

Edwin (Ned) Austin Noble (1922–2013)

State Geologist of North Dakota

by Edward Murphy



Edwin Austin Noble passed away on January 3, 2013, at the age of 90. Ned was born in Bethel, Vermont, on December 15, 1922, to Mary and John Noble. He had a lifelong interest in natural history and sports. While studying at Tufts University, he was called to serve in the Army's First Infantry Division ("The Big Red One") during World War II. He saw extensive combat and received two bronze stars and a silver star for valor on the battlefield while fighting in the Ardennes and the Rhineland.

After the war, he returned to Tufts, where he met his wife, Polly. He then studied at the University of New Mexico and received his Ph.D. in geology from the University of Wyoming. He explored for uranium on the Colorado Plateau for the Atomic Energy Commission and later in Argentina as a United Nations advisor to their uranium program.

Ned came to the North Dakota Geological Survey in 1965. He served as Assistant State Geologist under Wilson M. Laird from 1965 to 1969 and as State Geologist and Chairman of the Geology Department at the University of North Dakota from 1969 to 1977. Ned served as AASG Editor from 1971 until 1978. Six of the last seven State Geologists of North Dakota worked under Ned in one capacity or another.

After working for the NDGS, Ned went to work for the USGS in Reston, Virginia, and spent five years working in Pakistan on a USAID energy resource program. Ned was the quintessential member of the "Greatest Generation." He was friendly, thoughtful, a good listener, and a true gentleman. He will be missed by his former colleagues at the North Dakota Geological Survey as well as those at the USGS and USAID.

Ned is survived by Polly, his wife of 64 years; sons Bill (Colorado) and Jonathan (Tucson); daughter Mary (San Antonio); and granddaughter Andrea Stuen (Idaho).