

JOHN F. MANN, JR. (1921-1998)

Mel Blevins and Richard Proctor



Dr. John Mann was born in Flushing Meadows, New York in 1921. His family moved westward and John earned his Geological Engineering degree from the Colorado School of Mines in 1943. From 1944-1946, John was a Lieutenant JG in the U.S. Navy. He then entered the University of Southern California and earned his master's (1947) and

Ph.D. (1951) in geology. He stayed on at USC for more than 25 years, as Assistant, Associate, and Adjunct Professor of Geology.

John's other employment included Field Geologist for Frontier Refining company, 1943-1944; as Groundwater Geologist for the USGS in the summer of 1948; and from 1949-1951 as Groundwater Geologist for the Illinois State Geological Survey.

John's 40-year-long consulting career in groundwater and as an expert witness began in 1957, when he gave testimony on behalf of a defendant whose spring in Topanga Canyon was affected by a pumping well. As his reputation grew, John was sought by attorneys to prepare litigation for more than 60 cases, and was in demand for his testimony in more than 30 court appearances. He prepared more than 300 publications and reports.

Public agencies, engineering firms, corporations, and attorneys sought John for his knowledge of hydrogeology and water rights. Most of his work was in California, but he also consulted in Arizona, Nevada, Canada, Egypt, and Spain.

John's most significant consulting work was with issues of Groundwater Management and Water Rights. He was an expert witness in dealing with the 24-year long litigation regarding the important San Fernando Valley water rights case, from 1955-1979. He evaluated the Safe Yield and the date of Overdraft within the San Fernando basin. John's prepared papers, reports, and expert testimony were significant in the winning of this water rights case for the City of Los Angeles.

John was heavily involved with two other famous cases, with satisfactory solutions for the City of Los Angeles: The Owens Valley litigation ("L.A. is stealing our water!") which lasted 25 years (1972-1997), and the Mono Lake litigation ("L.A. is drying up our lake!") which lasted 15 years (1979-1994).

John was a member of many professional organizations, including the American Water Resources Association, American Geophysical Union, AAPG, AEG, AIPG, GSA, and was Life Member of the American Water Works Association and the National Water Well Association. He is listed in American Men of Science, and Who's Who in California.

As a connoisseur of wines (and Chinese food), John had a large wine collection. A humorous incident occurred when he invited the geologists of the Metropolitan Water District, where he was a consultant, to a wine tasting at his home in the Puente Hills. After the party was underway, John's wife Carol approached a geologist standing in the open doorway. The geologist said, "I'm Marshall Payne." Carol said, "Oh, more champagne, I'll get you some."

John became very successful, and in later life decided to give back to his profession. His generous donation to the Geological Society of America established the John Mann Mentors in Applied Hydrogeology. After his passing, Carol, along with assistance from Roy Shlemon of the GSA Council, ensured that the funds were directed only toward helping students of applied geology. Thus, the good work of a gentleman, and a gentle man, with a renowned sense of humor, will continue long after his passing.