



Memorial for Thomas Johnson “Tom” Joiner, Former Alabama State Geologist

Submitted by Nick Tew, Alabama State Geologist
June 12, 2019

Thomas Johnson “Tom” Joiner, former State Geologist and Oil and Gas Supervisor of Alabama and Honorary Member of AASG, passed away on Monday, March 11, 2019, at the age of 86. His passing was sudden and leaves a great void, not only with his family and many friends, but also for the Alabama geological community, The University of Alabama campus, the City of Tuscaloosa, and the west Alabama region. Tom was a man who believed in giving back and he was a very active and engaged leader in a number of civic, business, academic, and philanthropic endeavors.

Tom was born in Akron, Ohio, to parents from Alabama and grew up in Clarke County, Alabama. He attended The University of Alabama and was a proud alumnus of the geology program, where he earned his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees. After receiving his M.S., he worked in private industry and with the U.S. Geological Survey before joining the Geological Survey of Alabama (Survey) and the State Oil and Gas Board (Board) in 1961. During the administration of State Geologist Phillip E. LaMoreaux, Tom served in key leadership positions at the Survey and Board, including Assistant State Geologist and Oil and Gas Supervisor. Upon LaMoreaux’s retirement in 1976, he was appointed as Acting State Geologist and Oil and Gas Supervisor and was subsequently named State Geologist and Oil and Gas Supervisor of Alabama in 1977, roles he filled until 1981.

During Tom’s tenure as State Geologist and Oil and Gas Supervisor, important strides were made by the Survey and Board to investigate, describe, and promote the scientific understanding and prudent development of the natural resources of the State of Alabama. He emphasized expansion of the Survey’s databases for

water, mineral, and energy resources and focused the Survey's activities in key areas, such as continuing work, initiated during the LaMoreaux years, on a new state geologic map; enhancement of the mineral mapping and economics programs; initiating studies on water use and water management; and accelerating efforts to describe and develop the state's energy resources.

In addition, there was substantial growth in Alabama's oil and gas industry during the Joiner years and numerous new oil and gas fields were established in southwest Alabama and the Black Warrior Basin of north Alabama, including the initiation of what would become the State's significant coalbed methane industry. In 1979, world class offshore natural gas reserves were discovered in Alabama state waters, leading to a period of significant leasing and development and, thus, activity for the Board. During this time, Tom worked closely with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in planning what would be Alabama's most successful state waters lease sale, which brought almost \$450 million into State coffers.

After leaving the Survey and Board in 1981, Tom founded a very successful geological and engineering consulting firm, Tom Joiner and Associates, which remains active today. He continued to be a strong supporter of the Survey and Board throughout his life; always maintained an active interest in the work and well-being of these agencies; and was a tireless advocate for their importance in state government and beyond. During a hearing on March 21, 2019, the State Oil and Gas Board of Alabama adopted an official resolution honoring Tom's memory and his contributions to the State of Alabama.

Tom was very highly regarded for his significant contributions in business, civic, academic, and philanthropic affairs and he remained an actively engaged leader in the community until the day of his passing. Tom believed in working hard for the greater good and he received countless awards and accolades for his tireless commitment to serving his city, alma mater, and community. One such honor was his recognition by United Way of West Alabama as one of the first inductees into their prestigious Alexis de Tocqueville Society, an organization that reserves membership for only the most committed and successfully influential philanthropists within the community. Tom remained passionate about service to The University of Alabama (UA) and was a key member of the UA Geological Sciences Advisory Board, the UA Museums Board of Regents, and the UA College

of Arts and Sciences Leadership Board. The Thomas J. Joiner Endowed Scholarship, established by the Geological Sciences Advisory Board, continues to support deserving students in the UA Department of Geological Sciences. In addition, Tom served on various other boards and committees that are too numerous to list.

Tom Joiner was devoted to his family and considered them his biggest source of pride and joy, as well as his greatest achievement. His survivors include his wife of 63 years, Virginia; their four daughters, Cathy Wood (Bob), Dianne Rumanek, Marion Price (Johnny), and Genae Pugh; thirteen grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren; and his brother, Max (Lynda).

Tom was a great friend and colleague, as well as a trusted mentor and advisor, to many in our profession and beyond. He will be missed.