

Duncan J. McGregor (1921 – 2014), 6th State Geologist of South Dakota

Dr. Duncan J. McGregor, Ph.D., 93, died at home in Vermillion, South Dakota on September 14, 2014. Duncan was born January 3, 1921 at St. Joseph, Missouri, to the Rev. Duncan E. and Elma B. (Lawrence) McGregor. He graduated from high school in Lawrence, Kansas, and earned his bachelor's degree in geology from the University of Kansas. Duncan served in the U.S. Navy Reserve in WWII as a communications officer aboard the escort carrier U.S.S. Thetis Bay, CVE-90, in the Pacific Theater. After the war, Duncan married Thelma Dewsbury in Auburn, Massachusetts. The two had met while Duncan was at the Navy's communications school at Harvard and the couple celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary on June 30, 2012.



Duncan and Thelma moved to Lawrence, Kansas, in 1946 where he completed a Master's degree in geology at the University of Kansas. While working for Sinclair Oil in Wyoming, his daughter, Lynn, was born in 1949. In 1953, Duncan completed his Ph.D. degree at the University of Michigan where his son, Scott, was born in 1952. After Duncan attained his Ph.D., the family moved to Bloomington, Indiana, where he took a position as head of the industrial minerals section of the Indiana Geological Survey at Indiana University. There a second son, Brett, joined the family in 1957. The family's next move was to Vermillion, South Dakota, where Duncan became a professor of geology at the University of South Dakota and was named as the South Dakota State Geologist and director of the South Dakota Geological Survey on September 1, 1963. Duncan retired from the Geological Survey in 1981 but retained his role as professor of geology and served as chairman of the University of South Dakota's Department of Earth Sciences until his full retirement in 1986. At that time, Duncan was awarded the rank of professor emeritus.



Under Duncan's direction of the Geological Survey, a program of ground-water investigations for cities and counties was expanded and quickly resulted in completed studies for 14 cities between 1963 and 1967. Studies to locate sources of ground water for rural water systems also began under Duncan's watch. By mid-1966, the waiting list for county-wide geologic and ground-water investigations had grown to 22 counties. Also during Duncan's tenure as State Geologist, a significant statewide study of the geology and hydrology of the Dakota Formation was conducted, geologic mapping of glacial and bedrock areas was continued, and a study of areas particularly prone to landslides was conducted with emphasis in the Pierre Shale along the Missouri River and in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. Additionally, Duncan broadened the education objectives of the Geological Survey by establishing an area of Educational Services which resulted in road logs designed to aid tourists as well as resulting in frequent presentations on mineral resources and geology to civic, professional, and academic organizations. Most of the Geological Survey's activities emphasized by Duncan continue to this day and provide vital information on South Dakota's natural resources.

Another of Duncan's accomplishments was to serve as President of the Association of American State Geologists in the 1976-1977 fiscal year. As the AASG President, Duncan highlighted a theme

that is as important today as it was then. The theme was that we as geologists must provide geologic information in a context that is useable to the politicians who form public policy and to the bureaucrats who manage the nation's natural resources.

At the University of South Dakota, Duncan was an active member of the faculty serving on the University budget committee among others and was selected as a presenter of the annual Dean Harrington Lecture in 1985. He was an active member of the Clay County Historical Society and the Vermillion Rotary Club, where he was recognized as a Paul Harris Fellow. Additionally, Duncan and Thelma were longtime active members of the Vermillion United Church of Christ in Vermillion.

Duncan was preceded in death by his wife, Thelma, who died January 27, 2013, and by two brothers: Ronald and Kenneth.

Duncan is survived by his daughter Lynn (Jerry) Ochs of Yukon, Oklahoma, and two sons, Scott (Karen) McGregor of Rapid City, South Dakota, and Brett McGregor (Val) of Nebraska City, Nebraska. He is also survived by grandchildren Melissa (Everett) Robins and Andromeda (Jacob) Morrison, and great grandchildren Sophie and Ethan Robins.

Interment was at Bluff View Cemetery in Vermillion, South Dakota.