

## In Memory of Philip J. Sterling

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# In Memory of Philip J. Sterling

1933-2019

Phil Sterling was born in Paducah, Kentucky on July 19, 1933. His father was a MD and administrator in the US Army and while growing up he moved around quite frequently. He was very active as a professional geologist for almost 50 years. He enrolled at UNM in 1951 with a Navy scholarship. At UNM he majored in geology and became interested in mineralogy and crystalline rocks. He also developed a relationship with the Anaconda Company's Butte, Montana mining operations. Upon graduating in 1955 he entered the Marine Corps and served for two years. Upon discharge he returned to work in a deep Butte underground mine. He credits this work at Butte as laying the foundation for developing his career. After several months he left Anaconda and worked a number of years for the Arkansas Geological Survey where he did research and field work, publishing a number of well thought out papers for the survey.

Conoco established a metallic exploration program in the late 1960s and Phil signed on. After initially exploring for copper out of Tucson he was assigned to the Albuquerque District as District Geologist in 1971 where he was in charge of a wide area of exploration for a number of commodities ranging from base metals to heavy sands. He was especially interested in the mineral potential of the Cerrillos Hills, Ortiz Mts. and San Pedro Mts. Each of these areas yields a different suite of commodities due to magmatic differentiation, which Phil had very carefully worked out. He also picked up properties in the vicinity of the Pecos mine, in the southern part of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and drilled out a sizable copper-molybdenum deposit. He left Conoco in 1981 to start his own consulting company, Sterling Exploration, where he continued to work exploring for metallic mineral deposits in the southwest, Mexico, and Alaska.

Phil was a successful consulting geologist who formed Sterling Exploration to manage geological field studies, acquired and sold mineral properties that contained gold and/or porphyry copper systems. Phil and his business partner staked the Tombstone South Property in 1986. Sterling Exploration was a successful company which leased or sold mineral prospects to small and large mining companies. Phil retired around 2010. Phil retired around 2010, and enjoyed spending his leisure time in Las Vegas, Nevada. We will miss hearing Phil talking about economic mineral deposits within the greater Southwest.

Phil had many personal attributes that facilitated his geological work. He had a very good sense of humor and an engaging personality, and was well known in the metal-exploration business. He was well liked and respected by his employees and an excellent mentor, especially to the younger ones, many of whom went on to meaningful achievements in a growingly tough business. He was serious about finding new metallic deposits and very much result oriented.

Phil passed away on August 2nd, and his wife Lucille died one week later. Services were held on Monday, August 26, 2019 at Holy Family Catholic Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Phil and his wife were buried at the Santa Fe National Cemetery, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

—Contributed by Thomas A. Parkhill and David Wentworth