

William Dresher



Dr. William H. Dresher passed away August 9, 2014 in Tucson. Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he earned a B.S. degree in chemical engineering from Drexel University in 1953 and a Ph.D. in metallurgy from the University of Utah in 1956. After graduation, Bill worked for Union Carbide Corporation where, as Assistant Director of Research, he supervised research and development on the extraction and purification of uranium, vanadium, tungsten, molybdenum, and asbestos.

Bill was named Dean of the College of Mines and Director of the Arizona Bureau of Mines at the University of Arizona in 1971. As Dean he increased the College enrollment and research revenue and established a degree program in Mineral Economics. Because the Arizona Bureau of Mines functioned informally as the state geological survey, Bill was a member of the Association of American State Geologists. Although his education and experience were in chemical engineering and metallurgy, Bill referred to himself informally as the “state geologist.” Bill wrote the enabling legislation that modernized and redirected the Arizona Bureau of Mines and successfully shepherded it to passage and signature by the Governor in 1977. The new agency, the Bureau of Geology and Mineral Technology, was comprised of a Geological Survey Branch and a Mineral Technology Branch. The Geological Survey Branch later became the Arizona Geological Survey; its director carried the title “State Geologist.” Bill served as Dean of the College of Mines and Director of the Bureau of Geology and Mineral Technology until 1981.

In 1981, he left the University to become President of the International Copper Research Association, Inc. (INCRA), supervising product development and providing the leadership that made INCRA an effective organization to promote and defend the use of copper worldwide. In 1989, he became Vice President of Technology of the International Copper Association, Ltd. (ICA). In 1995, he retired from ICA to establish his consulting practice.

He has represented minerals technology on the National Research Council and was a member of Ronald Reagan's transition team in the field of minerals policy. He is a past president of the Mining and Metallurgical Society of America. He was a member of the Mining Foundation of the Southwest since 1971, where he served on the Board of Directors. He was the chairman of the SciEnTeK-12 Foundation – an organization that encourages young people to enter careers in science and engineering that he co-founded in 1997.

On the personal side, his daughter described how Bill remodeled the vintage farmhouse that was the family's first home, doing all of the framing, electrical, and interior finishing himself. He also was quite a musician and enjoyed playing the clarinet especially at family gatherings.

One of the events his daughter recalled from his time as “State Geologist” was the call in the middle of the night that prompted him “to leap out of bed, jump in the car and drove all night to

somewhere outside of Flagstaff to save some ancient petrified sloth dung that had been ignited by a nearby forest fire.”

His daughter’s eulogy summed up Bill life as “a musician, carpenter, teacher, scientist, scholar, an entertainer and humble host, a man dedicated to his profession, his family, his church community and his profession. He loved the Tucson community and Western United States. He was a patient teacher for us - but always expected our best in whatever we did. He was a man of intense beliefs and ethics that were always relatable back to science.”

This summary was compiled from materials provided by the family and the Mining Foundation of the Southwest.