

Welcome to Earth Matters – field notes on the geology of New Mexico’s

Enchanting Landscapes. Celebrating Earth Science Week, I’m Phil Miller.

I learned a lot about geology as a child, collecting rocks and so on. I took Earth Science in high school, but I did poorly at first, because it was too easy and I was bored. Once my teacher, Mr. Jaragese, understood my dilemma, he took me on field trips, engaged me with more complex tasks, and asked me to show up early to help with tests. That was the best experience ever.

One day Mr. Jaragese passed around a beautiful reddish orange polished rock, and dared anyone to lick it, no one was willing. Lick a rock I thought, fine I’ll do it. So I licked the rock and then was told it was a coprolite, fossil dinosaur poo. Everyone oohed, ahed, and laughed and I said hey, it was just a rock. But, it was more than just a rock; it was a really old rock and I was holding and licking a piece of a dinosaur.

However, I wanted to be a computer animator, making movies and special effects. I got a degree in Computer Science with a focus in computer graphics and animation. I was chasing what I thought I wanted to do, but really missed the thrill I felt in holding that dino poo. Finally I returned to school at NMT to get back to my original passion, rocks. Fortunately, the NMBGMR, needed a Cartographer (someone who makes maps, and makes them beautiful). They would pay me to use the knowledge that I got in my previous degree.

It’s been hard working full time and going to school, but, I am 7 months away from completing a B.S. in Earth Science. I work as the Map Production Coordinator using both of my degrees to turn the maps the geologists make into even more beautiful maps, accessible to anyone. Reminding everyone to go for their dreams, never give up, and

**Celebrate Earth Science Week; I’m Phil Miller of the Bureau of Geology at
New Mexico Tech.**