

In Memoriam - Frank Titus 1928-2013

Bruce Thomson

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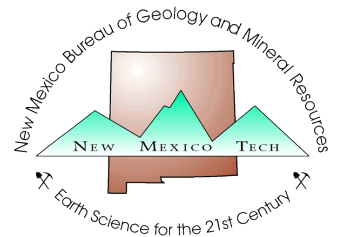
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New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources
New Mexico Institute of Mining & Technology
801 Leroy Place
Socorro, NM 87801-4796

<https://geoinfo.nmt.edu>



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In Memoriam—Frank Titus 1928–2013

Frank Titus passed away on the winter solstice just before Christmas, 2013. Frank was born in 1928 in Los Angeles and came to New Mexico in 1956 to work for the U.S. Geological Survey after completing a master's degree in geology at the University of Illinois. While working for the USGS he continued his graduate studies at UNM and received a Ph.D. in 1969 in geology from the University of New Mexico. His dissertation was on the hydrogeology of the Estancia Basin, a topic that he remained passionate about for the rest of his life. Frank joined the faculty at New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology and was with them from 1965 to 1973. During this time he served as the New Mexico Tech Hydrology Staff Advisor to the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources.

In his work with the U.S. Geological Survey and later New Mexico Tech, Frank was author or co-author of a number of important studies on the hydrogeology and ground water resources of central New Mexico that are still widely cited today. He remained active in academia, and from 2001 to 2004, he was the Senior Outreach Hydrogeologist for the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources.

Frank left New Mexico in 1973 and began a new career as a consulting hydrogeologist. In this capacity he managed Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) on large projects throughout North America. He moved back to New Mexico in 1987 and became manager of hydrology on the large Department of Energy, Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action (UMTRA) program. He served as Science Advisor to Tom Turney, New Mexico State Engineer from 1994 to 2002. He remained active as a consulting hydrogeologist long after his formal retirement, most recently working to help prepare analyses of the geology and hydrogeology of the WIPP site in preparation for EPA recertification of the site.



Although Frank was widely recognized and respected for his technical work, many of the folks in the state's water professions agree that his most important contributions were those he made as a volunteer participant in the public conversation regarding the state's water resources and how they are utilized. He was active in the Middle Rio Grande Water Assembly and led this organization's preparation of the first water budget of the middle Rio Grande watershed in 1999. He was leading an effort to update this analysis at the time of his death. He wrote articles and gave presentations on domestic well regulation, water budgets, and water planning and management. Through this participation he gained a reputation as a thoughtful but forceful advocate for rational and hydrologically defensible planning and administration of the state's most precious resource. In his own words, Frank wanted "New Mexico to grow, but to keep looking like New Mexico." In his volunteer work Frank was considered by many to serve as the conscience of the water profession—an elder statesman who was not afraid to remind his younger colleagues of the need to balance political and economic issues of water management, with the technical realities of its availability and its cultural importance to the citizens of New Mexico.

Frank was one of a very few water professionals in New Mexico who, through decades of teaching, research, consulting, and public advocacy, earned the distinction of being considered a legend. He will be missed.

—By Bruce Thomson,
University of New Mexico