

Daniel N. Miller, Jr. (1924-2001)



Dr. Daniel N. Miller, Jr. (Dan to many of us) died on March 26, 2001, at his home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at the age of 76. Dan will be remembered not only as a respected geologist, educator, and public servant, but also as an untiring advocate for the petroleum and minerals industries of Wyoming and the nation. This calling not only won him the distinction of being named Wyoming's Mineral Industries Man of the Year in 1975, but ultimately carried him to a 1981 Presidential appointment as the Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Energy and Minerals. This appointment was perhaps the highlight of Dan's 46-year career.

Dan was born August 22, 1924, in St. Louis, Missouri. He was a veteran, serving in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II. Dan was multi-rated as a combat pilot and radar observer on B-29 aircraft in the Pacific Theater, where he flew 17 missions with decorations. After his discharge in 1946, Dan returned to the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy in Rolla where he earned both a BS (1949) and MS (1951) in geology. He married Esther Faye Howell on September 9, 1950.

While working for Stanolind Oil and Gas Co. on the Gulf Coast, he completed his Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin in 1955. After graduation, Dan worked for Pan American Petroleum Corp. (formerly Stanolind) in Billings, Montana, and Casper, Wyoming, as a senior exploration geologist. In 1960, he became senior exploration geologist for the Lion Oil Division of Monsanto Chemical Co. in Casper. In 1961, he joined Barlow and Haun, Inc. in Casper as a geological consultant.

In 1963, Dan took a new direction. He became Professor of Geology and Chairman of the geology department at Southern Illinois University. During his tenure, enrollment in the department more than doubled and new classroom, office, and laboratory facilities were acquired. In 1969, Dan left the university and began yet another distinguished part of his career, this time as a public servant at both state and national levels.

In Wyoming, Dan is perhaps best remembered as the State Geologist and Executive Director of the Wyoming State Geological Survey, positions he held between 1969 and 1981. While serving under both Republican and Democratic administrations, Dan and the Survey remained apolitical, providing factual, unbiased geologic and mineral information for all to use. It was during this time, that Dan represented both Wyoming and the American Association of State Geologists on many national boards, advisory councils and research committees for the National Academy of Science, U.S. Department of Energy, Interstate Oil Compact Commission, and the U.S. Department of the Interior.

This was a particularly important time in the history of the Wyoming State Geological Survey as it had just been separated from the University of Wyoming. It had not been a separate agency since it had been rolled into the University's geology department back in 1933. The new fledgling Survey consisted of Dan, one other geologist, a secretary, and a clerk-typist. Initially it was housed within the Geology Building. Later, it also occupied a Butler-style hut behind the Geology Building.

But Dan had taken over the Survey during boom times and he wisely capitalized on it. The oil and gas, coal, and uranium industries were all growing. Dan saw the need for more geological expertise within the Survey as well as a future need for much larger facilities in which to carry out its mission and goals.

Always looking at the big picture, Dan created the oil and gas, minerals, and coal sections of the Survey. In support of them and other needs of the State, he added the stratigraphy and environmental geology sections. He also added a technical editor and cartographers to assist in

the preparation of the Survey's increasing number of publications and thematic maps. The most notable Survey publications conceived by Dan were its large, statewide maps, which depicted Energy Resources, Mines and Minerals, Oil and Gas Fields, and Coal Fields. These maps were best sellers. Demand for these and other maps and publications of the Survey increased at a rapid pace. The Survey's *Tectonic map of the Overthrust Belt* was another best seller as the overthrust belt of western Wyoming was fast becoming a major play in the continental U.S. Dan also helped guide the development of that exploration and development as a member of the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, which is the State's oil and gas regulatory agency. In addition, discovery of gem-quality diamonds in southeastern Wyoming added a unique dimension as Dan orchestrated the leasing of State lands to aid in the exploration and development of these precious stones.

It was an exciting time for Dan and for those of us who worked for and with him. To use one of Dan's expressions, 'it was a time for blowin' and goin.'

Always looking ahead, in 1971, Dan saw the need for a separate building for the Survey. Supporting Dan's plans for a Survey building, 100 individuals each pledged \$100 toward the cost of the proposed building. Following the raising of this \$10,000 in private pledges, Dan succeeded in getting a \$920,000 legislative appropriation for its construction in 1974. The Survey's new 22,400-sq-foot building was completed in 1976. Without these new quarters, the Survey's expansion would have been stymied and its value to the State greatly diminished. By 1981, under Dan's able leadership, the staff had grown to 12 full-time employees as well as positions for another 14 part-time employees.

It was at this time that Dan's capable direction of the Survey and his advocacy for the petroleum and minerals industry opened a new opportunity for him. In 1981, he accepted a nomination for Assistant Secretary for Energy and Minerals in the Department of the Interior. In March, he moved to Washington D.C. in an acting capacity. President Ronald Reagan nominated Dan for the position and the Senate unanimously confirmed him in June of 1981.

This was where Dan felt he was needed at that moment. As Assistant Secretary, his responsibilities included "policy development and implementation involving research and technical programs and regulatory matters" for the U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Bureau of Mines, Office of Surface Mining, Office of Minerals Policy and Research Analysis, and the Minerals Management Service. Collectively, these agencies had more than 21,000 employees and a budget in excess of \$1 billion. Among his accomplishments at Interior were the reorganization and reform of the Office of Surface Mining; the development of a National Materials and Minerals Program Plan; oversight of the new Minerals Management Service; and the implementation of a new five-year leasing plan, which opened the entire Outer Continental Shelf area to oil and gas exploration. Dan left the Assistant Secretary's position in May 1983, having met the goals set before him.

Perhaps Dan's own words say it best as he departed Washington. "Washington, D.C. is not for me." He went on to say that as a lecturer, "I can continue to deliver my same old message across the country, that private exploration is the key to America's energy and mineral policies." In 1983, with those departing remarks, Dan started IWO Exploration, his own geologic consulting practice in Boise, Idaho. At the same time, Dan gave many talks on the professional lecture circuit and served as an adjunct professor and guest lecturer to the Department of Geology and Geophysics at Boise State University.

Then in 1989, Dan accepted the position of Director of the Anaconda Geological Documents Collection and Curator of International Archives of Economic Geology in the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. The Anaconda Collection alone consisted of 1.8 million documents. This, again, was a relatively new entity. It required imagination and effort as the collection and archives lacked adequate funding and facilities. Dan helped it through these early years leaving it much improved when he retired in 1992.

Perhaps "retired" is not the best choice of words for these latter years of Dan's career as Dan was never one to keep silent on important issues. Dan maintained professional and governmental contacts and remained as dedicated to the geological profession and to the support of the petroleum and minerals industry as he was at the beginning of his career.

Also, testifying to Dan's accomplishments are his many service awards and honors. In 1964, Dan received a Certificate of Merit from Southern Illinois University; in 1971, he was named as a Distinguished Lecturer for the American Association of Petroleum Geologists; in 1975, he was given Wyoming's Mineral Industries Man of the Year Award; in 1983, the Rocky Mountain Association of Petroleum Geologists awarded him the Distinguished Public Service to the Earth Sciences Award; in 1988, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists awarded Dan its Public Service Award; in 1993, the American Institute of Professional Geologists awarded him its distinguished Ben H. Parker Memorial Award; in 1994, it also awarded Dan its Martin Van Couvering Memorial Award; and in 1999, the University of Missouri-Rolla awarded Dan an Honorary Professional Degree for his achievements as a professional geologist and public servant.

In regard to professional organizations, Dan was President of the Illinois Geological Society in 1966-1967; an active member as well as the 1979-1980 President of the American Association of State Geologists; a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists and 1987 President of its Rocky Mountain Section; a charter member and active participant in the American Institute of Professional Geologists; and a long-time member of the Wyoming Geological Association, serving on various committees and giving numerous luncheon and conference talks. Dan also authored more than 45 scientific and technical reports.

I am personally proud to have worked for Dan and remember him as a friend and mentor. While Dan will be very much missed by many of us, he will be missed much more as the husband, father, and grandfather that he was to his family. I know they join us in this salute to a man that dedicated his professional life to ideals that he firmly believed in and that he championed throughout his career.

Dan is survived by his wife, Esther, of Chapel Hill, North Carolina; a son, Jeffrey S. Miller, of Denver, Colorado; a daughter, Gwendolyn Sarnoff, of New York, New York; and two grandchildren.

Gary B. Glass
August 21, 2001