



*John C. [unclear]*

## JOHN CHAPMAN FRYE

*1912-1982*

BY WILLIAM C. ACKERMANN

**DR.** JOHN CHAPMAN FRYE had recently retired as Executive Director of the Geological Society of America when he died on November 12, 1982, in Boulder, Colorado. His long and distinguished professional career was marked by both outstanding scientific contributions and exceptional managerial skill.

Perhaps the most lasting contributions of John Frye reside in more than 140 scientific papers and publications. Although these dealt with a wide range of subjects, including minerals, stratigraphy, and groundwater, they were predominantly concerned with the recent Pleistocene and Pliocene periods of the interior provinces and with the interpretation and applications of glacial materials.

As an outgrowth of his scientific studies, Dr. Frye can be credited with advancing the term and substance of environmental geology to its present well-recognized field among geologic specialities. This subject employs surficial geology in a systematic way to the solution of such important and practical matters as foundation conditions, landfill siting, availability of sand and gravel deposits, and land use planning.

John Frye was born in Marietta, Ohio, on July 25, 1912. He earned his B.S. degree at Marietta College in 1934 and his M.S. and Ph.D. in geology at the University of Iowa in 1937 and 1938, respectively. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Science degree by Marietta College in 1955.

His professional career began at the University of Iowa and was

followed by service in the Groundwater Division of the U.S. Geological Survey. He served as Assistant State Geologist and Assistant Director of the Kansas State Geological Survey from 1941 until 1945, at which time he was named the Executive Director of the Kansas State Geological Survey, a position he held until 1954. From 1952 to 1954 he served concurrently as State Geologist. He held appointments as Professor of Geology at the University of Kansas (1942-1954) and at the University of Illinois (1963-1974).

In 1954 Dr. Frye was named Chief of the prestigious Illinois State Geological Survey and held this position until he retired in 1974, at which time he accepted the position of Executive Director with the Geological Society of America until his second retirement in 1982.

John Frye was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 1971. He was also a Fellow of the Geological Society of America and the American Association for the Advancement of Science; a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists; the Society of Economic Geologists; the American Geological Institute (President, 1966); the American Institute of Professional Geologists; the American Geophysical Union; the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers; the Association of American State Geologists (President, 1960); and the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists (Vice-President, 1965-1966).

Dr. Frye was prominent in the activities of the National Research Council. This included service in the Division of Earth Sciences, the Geophysics Research Board, and a series of committees and panels dealing with remote sensing, mineral resources, energy, and radioactive waste management.

John Frye not only left a valuable record of basic and applied geological contributions, but he excelled as an administrator. His direction of the Illinois State Geological Survey from 1954 to 1974 was a golden age for that agency, based upon his scientific achievements, his administrative skills, and his personal qualities. Those same qualities were important during the subsequent eight years when he led the Geological Society of America (GSA) as its Executive Director. When he entered that position, the GSA faced financial crises that were effectively resolved. It was his leadership in

organizing and managing the GSA Foundation that was successful in obtaining new funding that provided for important new Society endeavors. He stimulated greater participation in Society affairs by the membership with the resultant advancement of the geological sciences.

Those who knew John Frye best were his close professional associates who shared his extensive field exploration. He was particularly outstanding as a field geologist. He was a fine observer, systematic in recording his observations in the field and writing every evening a summary of the day's findings and their significance. Every day in the field was an adventure, and it never ended until the light faded.

John Frye was a warm and thoughtful man of good humor, a devotee of classical music, and deeply religious. He loved his family and was a valued friend and professional associate.