

## Memorial to Olin Grogan Bell 1893—1970

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Olin G. Bell, a highly respected petroleum geologist who, early in his career, was a university instructor and worked for the Pennsylvania and Florida Geological Surveys, died July 31, 1970, at his home in Houston, Texas, at the age of 76. He had been a member of The Geological Society of America since 1954 and a Fellow since March, 1968.

Olin Bell was born August 26, 1893, in Lone Oak, Texas. Following World War I, in which he served with distinction, he completed studies at the University of Oklahoma, receiving a bachelor's degree in geology in 1920. That same year he began graduate work at Cornell University, where he also served as an instructor. During the early 1920s he worked with the Pennsylvania Geological Survey and the Florida Geological Survey, and had a short consulting assignment for the Standard Oil Company of Venezuela. On July 1, 1925, he joined Humble Oil and Refining Company as a geologist.

Shortly after his employment with Humble, Bell was made a part of a Mexican venture into which the company entered and became an officer and General Manager of *Compañía Petroleos Tamaulipas, S.A.*, which operated in Mexico for several years as an affiliate of Humble. After he returned to Humble from his Mexican experiences, he had many other assignments. In the Confidential Evaluation for Fellowship, prepared by Edgar W. Owen for GSA in February, 1968, a good description of Bell's activities was set out, and is quoted herewith:

Mr. Bell did a great deal of pioneer geological work in southwest Texas and northern Mexico from 1925 to about 1936. Although the confidential nature of most of his work prevented publication, his reports were very influential in the exploration by the largest oil company in the region and had a big impact on industrial development. He was very generous in sharing his knowledge informally with geologists of other companies and the state and federal surveys.

He was a very successful administrator as Humble's division geologist for the Gulf Coast region during several years before World War II. From 1944 to 1958, he was in charge of recruitment of geological personnel for the largest industrial department in the United States and did an outstanding job.

Many young geologists received their initial field and laboratory experience under his guidance. He devoted a great deal of time and careful thought to their training and exerted profound influence on their careers.

During the depression, Mr. Bell probably did more than any other person in helping unemployed geologists find positions in the oil industry outside his own company.

He was very helpful to several university geological departments during his tour of duty as a recruiter from 1944 to 1958.

He made a distinguished record in military service and was largely responsible for training many geologists and other professional men to adapt their skills to specialties in military intelligence.

Always interested in military affairs, Bell offered his services to his country again in June, 1942, and served in World War II until May 22, 1944, in the U.S. Air Force. He entered the Air Force as a Major at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and attained the rank of Colonel before his discharge. He belonged to several military organizations, including the Air Force Association, the Air Reserve Association (elected President in May, 1947), the Reserve Officers Association, the American Legion, and the Society of Military Engineers.

Bell's main technical and scientific interest was in the science and practice of geology. He took great pride in the fact that he belonged to the geological profession. Although he was occupied much of his business life with corporate assignments, he found time to contribute some published reports which ranged from *A Report on the Clays of Florida* for the Florida Geological Survey in 1924, to *A Description of the Friendswood (Webster) Field, Harris County, Texas* in 1938. While his contributions to geologic literature were not extensive, each report and paper written by him was a distinct contribution to geological knowledge on the particular subject involved.

In addition to the affiliations already mentioned, Bell was a member of the following professional organizations: Houston Geological Society (Past President and Life Member), Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, Society of Exploration Geophysicists, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Geological Institute, American Association of Petroleum Geologists, American Petroleum Institute, Houston Engineers Club, American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, and Texas Society of Professional Engineers.

Olin Bell was a member of the Second Presbyterian Church in Houston, where he served as an Elder. He was a member of the Acacia Fraternity and Houston Lodge No. 1189 AF and AM. He was a devoted family man and is survived by his wife, Mrs. Willie C. Bell; his daughters, Mrs. E. A. Baumgartner of Beaumont, Texas, and Mrs. Margaret Thompson of Houston; his son, Alan C. Bell of Lafayette, Louisiana; three grandchildren; a brother, Mr. L. P. Bell, and two sisters, Mrs. Floyd Burriss and Mrs. Reubene Wood.

Shortly after Olin Bell's death, Mrs. Bell received a certificate signed by President Nixon, which has on it the following inscription:

The United States of America honors the memory of Olin G. Bell. This certificate is awarded by a grateful nation in recognition of devoted and selfless consecration to the service of our country in the armed forces of the United States.