

Memorial to Franklin Alton Wade 1903-1978

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The geological profession lost one of its more respected members on the morning of October 1, 1978. F. Alton Wade passed away after a rather lengthy series of illnesses which, however, did not diminish his interest in geology or reduce his professional work until very shortly before his death.

Al's career was neither routine nor uneventful by any conceivable standards. He was born in Akron, Ohio, on February 5, 1903, and he chose to major in chemistry at Kenyon College in Ohio. The fact that he received both the Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degrees at the same ceremony in 1926 provides a good example of his approach to most matters that confronted him: he excelled in what he considered to be important and tended to act on matters he considered to be of small importance only if necessity demanded it. In the case of the two degrees, he had concentrated on his study of chemistry to the extent that he had not met his undergraduate requirements in German until he had completed the academic work for his first graduate degree.

Having worked for a short period as an industrial research chemist, he enrolled in the Johns Hopkins University to obtain a doctoral degree in chemistry. During the years 1929-1931 he supported his studies by serving as an instructor of chemistry and geology at the University of Delaware. Al had minored in geology at Kenyon College, and his interest in that field eventually exceeded his interest in chemistry; he thus changed his major and started work on his new goal in geology. His extensive academic and professional background in chemistry provided an excellent basis for his studies in mineralogy and petrology. But his broad and intense interests in geology, which were expanded by field work and teaching assignments, led to professional competence in many other fields of geological specialization. He preferred not to be introduced as a specialist; he considered himself to be simply a geologist.

Al interrupted his academic studies to serve as a member of the second Antarctic expedition led by the late Admiral Richard E. Byrd. Even though he always told me he had only been a dog driver for the expedition, the field work he did while in Antarctica served as the basis for his doctoral dissertation. He accepted a position as instructor of geology at Miami University of Ohio in 1936, and completed his dissertation while teaching at that institution. The Johns Hopkins University awarded him the Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1937.

When Admiral Byrd organized his third expedition to Antarctica, Al was selected to be its chief scientist. He received academic leave from Miami University and established a practice he followed on his later expeditions: he took two students with him on the expedition, affording them invaluable field experience.

His return to Miami University provided only a short respite from work in the glacial environment. In World War II Al was assigned as the commanding officer of the Greenland Icecap Detachment, United States Army Air Corps. He made use of this opportunity to study the Greenland ice mass and make comparisons between it and that portion of Antarctica which he had previously explored.

Al returned to Miami University in 1946. Many of us had the privilege of attending his classes; I had the additional good fortune of having him supervise my work for the Master of Science degree. During that period he expanded the geology department by establishing the field program in Wyoming, an operation that has been maintained since that time.

Al's widely recognized abilities in many fields led to another interruption of his academic career. He was selected to be one member of a small team of civilian specialists to act in an advisory capacity to General Douglas MacArthur and his staff in the postwar reconstruction of Japan. The Korean conflict terminated this plan, and Al served in 1950–1951 as chief of the Operations Analysis Office, United States Air Force, in Japan and Korea. His was a civilian position, but he worked closely with the military leaders who conducted the military operations.

He returned once more to Miami University and resumed his professional duties. In 1954 he was asked to head the Department of Geology at Texas Technological College, and he took final leave from Miami University. His teaching and administrative work in this new assignment produced a dynamic program that graduated many geologists who are now engaged in rewarding careers. He had the misfortune of being the department's administrator when the colossal "geological depression" of the late 1950s occurred. It is to the credit of that institution's president, E. N. Jones, and its dean, Robert C. Goodwin, that the drastic reduction in no way affected Al's administrative efforts, and that they continued to support his work. During this period Al applied to the National Science Foundation for funds to establish a new program of Antarctic research, and he once more took leave from the campus to engage in polar studies.

There is no doubt in my mind that his return to Antarctica led to his decision to retire as head of the geology department at Texas Technological College (officially renamed Texas Tech University in 1961). Even though it was evident that a new period of prosperity for the department was well advanced, Al had lost all desire to return to the administrative duties which had never provided him any real pleasure. For Al, the paper work and meetings were a waste of the time he could have spent in teaching and research. He resigned as head of the department in 1964, but continued to serve as a professor until his retirement from the department in 1973. He conducted five expeditions to Antarctica while teaching at Texas Tech University, did both research and consulting work in the space program, and served as the director of the Antarctic Research Center at the Museum of Texas Tech University. His last major project was as chairman of the Antarctic section of the Map Committee, Circum-Pacific Council for Energy and Mineral Resources.

It is a pleasure to note that his work did not go without significant recognition within his lifetime. The Congress of the United States awarded him two special congressional medals for his work on the Byrd expeditions; the United States Air Force granted him the Meritorious Civilian Service Award in 1952 for his service in the Korean conflict; he was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America as well as a highly regarded member of many other national and international scientific societies; Texas Tech University named him a Horn Professor, a position reserved for faculty members who have made outstanding contributions in their fields, and gave him the

rank of professor emeritus upon his retirement. He served as the president of the Polar Society and in 1977 was awarded the Bellingshausen-Lazarev Medal by the Soviet Academy of Sciences; this honor has been bestowed upon few citizens of the United States.

In many memorials it is merely stated that the member is survived by his wife; in this case, as in many others, this is a gross injustice. Any geologist who spent the time Al Wade dedicated to field work and yet maintained a happy marriage for forty years had to be married to a woman worthy of extensive recognition in his memorial. Al met Jane Richards while he was an instructor and she a student at Miami University; they were married in 1938. Six polar expeditions, a prolonged tour of military duty in Greenland, and extended periods of teaching students field methods resulted in many periods of separation that required an unusual degree of understanding on Jane's part. This charming and gracious lady is worthy of special tribute in this memorial because of her many positive contributions to her husband's career. She made many sacrifices, accepting the adverse experiences with an understanding few wives have displayed. Al's career was based on a wonderful partnership; his partner and her many contributions should be recognized.

Al Wade's place in history will be that of an explorer and scientist, a position that is documented in many places, including the national *Congressional Record*. His students will always believe that he made his greatest contributions to the science in the classrooms and laboratories. To those who knew him well he will be remembered as an outstanding member of our society and as a sincere friend who had genuine respect for all persons other than those who demanded recognition by virtue of wealth, professional position, or social activities.

Even though his main interests were in the field of science, Al Wade enjoyed many aspects of life. He was an avid sports fan, read extensively in nonscientific fields, and with Jane conducted an active social life during the periods he was not in some remote field area. I would be remiss if I failed to note his great love for singing. He was a member of the church choir until shortly before his death, and no student who attended his field camp or field trips will ever forget his delight in joining them in songfests at a local tavern. Despite his intense interest in scientific work, this man never forgot the importance of being a pleasant companion to his professional and nonprofessional associates.

Franklin Alton Wade stood the ultimate tests of greatness. His professional colleagues considered his work in teaching and research to be of excellent quality and respected him for his high standards of professional integrity. But of greater importance is the fact that those who knew him well realize that the sadness resulting from his death is far exceeded by the pleasure of and gratitude for the opportunity of knowing a man of his professional stature and outstanding human qualities.

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