



ALVIN J. THOMPSON  
1903-1990

Alvin J. (Lefty) Thompson was a member of the Association of American State Geologists, as Director of the New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, from 1957 to 1968. During his years of leadership, he developed the metallurgical and chemical laboratories at NMBM&MR and was an active mineral industry leader, professor, and metallurgical researcher. In the 1962-1964 Annual Report of NMBM&MR, he wrote "...New Mexico must actively contribute to the promotion of its mineral resources and take the lead in research and development work if it is to attract proper and prudent growth. At the same time the State has a primary obligation to see that mineral development and utilization proceed with due regard to the best conservation practices..." Lefty was a metallurgist, but he strongly supported a broad mineral-resources and geologic program for New Mexico.

Mr. Thompson was born July 7, 1903 in Lake City, Iowa, and passed away April 5, 1990. He is survived by his wife, Betty S. Thompson, and son, Richard B. Thompson, as well as grandson, Prescott Alvin Thompson.

Lefty received his B.S. in 1927 and M.S. in 1933 from the University of Arizona and was honored by the University with an Award of Merit in 1960. He had honorary memberships in Phi Kappa Phi (scholastic), Delta Phi Sigma (mathematics), and Sigma Delta Psi (athletic).

He worked for United Verde Mining Company, Phelps Dodge Copper Company, Davis Dunkirk Mines, and Hillside Mining Company in Arizona. During World War II, he did research work at the Batelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio, including service on the War Metallurgy Committee of the National Academy of Science, and the development of new

methods of extracting metals from many types of ores. He taught for five years at the University of Arizona, and for eleven years at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, serving as chairman of the mining and metallurgy department. From 1957 to 1968 he was Director of the New Mexico Bureau of Mines & Mineral Resources, retiring in 1968.

Mr. Thompson was a registered professional engineer in New Mexico and Arizona and had been a member of the American Chemical Society, Society of Professional Engineers, American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, and the Association of American State Geologists. He was a long-time member of the New Mexico Mining Association, served as its president, and was for many years on the Board of Directors, being Emeritus Director after his retirement. He helped establish and was past chairman of the Central New Mexico Section of AIME, and chairman of the New Mexico Mining Safety Advisory Committee.

Lefty was an avid mineral collector and his specimens include some magnificent pieces of smithsonite from the world-famous Kelly Mine in the Magdalena Mining District in central New Mexico. He oversaw the transfer of New Mexico Tech's Mineral Museum from the basement of Brown Hall, the administration building, to four large bays in the new (in 1958) wing of Workman Center, where it became the responsibility of NMBM&MR. With his encouragement, the Mineral Museum has grown to contain one of the more significant collections in the Southwest. As Director of NMBM&MR, he was fiscally conservative, as required by the times, but encouraged and supported new ideas and new projects which helped development of the State's mineral resources. In addition to overseeing projects, he personally wrote some 17 published reports including three on silver, lead, and zinc deposits of New Mexico.

As evidenced by his membership in Sigma Delta Psi, Lefty was an active athlete. During the middle 60's he was the most skilled member of a doubles handball team that twice won the New Mexico Tech campus championship, playing against tall vigorous juniors and seniors. After his retirement in 1968, he had considerably more time to play tennis, which he did almost every morning, often with his wife Betty, and some of his last active moments were on the tennis court. An Alvin J. Thompson Scholarship Fund has been established at New Mexico Tech in his honor.

-Frank E. Kottowski

New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources