IN MEMORIAM

FRANCIS L. WHITNEY

Francis Luther Whitney, Professor Emeritus of Geology, died quite unexpectedly of an acute infection, following an operation early in the morning of January 25, 1962; he was 83 years of age. Dr. Whitney is survived by his daughter, Dr. Marion Whitney, of Shepherd, Michigan, and he was living with his daughter at the time of his death. His wife, Grace, had preceded him in death by four years. Dr. Whitney retired from active teaching in 1953, to become Professor Emeritus of Geology, after 44 years of teaching at The University of Texas.

Born at Enfield Center, New York, September 2, 1878, Dr. Whitney was the only son of Luther and Elizabeth Whitney. His elementary education was completed in New York and he graduated from Elmira Academy before the age of 15. Hard times came upon the family after a bank theft, and young Francis Whitney spent six years in the tool makers trade, becoming foreman in one factory by the age of 21.

Before the age of 12 he became a fossil collector, and as he grew older, he maintained his interest in fossils. He served as guide, while still a youngster, to Cornell University geology classes when they were collecting in the Elmira, New York, area. Dr. G. D. Harris was the professor in charge of these collecting trips, and this was the beginning of a lifelong friendship between Whitney and Harris. Certainly when young Whitney entered Cornell, there was no doubt that he would major in geology.

At Cornell Francis Whitney started his long teaching career, for after his first year he handled all the paleontology classes while
continuing work for his own degree. When Dr. G. D. Harris accepted the position of State Geologist of Louisiana, Francis Whitney spent several extended periods mapping in the Louisiana swamps; this was his first acquaintance with the southern United States.

Francis Whitney graduated from Cornell in 1901, and in the same year married Grace Pellet of Elmira, New York. He immediately went to work for the Gurley Instrument Company repairing and making surveying instruments. However, he preferred the out-of-doors to a lifelong position indoors, and when the opportunity arrived, he chose teaching as a profession. He taught for one year (1907) at Buchtel College in Akron, Ohio, and a year (1908) at Hastings, Nebraska. In 1909 he came to Texas to start 44 years of service at The University of Texas. He started as an instructor, rose through the ranks to professor, and upon retirement to Professor Emeritus.

In his early years Professor Whitney's outstanding accomplishments at The University of Texas were of two facets, (1) he shared in and sometimes alternated in teaching the fine geology field courses started by the late Dr. Hal P. Bybee, and (2) he inaugurated paleontological studies at The University of Texas, neglected since the short tenure (one year) of R. T. Hill as Professor of Geology in 1887-88. At this time Professor Whitney started one of the earliest courses in micropaleontology in the world. It was second in North America, and only by about three months, to a similar course inaugurated at The University of Chicago. The early days of micropaleontology in the oil industry were dominated by Whitney's students, one of whom (Miss Alva C. Ellisor) was honored in February of 1962, by the Department of Geology at The University of Texas, for outstanding service to the geological profession.
Much of the paleontology of Texas, published during the 1920's, was published by Whitney's students.

In addition to English and a small spattering of other languages, Whitney spoke ancient Greek and German. The latter language served him well from 1915 to 1935, during which years he spent much of his time mapping geology around the older, German settled, villages of Hays, Comal, and Blanco Counties.

Dr. Whitney was never a military man, and was probably far too independent to have ever made a good soldier. However, having learned the machinist trade as a youngsters, during the first world war he organized and headed the automotive Camp Mabry shop, associated with the training camps at Austin, and served at least in an advisory capacity to similar training shops throughout Texas. His machinist skill was an asset throughout his life for various projects such as (1) cutting a ring gear to repair a station wagon in Trans-Pecos Texas, (2) building his own photographic and dark room equipment, (3) manufacturing machined models for demonstrating problems in structural geology, (4) developing a method of copper plating wax models so that they would not collapse in excessive summer heat, (5) making his own photographic chemicals and emulsified papers during World War II when they were unobtainable through normal channels, (6) to numerous other instruments, including in his laboratory at his home on Wooldridge Drive in Austin, a mechanical computer which he designed on the principle of an abacus, and built of spare typewriter, adding machine, speedometer, and other miscellaneous parts. The figures were put into the machine by inserting a pencil in a hole and removing up or to the left the desired number of digits. The answer was read from a speedometer dial at the bottom of the contraption.
Professor Whitney slept but little, at least his neighbors said, he seldom retired before 2 a.m. and was usually active by 5 a.m. Dr. Whitney's laboratory, in addition to extensive fossil collections, contained a wood-working lathe, a metal working lathe, and various other machinist paraphernalia. His independence led to extremes beyond the experience of the normal. Being a machinist he continually changes the locks and keys to his laboratory so that only he could gain access. This kept out such, in his opinion, busy-bodies as janitors, fire marshals, and various and sundry administrative officials. Dr. Whitney was the third chairman of the Geology Department of The University of Texas, serving in that capacity for nine years. During this period the Geology Department started its great pre-World War II growth. When a doctoral program was inaugurated by the Department of Geology at The University of Texas, the first doctorates were supervised by Professor Whitney.

Professor Whitney's list of publications is not large; neither are those of his colleagues during the middle-30-years of the Geology Department at The University of Texas. But for some success may be measured in other ways. Whitney's students have published more than their share of the geology of the Gulf Coast, and the measure of Professor Whitney's contribution to The University of Texas, to the State of Texas, and to the profession of geology, is in the tremendous contribution that his students have made to the Texas economy through geology; to science through publication and research; and to culture through the inspiration they have shared with and given to others.

Professor Whitney's moral courage was above criticism. In later years after Dr. Whitney's retirement, Mrs. Whitney suffered an unfortunate incapacitating accident. Professor Whitney, in spite of the discomfort of a serious hernia, for four years was the sole nurse, and designer of
convalescent furniture. Such moral stamina seldom is encountered in the modern age of social welfare.

Professor Whitney was a member of the Scottish Rites bodies in Austin, of the American Association of Petroleum Geologist, the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, the Geographic Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sigma Xi, and a fellow of the Geological Society of America. In 1953, after 44 years of service at The University of Texas, Professor Whitney was honored by the geology alumni of The University of Texas, many of whom had been his students.

Dr. Whitney's greatest contribution was as a teacher, was in the continued impact of his students on geologic science, and, in the petroleum industry, on the economic welfare of Texas.

Joseph R. Smiley, President
The University of Texas

Eugene W. Nelson, Secretary
The General Faculty

These resolutions were prepared by a Special Committee consisting of Professors Keith Young, Chairman, C. P. Boner and F. M. Bullard.