IN MEMORIAM  
FRED MASON BULLARD  

Fred Mason Bullard passed away suddenly and quietly at his home in Austin on Friday, July 29, 1994. He was born July 20, 1901, on Kickapoo Indian lands, Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, where his father had homesteaded.

Bullard obtained BS and MS degrees in geology at the University of Oklahoma, where he also played the saxophone in the university band. He received a PhD from the University of Michigan in 1928. He worked for several years as field geologist for the Oklahoma Geological Survey. He joined the faculty of the Department of Geology at The University of Texas at Austin in 1924, where he had a professional career in teaching and research for 70 years. He was actively working in his office on the last day of his life.

Professor Bullard was known as an outstanding teacher of large introductory geology courses for more than four decades. A colleague once calculated the thousands of students that Bullard had taught and concluded that he probably taught the largest number of introductory geology students in North America. Many of these students made careers in geology and many became pioneers in the petroleum industry. He was greatly admired and loved by his students, colleagues, and friends, and kept in touch with many of them over his long professional life. The span of his career offered him the chance to teach the children and grandchildren of his early students, and during his travels he constantly met people who came up to him to say, "Dr. Bullard, I was a student in your class in 19--."

Bullard also taught a course in volcanology and in the 1920s regularly taught the summer geology field course in Central Texas. Some of his experiences were told in the newsletter of the Department of Geological Sciences.

Bullard served as chairman of the geology department from 1929 to 1937. During this period the State of Texas implemented the building program for the central core of UT buildings surrounding the Main Building, which helped celebrate the 1936 Texas Centennial. Fred Bullard researched the architecture of geology buildings at prominent universities and then designed and helped draw the plans for the first geology building; he selected the furnishings as well. He designed the fossil frieze that decorates the building’s exterior, indelibly and forever signifying its dedication to geology (although it is now designated the Will C. Hogg Building). At the time that Bullard served as chairman, he was only an associate professor and thus not eligible to vote on budgetary matters; such matters were reserved for full professors.

Dr. Bullard served as a visiting professor at a number of schools through the years, including the University of Michigan, Columbia University, the National University of Mexico in Mexico City, Vassar College, and Northern Arizona University. He served in the Visiting Scientists Program of the American Geophysical Union in 1966 and 1968-69. Other foreign assignments included appointments as a Fulbright Research Scholar in Italy, 1952-53; Fulbright Lecturer in Peru, 1959; and Chief of Party of The University of Texas contract group at the University of Baghdad, Iraq, for two-and-a-half years, 1962-1964. This group was sent under a U.S. Agency for International Development program to provide "technical assistance in improving education in the sciences and engineering" to the University of Baghdad. Nine professors and their families were in the group under his care, four in the sciences and five in engineering.

On his first day in the classroom in the University of Baghdad, Dr. Bullard introduced himself and urged
students to raise their hands if he used a word they did not understand. All nodded in agreement. He took a
breath and began, “Geology is the science of the Earth,” whereupon a hand went up. The student asked, “What
is Earth, professor?” Dr. Bullard recalled thinking that it was going to be a long, long semester.

Fred Bullard regularly attended the annual meetings of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists.
Even in his later years one could always find Fred on the front row of a particular talk or symposium and ready
with a question. Fred was named Distinguished Lecturer of the Association an impressive three times: 1943,
1945, and 1954.

Fred’s early research included geologic mapping in Oklahoma and Texas, and studies in invertebrate
dentrology and meteorites. During World War II he published a classical study of the heavy detrital minerals
(ones having high specific gravity) of Texas beaches and the rivers supplying sand to them. Bullard’s study
showed the value of heavy minerals in determining the source of sand along Texas beaches.

Fred Bullard’s interest in volcanoes was piqued while on a U.S. Geological Survey expedition to Alaska in
1929, where he observed an active volcano for the first time. This led to his appointment as an assistant at the
Hawaiian Volcano Observatory in 1939, where he worked under the famous volcanologist Dr. T. A. Jaggar.
This provided him with the background to do the seminal geologic research on the nascent active volcano
Paricutin when it erupted out of a sleepy cornfield in Mexico in 1943. He wrote: “When Paricutin was born, I
was teaching a course on volcanoes at the National University of Mexico. I used it as a laboratory for my
students, and for the next seven years I spent a part of each year at Paricutin studying the life history of this
volcano. I studied the volcanoes of the Central American countries from 1945 to 1957. In 1959, I extended my
work to South America. In the summer of 1960, I participated in the International Congress Field Trip to study
the volcanoes of Iceland. In 1962 I was a member of the International Symposium on Volcanology in a study of
the volcanoes of Japan.

“During the summer of 1963 I studied the volcanoes of Central Turkey and the Greek Islands. During the
summer of 1964 I visited the volcanic areas of Africa, the Canary Islands, Madeira, and the Azores. During the
summers of 1965 and 1967 I taught volcanology in a National Science Foundation Institute for high school
science teachers at Northern Arizona University. In the fall of 1965-66 I studied the volcanoes of the South
Pacific region (Philippines, New Guinea, New Britain, etc.) and attended the International Symposium on
Volcanology in New Zealand. During the summer of 1968 I was on an International Geologic Congress Field
Trip studying volcanics in the Carpathian Mountains of Slovakia. During the summers of 1969 and 1970 I
studied the “Great Rift” at Craters of the Moon National Monument, Idaho.”

Bullard’s research findings and accumulated knowledge became an original reference work on volcanoes
entitled Volcanoes: in Theory, in History, in Eruption, published by The University of Texas Press; a revised
and enlarged edition, including information on the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, was published under the title
Volcanoes of the Earth. These books were best-sellers among the UT Press offerings. One of the products of his
studies of Paricutin was a film on that volcano, which he showed once a year to a standing-room-only crowd in
the Geology Building auditorium.

In his early days at the University, Fred Bullard helped organize and participated in the activities of professional
gelogical organizations, including Sigma Gamma Epsilon and Sigma Xi. He helped organize the Institute for
Latin American Studies during the Roosevelt “Good Neighbor Policy” days. He enjoyed lifelong membership in
the Kiwanis Clubs of Austin (being in “the Old Men's Group”) and, after retirement, the Retired Faculty
Association. He was a Mason, a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, and a member of the
Mineralogical Society of America, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and Phi Beta Kappa.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Earle F. McBride
(chair), William L. Fisher, and Clark R. Wilson, Professors Emeritus Robert L. Folk, Ernest L. Lundelius, Jr.,
and William R. Muehlberger, and James Underwood.

Distributed to the Dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on June 5, 2001.
Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at:
http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/