bill went to work for the Tennessee Division of Geology, but soon left to take a job with the U.S. Corps of Engineers in what would now be called engineering geology, connected with their dam construction projects.

With U.S. entry in World War II in 1941, Bill's professional career, like so many others, was laid aside for "the duration." Entering the Navy, he was trained as an aerial navigator, commissioned, and spent the balance of the war as navigator on Naval Air Transport Service flights. Many of these were trans-Atlantic flights to North Africa and Europe, and he often had occasion to fly in and out of the Gander, Newfoundland air base, thus overflying many times the terrain he had negotiated so laboriously by rowboat years before.

After the end of the war, Bill was honorably discharged from the Navy and in 1946 he returned to the Tennessee Division of Geology. In that same year he met and married the former Helene Barry Groves, at that time also a State employee. They had four children, two sons and two daughters, and twelve grandchildren.

In 1952 Bill was appointed Director of the Division of Geology and State Geologist, a position that he filled with distinction for 17 years. Among the major accomplishments during his tenure were the publication in 1959 of a state mineral resources map, the beginning in 1960 of a geologic mapping program that resulted in publication of over 200 1:24,000-scale 7.5-minute geologic quadrangle maps, each accompanied by a booklet summarizing its mineral resources, and the publication in 1966 of a new geologic map of Tennessee at the 1:250,000 scale.

In 1969, he left the Division of Geology to become Chief of the Geological Branch of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Although he held this position for only 16 months, he left his mark by coordinating the production and publication of a mineral resource map for the Tennessee Valley region during that period.

On October 16, 1970 he left T.V.A. and Knoxville to return to the Nashville area and a position as Tennessee liaison officer for the U.S. Bureau of Mines. He held this position until the summer of 1980, when he retired from government service. From that time until his death, he remained active as a consultant on mineral resources and oil and gas.

Bill was not a "joiner", but at various times he was active in the GSA, AAPG, AIMME, and the Tennessee Academy of Science. He was a charter member of the American Institute of Professional Geologists and maintained a keen interest in professional affairs right up to the end of his life. He did not enjoy the big meeting or the public forum, preferring always to work quietly but effectively behind the scenes. Although most of his professional career was in administrative positions, his true interests were in economic geology and petroleum geology. Despite this he was a very effective administrator, greatly respected by his staff and possessed of a cool and wily persistence in searching out the open avenues of approach to the political hierarchy above the Division level in State government and making good use of them in furthering the best interests of the Division of Geology and of his staff. He stood as an immovable barrier between his people and political skullduggery of all kinds, and by so doing perpetuated a tradition of professional integrity in the affairs of the Division that persists to this day.

In his latter years, Bill was often heard to mutter darkly about how "they" - the bureaucrats, the accountants and auditors, and the politicians - were taking over the world, making it difficult, by their insistence on petty rules and procedures, to run a state geological survey in an efficient and effective manner. It is ironic, therefore, to suggest that it is in the area of dealing with such general nuisances that he made the contribution for which he will be most fondly remembered by those of us who worked for him. The State of Tennessee and the geological profession have lost a true friend. He will be greatly missed.

-E.T. Luther