

## EUGENE B. "GENE" WAGGONER (1913-1991)

*Allen W. Hatheway*



Eugene Waggoner was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and graduated from Hamilton High School, Los Angeles, with the Class of 1931. This has always been a prominent high school, favoring bright minds, and Gene was able to enroll in Geology at UCLA's relatively new Westwood campus (est. 1928 on a move from its original Vermont Blvd. location of 1915 as the University of California, Southern Branch. Gene's family were of modest means and his matriculation at UCLA came at near the bottom of the Great Depression. Through friends, he was able to obtain employment as a stock boy at the prominent Wilshire Boulevard department store of Bullocks,' now long disappeared as an entity.

Gene's BA (1937) undergraduate experience was a long one, interrupted by the need to pay his own way, but well used to the plodding, Gene elected to stay to complete an MA in 1939. His entry into geologic practice came in the "oil patch" and he remained there until 1946, when he was operating out of Denver and there joined the massive post-war expansion of the Bureau of Reclamation (USBR). After eight years with USBR Gene established an engineering geological consulting firm at Denver and, in June of 1960

merged into the young (1954) and already successful Woodward, Clyde, Sherrard, Inc. (later, Woodward-Clyde Consultants (WCC), as its new Denver office.

It is testament to Gene's affable, productive, reliable and hard-working nature that he was the first geologist to enter Woodward-Clyde's upper management and then to rise to President of the Company (1967), as equally affable Richard ("Dick") Woodward became Board Chairman. Dick retired about 1968 and Gene became Board Chairman.

In the field, Gene possessed the UCLA hallmark for sound observation, note-taking, and sketching to augment his field geologic mapping. The Waggoner "touch" was legendary, and he was the face of WCC for the furious 13 years that he was an active member of the firm.

Gene's NAE *Memorial Tribute* was written by his senior competitor, William W. Moore, co-founder of Dames & Moore: "What established his reputation was his outstanding ability to understand a regional geology, interpret the exploratory work in that context, arrive at remarkable definitive conclusions, and then to explain them. His work ultimately brought meaning and demonstrated the value of practical, understandable consulting geologic service to groundwater development and control in the United States and foreign countries."

Gene's long-suit of outstanding abilities was his unusually direct and reassuring relationship with his clients. Some of the toughest clients in the profession have been in tunneling and it was here that Gene shined to the greatest degree. His popularity was so uniform that he served for some years on the now-defunct U.S. National Committee on Tunneling Technology (USNCTT; est. 1967 and deactivated in 1994). Gene chaired a remarkable subcommittee on Tunneling Methods and was the cause of a Federal grant to summarize the best of the prevalent site characterization techniques being employed in the American underground space industry; this work still holds.

AEG Honorary Member Bob Valentine is quick to point out that a Waggoner forte was to come forth with a lay-person's analogy for assimilation by judge and juror, as well as attorneys. Gene was an accomplished arbitrator and "could have made a good living at that alone!