

# New Mexico Geological Society

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## *Scenes from the past - II*

William L. Hiss

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*This is one of many related papers that were included in the 1975 NMGS Fall Field Conference Guidebook.*

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## **Annual NMGS Fall Field Conference Guidebooks**

Every fall since 1950, the New Mexico Geological Society (NMGS) has held an annual [Fall Field Conference](#) that explores some region of New Mexico (or surrounding states). Always well attended, these conferences provide a guidebook to participants. Besides detailed road logs, the guidebooks contain many well written, edited, and peer-reviewed geoscience papers. These books have set the national standard for geologic guidebooks and are an essential geologic reference for anyone working in or around New Mexico.

### **Free Downloads**

NMGS has decided to make peer-reviewed papers from our Fall Field Conference guidebooks available for free download. This is in keeping with our mission of promoting interest, research, and cooperation regarding geology in New Mexico. However, guidebook sales represent a significant proportion of our operating budget. Therefore, only *research papers* are available for download. *Road logs*, *mini-papers*, and other selected content are available only in print for recent guidebooks.

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# SCENES FROM THE PAST-II

by

WILLIAM L. HISS

Past President

New Mexico Geological Society

## INTRODUCTION

This is the second in what promises to be a continuing series of photographic histories of the New Mexico Geological Society and the geological exploration of New Mexico and adjacent areas. Photographs accompanied by a brief, but complete, narrative description containing the names of the people in the photos, the location and date on which the photo was taken, the geological features shown, and general background information are solicited from readers by the officers of the Geological Society. Photographs submitted will be copied and promptly returned to the owner.

## TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Participants in the second field conference sponsored by the New Mexico Geological Society registered at the Administration Building, University of New Mexico, the afternoon of October 11, 1951 and left early the next day for Grants and a tour of the south and west sides of the San Juan basin. The conferees were entertained with Kodachrome slides of the route scheduled for second and third days by W. B. Hoover at an informal dinner in Gallup at the end of the second day. The trip ended near Shiprock late on the third day.

Dr. Clay T. Smith, Professor of Geology, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, was both General Chairman of the field conference and Editor of the guidebook—an overwhelming task. Clay kindly contributed the following recollections of the second field conference.

"Field trip chairmen are the poorest people in the world to ask 'what happened?' When the time for the trip actually arrives one is convinced of several things: First, the guidebooks will never be printed and even if they manage to clear the printshop they'll never make it to the trip on time. Second, you've printed too many guidebooks and the society faces imminent bankruptcy. Third, there will be too many cars in the caravan and there are at least six stops where parking will be impossible. Fourth, seven stops in one day cannot be made since a full hour is required to stop, park, unload and load the caravan without a word being spoken on the outcrop and yet each scheduled stop is critical to an understanding of the geology—so which one do you omit? Fifth, whatever contingency you haven't thought of and prepared for will occur.

My recollections are somewhat clouded by the passage of time, but almost all of the above did happen on the second field conference. Only about 300 of the 1,500 guidebooks printed were ready when the field conference opened registration in Gallup. The Society had begun the preparations for the first field conference the previous year with a balance in the treasury of 67 cents and, although almost the entire stock of guidebooks (1,000) was sold by the time of the second field conference, the 1,500 ordered of a larger book with more illustrations had again placed us deep in the red. Few of us at that time could envision the potential of the San Juan basin

and the support it has afforded not only for the New Mexico Geological Society but also for the Four Corners group as well. There were more than 125 cars in the caravan and a simple calculation will indicate that this number requires at least one-half mile of eight-foot wide space for parking as well as creating horrendous traffic jams on U.S. 66, which was a narrow 2-lane highway in those days. The Society certainly must acknowledge superb cooperation from the New Mexico State Police and the Navajo Reservation Police in handling the traffic problems.

The names and events that come to mind? Big John Harshbarger trying to sell the Cow Springs Sandstone to the assembled multitude. Bill Hoover insisting that his Red Mesa formation was a more viable name than extending Summerville from the San Rafael Swell of Utah. Charley Read and the Todilto 'niche' going south from Fort Defiance. Where did the Navajo sandstone pinch out?, or did it? Would the uranium discoveries west of Grants really amount to anything?, and besides what could you do with ore in limestone? Could anyone ever really produce gas from those tight Cretaceous sands in the basin? It was fun to be in on the beginnings of such an unprecedented development as has occurred with oil, gas, coal, and uranium.

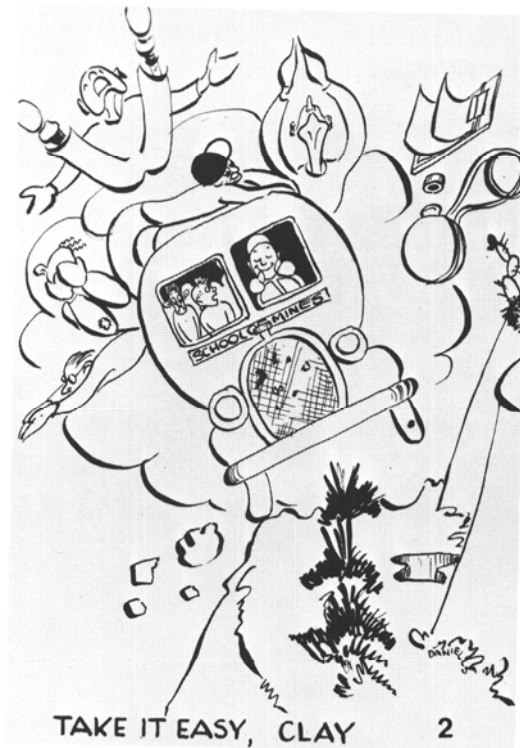
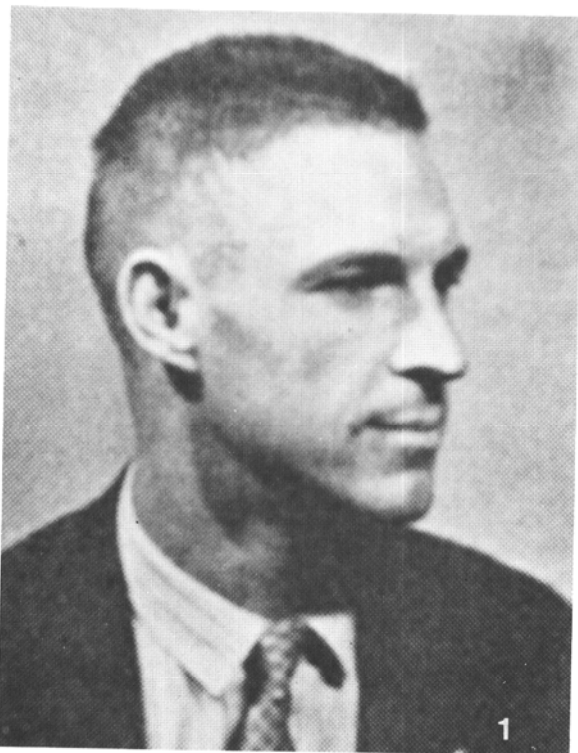
Roads and cars not being as dependable (?) as today's gas guzzlers, the Society always engaged the services of a tow truck to follow the caravan, make minor repairs, carry extra gas, oil, fan belts and the like, and generally provide insurance that major problems could not arise. However, the last stop of the third day was to be near sunset at the top of Lukuchukai Pass in the Chuska Mountains. It was felt that Shiprock to the east and the spectacular colors to the west would provide a fitting climax for the trip. As the caravan started up the grade the seventh or eighth car stalled on a narrow steep pitch from overheating. The road was so narrow and so jammed with the caravan that the tow truck at the rear of the line could not get to the stalled vehicle. Nearly two hours were lost before the line could proceed up the pass and, needless to say, the last stop was cancelled since it was pitch dark when the group reached the top. I remember standing at the pass and waving the caravan on as they topped out. The dust was so thick it's a wonder more cars simply didn't clog up and cease running. It was still a pretty sight to watch the lights running out across the basin from Red Rock to Highway 666.

Being chairman of a large field trip has always been a traumatic experience at best, but it has its good side too. One gets to work closely with a great bunch of people who are utterly selfless when it comes to serving the Society. And apparently that bonus never changes through the years. It's nice to be a geologist and even nicer to be able to depend upon your fellow geologists regardless of age, training or experience. Our profession may not be unique in this regard, but I haven't heard very many other professionals make similar statements."

## CREDITS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS AND CAPTIONS

1 and 2—taken from 1949 edition of "Porphyry" published by the students of the New Mexico School of Mines; 3 to 8—Sherman A. Wengerd, Professor of Geology, University of New Mexico; 9—Philip T. Hayes, Geologist, Branch of Coal Resources, U.S. Geological Survey, Denver; 10 to 12—William L. Chenoweth, Geologist, Energy Research and Development

Agency, Grand Junction; 13—C. V. Theis, U.S. Geological Survey, Albuquerque; 14 and 15—J. M. "Rex" Alcorn, Roswell; 16 and 18—loaned by Mrs. Kirk Bryan, Santa Fe, to J. L. Kunkler who assisted the author in obtaining the photographs; and 17—Mrs. F. T. McCann, Auburn, Alabama.



1. Somehow photographs of Clay Smith taken during the 2nd Field Conference have been lost in antiquity. This photograph was taken a few years earlier and was published in a 1949 issue of the "Porphyry."

3. Drs. J. Paul Fitzsimmons and Stuart A. Northrop, Professors, Stop 1, Ceja del Rio Puerco. Some people just never get old!

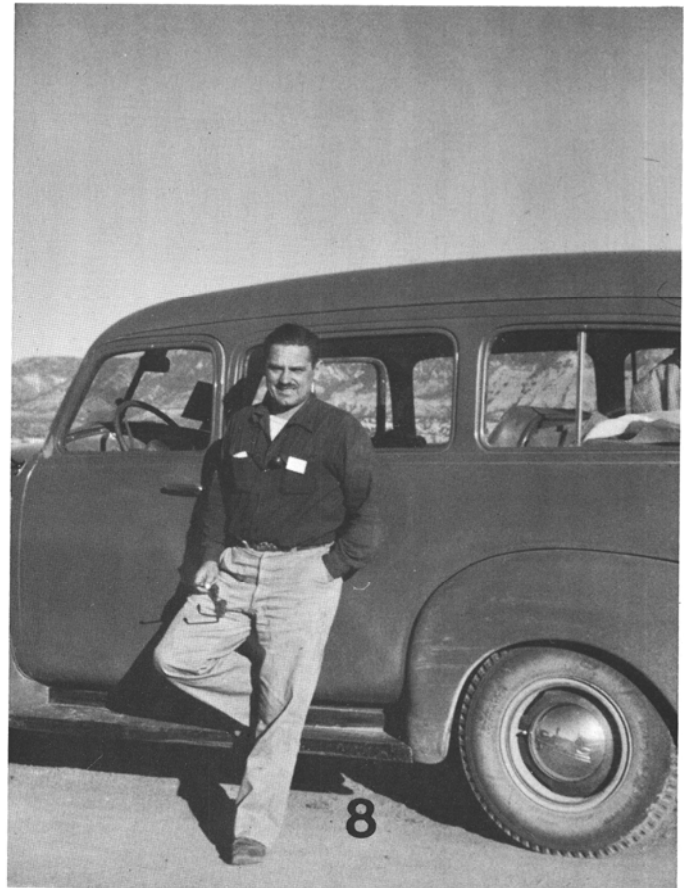
2. This cartoon also from the 1949 "Porphyry," seems to be an appropriate description of the 2nd Field Conference.

4. Drs. Art Huey, Rousseau Flower, and John Elliott Allen. This rakish trio, all active as geologists, seen at Stop 1, 2nd day, Bluewater Lake. Art is a Consultant in California; Rousseau is still naming parasites fossilized on megabugs after his enemies; and John is retired as Chairman of the Geology Department at Portland State University, Oregon.



5. Drs. Rudolph Edmunds and Stuart Jones at Hunters Point, Stop 1, 3rd day. Rudy was a geologic trainee with Sherm Wengerd at Mid-Continent Division, Shell Oil Company, Tulsa, in 1940. Later he was to become Exploration Manager for Sohio in Oklahoma City, and then Professor at Augustana College. He is presently Professor of Geology at California Lutheran College after several years as distinguished Dean of that college. Stu Jones, Ph.D. in Geology, California, became Professor of Geology at New Mexico School of Mines. Later took an M.D. degree and is now practicing in Palo Alto.

6. John Gill and Bob Lamsens, 3rd stop, 2nd day, near Mariana Lake. Both University of New Mexico graduates, John owns a hotel in Del Ray Beach, Florida, after a career with Stanolind. Bob, no longer with us, worked for GeoPhoto many years, and was a Marine aviator in World War II.

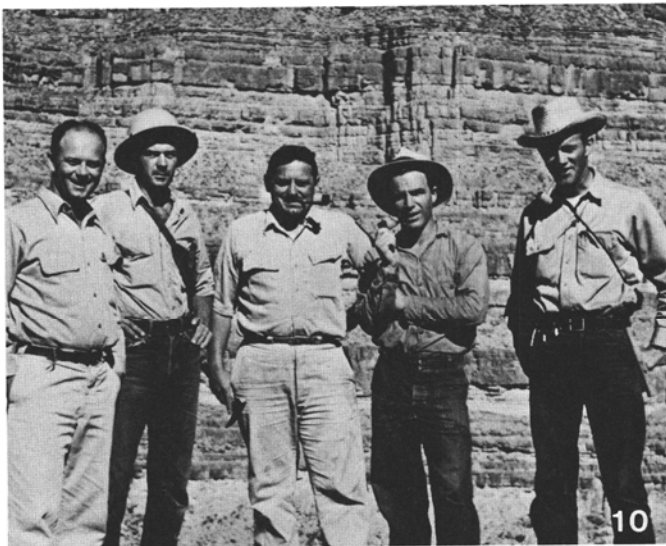
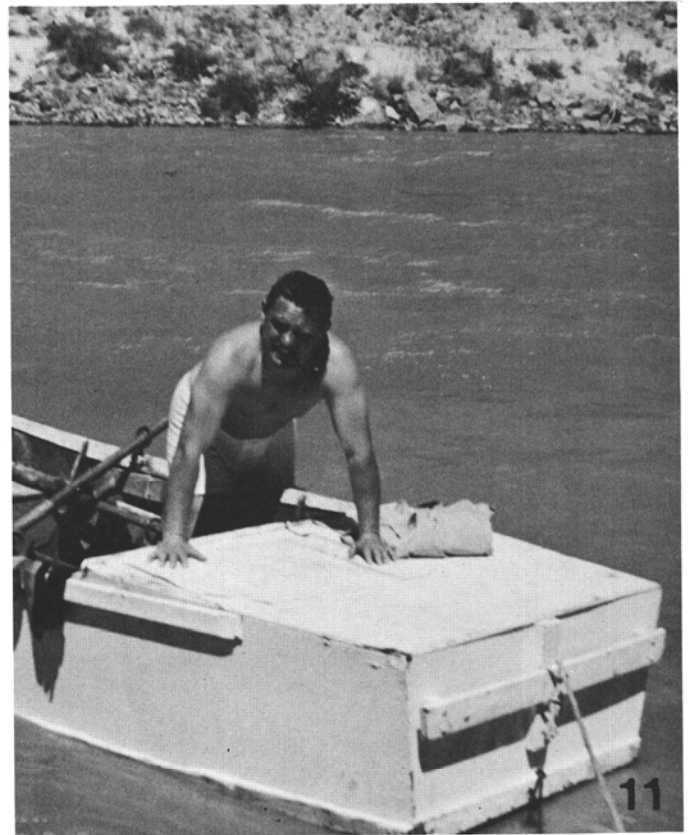


7. Julia Smith Berger hams it up with the late O. Robert Lamsens, Stop 1, 1st Day, Ceja del Rio Puerco. Julia, one of our early University of New Mexico girl graduates, is married to a well-known geologist.

8. Sherm Wengerd (other geologists look somewhat older!), with trusty GMC suburban west of Lukuchukai Mountain, Stop 4, 3rd day, just before the rugged road crosses over the pass. Little did we know, high at the north end of the Chuskas, that a major oil field would be found in an igneous sill, right under our wheels at Dineh-Bi-Keyah. George Hardin, Geologist for Kerr-McGee at the time, called it "An economic success, but a geologic failure!"

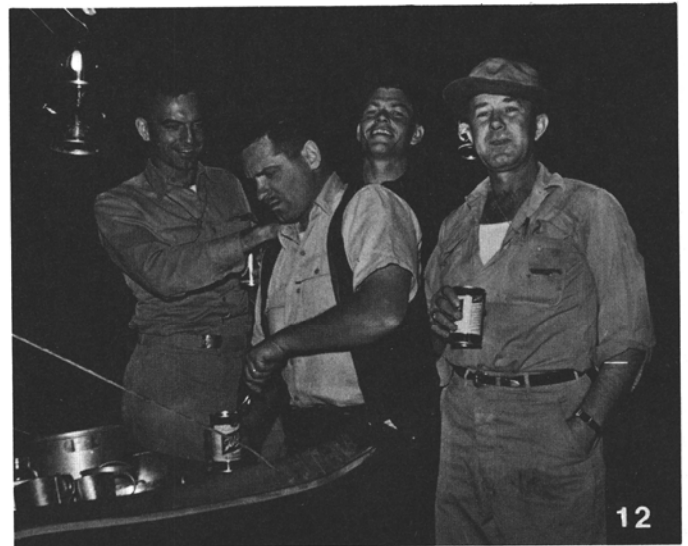


### THE LATE HOLOCENE



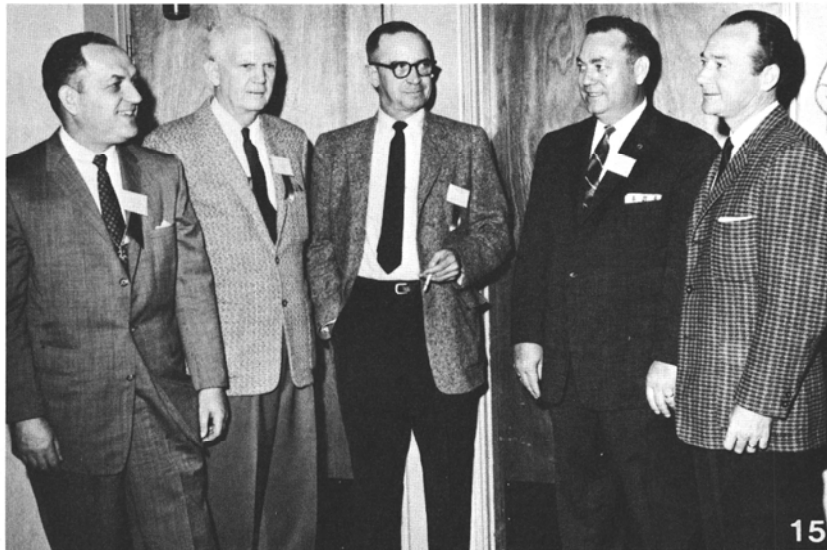
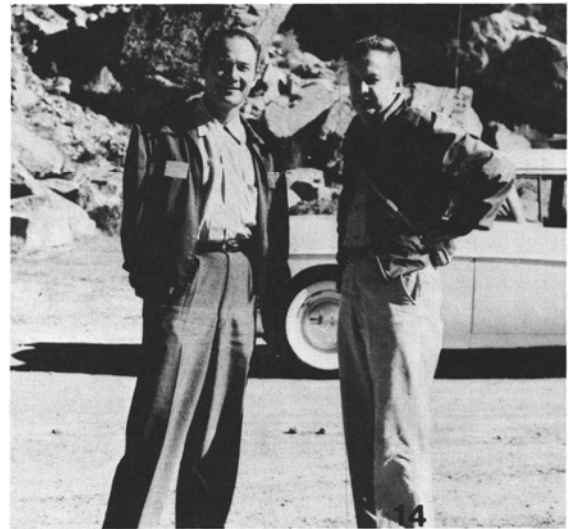
9. Ed Beaumont at Stop 4, 3rd day, October 14, 1951, looking away from Chuska Mountains. Elmer and Diana Baltz are in background.

10. Bill Mallory, John Duletsky, Sherm Wengerd, Frank Frost, and Phil Hayes on Honaker Trail in the San Juan River Canyon on June 11, 1952.



11. Sherm Wengerd in the Goosenecks of the San Juan River on June 11, 1952.

12. Stew Jones, John Lookingbill, Sherm Wengerd, and Don Mills on a joint field trip to Carrizozo, New Mexico, sponsored by the University of New Mexico and New Mexico School of Mines on May 9, 1952.



13. Most of the New Mexico Ground Water Branch, Water Resources Division, U.S. Geological Survey on Sandia Peak, June 26, 1938.

From left to right: George C. Taylor, Jr., Albuquerque born and graduated from University of New Mexico. Later for many years Chief of the Foreign Hydrology Section, USGS, and now retired. Arthur M. Morgan, Graduate of University of Wyoming. Received his Ph.D. from Columbia on the basis of a ground-water thesis after this picture was taken. Studied hydrology of Pecos River and what is now called the Roswell and Carlsbad artesian basins.

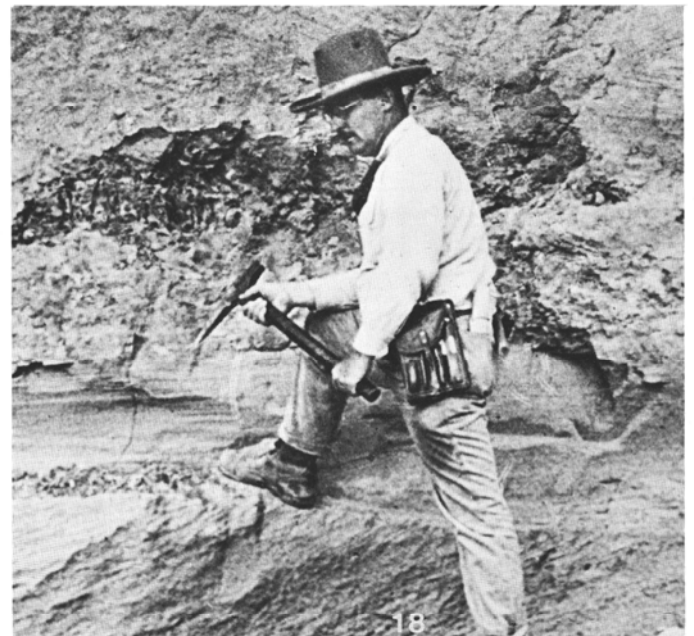
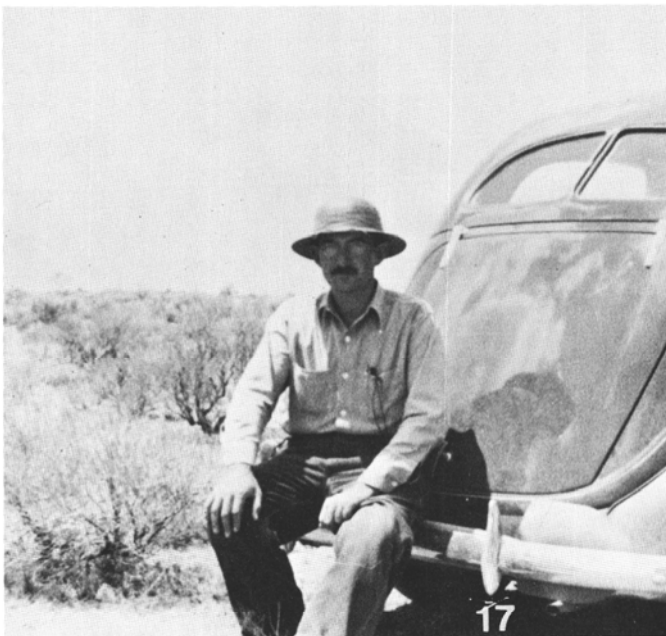
Oscar Edward Meinzer, Geologist in charge, Ground Water Branch, USGS. Meinzer received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1922. His thesis was USGS WSP 489 "The occurrence of Ground Water in the United States with a Discussion of Principles." To Meinzer more than anyone else goes the credit for developing ground-water geology into an organized scientific discipline. His early work included ground water studies of the Estancia Valley and the Tularosa Basin.

Charles Vernon Theis, at the time in charge of the USGS ground water studies in New Mexico, and not knowing that the recently published "Theis equation" describing movement

of ground water would become famous. In 1958, received one of first Distinguished Service Medals given by the Department of Interior to still active employees. Now one of the most productive "retired" government employees.

14. Rex Alcorn, Sun Oil Company (now an independent), Roswell, and General Chairman of the 5th Field Conference, and Frank Kottlowski, New Mexico Bureau of Mines and Mineral Resources, Socorro, somewhere in southeastern New Mexico on the route of the field conference, October 1954.

15. Caswell Silver, Consultant, Albuquerque, and President, NMGS; T. F. Stipp, USGS, Roswell; Charles B. Read, USGS, Albuquerque; Clarence Symes, Sunray Mid-Continent, Roswell, and President, Roswell Geological Society (now deceased); and Rex Alcorn, Sun Oil Company, Roswell, President-elect, NMGS. Photograph taken April 18, 1958 during the 12th Annual Meeting of the New Mexico Geological Society at the Holiday Inn, Roswell. Charley Read presented colored slides and slow-motion films of the underground nuclear explosions of the "Ranier Event" at the banquet.



16. Geological party at Harvard Archaeological Camp, Awatovi, Arizona. Similar photo from Mrs. F. T. McCann bears date August 1, 1939. However, Kirtley Mather and Sherm Wengerd suggest El Rito Camp, 1934; John Hack, Awatovi Camp, 1938; Herbert Wright, Hopi Mesa, 1941; Doak Cox, 1940; and Charles Stearns, 1939. Left to right: Charles Stearns (later Dean of Tufts University), John T. Hack (later U.S. Geological Survey), Kirk Bryan, Professor of Geology, Harvard University and Field Camp Manager, Herbert E. Wright, Jr. (later Professor, Limnological Research Center, University of Minnesota), Doak Cox (later Director, Environmental Center, University of Hawaii at Manoa), Alwyn

Marston (then a Tufts undergraduate—comment by Charles Stearns), Mrs. E. C. Hadda Cabot, E. C. "Ted" Cabot, and Franklin T. McCann (later Professor of English at Auburn University—comment by John Hack).

17. John T. Hack geologist for Harvard Archaeological Camp at Awatovi, Arizona, August 2, 1939.

18. The late Kirk Bryan in the field, date unknown. "I think this is Recent Alluvium perhaps Chaco Canyon"—Sheldon Judson.