Memorial to Frank Edward Byrne
1907-1974

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“Our society is based upon technological sophistication and manufactured satisfaction provided by an artificial environment. It has largely abandoned the pleasures a person can derive from within himself or from the natural world surrounding him . . . .”

“Man still has his chance to choose . . . . I have every confidence in this unique animal named Man.”

These words of Dr. Frank Byrne, from his recent book, *Earth and Man*, have been engraved in a plaque presented by his students to the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay, shortly before his death. On the occasion of the dedication of the university’s new community sciences complex, Dr. Byrne’s students, through this presentation, formally recognized his service to the university and especially his sustained and devoted work to help students and former students fulfill themselves professionally.

Frank had brought to Green Bay a wealth of academic, government, and industrial experience. He launched new educational programs in which sound basic geology was demonstrably a key subject, yet the approaches he used were far from traditional. His blend of the traditional and the nontraditional to confront practical problems attracted and excited students.

Frank was born July 27, 1907, in Chicago. His grade school education was in the public schools of Chicago, and he attended Lane Technical High School. In 1927 he received his B.S. from the University of Chicago with a major in geology and a double minor in geography and history, and he continued as an assistant until 1930. He received his Ph.D. in 1940 from Chicago, concentrating on geology and paleontology, with a minor in zoology.

This long history in Chicago might perhaps explain why an ordinary soul would continue to be an unflappable Chicago Bears fan on the home turf of their arch-rivals, the Green Bay Packers. Frank, however, was no ordinary soul. His loyalties were steadfast, and he had the gift for tweaking inflated egos with the rare good grace of the likable adversary. Frank undoubtedly enjoyed being a Bears fan in Green Bay.

Frank's academic career consisted of service at Kansas State University from 1930 to 1953, with time out for military service from 1942 to 1945; at Idaho State University from 1962 to 1965; at the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater from 1966 to 1968; and at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay from 1968 until his death in 1974.

His government service, from 1940 to 1954, consisted chiefly of summer and part-time work for the USGS and the Kansas Geological Survey, while teaching at Kansas State, although he did work full-time for the USGS from 1953 to 1954.

His industrial experience was gained between 1954 and 1959 with the Getty (Tidewater) Oil Company, from 1959 to 1962 when he was an operating partner with
the Amaden Petroleum Company, and from 1965 to 1966 with the Denver Research Institute.

Thus his career was divided into three major parts: the first part consisting of academic and government service (24 years), the second part consisting of industrial work with a three-year academic respite (12 years), and the third part consisting of academic service in the University of Wisconsin System (8 years). Frank was author or co-author of about 40 papers and reports, one-third of which were USGS publications.

In his early years in Kansas, Frank devoted his attention to problems in ground water and engineering geology. He studied the hydrogeology of Seward and Barber Counties in Kansas, and in cooperation with the Kansas State University Engineering Experiment Station, he prepared industrial surveys of several Kansas counties. He mapped engineering construction materials in twenty-two counties, and worked on materials surveys in cooperation with the Bureau of Reclamation, Corps of Engineers, and Kansas Highway Commission. Frank also served as a consultant to the Highway Commission in organizing a geological department.

During World War II, Frank served as a Captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps training bombardiers in target recognition.

Frank's industrial experience was primarily in oil and gas geology. As District Geologist for Getty Oil Company, he was in charge of oil and gas exploration in the Rocky Mountain district. He also supervised evaluation of Getty holdings of oil-shale reserves in the Piceance Creek Basin and in the Athabasca area. For Amaden Petroleum Company, he mapped and developed oil and gas prospects in the Piceance Creek, Uinta, and Powder River Basins.

In his work as a geologist with the Denver Research Institute, Frank's primary task was to develop terrain analysis techniques. This work anticipated some of his major academic accomplishments at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in regional analysis and planning.

In all of his academic posts, Frank rose to positions of responsibility, developed new programs and improved old ones, and fostered constructive working relations between academic enterprises and their counterparts in industry and government. At Kansas State, where he rose from instructor to professor, Frank organized curricula in ground-water geology and engineering geology. At Idaho State where he was professor and department chairman, he was also associate director of university extension. At both Kansas State and Idaho State, he played key roles in organizing master's programs in geology.

At the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, where he was an outnumbered geologist in a large geography department, he had the fortitude and ingenuity to reorganize the curriculum in geology and Earth science.

In addition to serving as Professor of Earth Science and Geography at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Frank also served as Special Assistant to the Chancellor and Secretary of the Faculty. He later resigned these two administrative posts to become chairman (1970 to 1973) of a kind of superdepartment in regional analysis. About eighty percent of the graduates of this program have obtained jobs in planning or closely related fields.

In 1973, a program for computerized land planning, developed by Frank and a colleague at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, was introduced to planning officials around the state of Colorado.
The students and graduates of the regional analysis program at Green Bay have established a memorial fund to equip a field camp for students and community people to study environmental problems. Frank's infectious interest in field work—for its own sake and as a teaching method—was amply communicated to his students.

Frank had a keen interest in the professional practice of geology. He was a charter member of the American Institute of Professional Geologists, served as a member of the institute's Professional and Scientific Standards Committee, and as chairman of the Committee on Geology in the Environment and the Committee on National Mineral Resource Policy. He was an organizer of the Wisconsin State Section and played a key role in combining the Minnesota and Wisconsin sections.

Frank was also a Fellow (1949) of the Geological Society of America and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, an active member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and a member of the American Association of University Professors.

In the closing years of his life, Frank maintained a crowded work schedule. Despite the relentless advance of his illness, he continued going to class, taking students on field trips, and working on his book, *Earth and Man*. He had the great pleasure of completing the book—all 765 pages of it—in which, in his own words, he placed the "... emphasis entirely on the impact of mineral, water, and land resources on man's activities in a region."

A former student reports that as recently as last June "Dr. Byrne refused to undergo a biopsy because this would conflict with our field trip." His lovely wife Doris recounts how Frank continued to go to campus to meet his classes, despite great hardship, until only two weeks before his death.

Frank E. Byrne is survived by his wife and two sons. He is also survived, in the minds of those fortunate enough to have known him, by the memory of a warm, kind, highly civilized human being.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF F. E. BYRNE**

1948 Geologic reports on construction materials: Kansas State College Bull. 56, Engineering Experiment Station, 4 p.