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Memorial of Joseph John Fahey July 30, 1901-June 29, 1980

GEORGE T. FAUST

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Joseph John Fahey, a longtime chemist, mineralogist, and geochemist on the staff of the U. S. Geological Survey in Washington, D. C., and later at Reston, Virginia, died on June 29, 1980, at the age of 78.

"Joe" as he was familiarly known, was born of Irish ancestors in Messina, New York, on July 30, 1901. His family later moved to the Washington, D. C. area where he received his schooling. His reminiscence of his birthplace was that "it was frightfully cold." Joe was educated in the strict schools of the Jesuit order, and this schooling gave him an excellent background in the basic subjects of the academic curriculum, especially in Latin and Greek. He retained a working knowledge of Latin; his salutation to me and to some others in the morning was "Dominus vobiscum," and he expected the correct reply. Joe's college education began at Catholic University, where he studied chemistry from 1919 through 1921. He felt that he needed a broader base in chemistry, so he transferred to the George Washington University in the District of Columbia in 1921.

In 1922, he was employed as a laboratory assistant in the Chemical Laboratory of the Bureau of Public Roads, U. S. Dept. of Agriculture, where he learned about the chemistry of engineering materials used in the construction of roads—rocks, soils, asphaltic materials, and oils. He continued his education at the George Washington University, at night, until 1925. The present consortium existing between the universities and colleges of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia did not exist at that time; Joe had all the credits for a B.S. degree and was partially prepared for an M.S. degree, but the nontransferability of credits and other logistical problems between institutions blocked the attainment of these degrees. Joe was never bitter about this situation—he felt that rules were rules.

Joe remained at the Bureau of Public Roads until 1927, during which time he gained some knowledge of German and French. He was then



appointed a junior chemist in the Chemical Laboratory of the U. S. Geological Survey, and this significantly changed his career. At the laboratory, Joe was carefully trained in the chemical analysis of minerals and rocks by George Steiger, Roger C. Wells, John G. Fairchild, and Waldemar T. Schaller. Under these masters, he became a superior chemical analyst. His analytical background was enriched by associations with William F. Foshag of the U. S. National Museum and James I. Hoffman of the U. S. Bureau of Standards. Most of his teachers of analytical chemistry were trained by William F. Hildebrand. Joe liked to say that these teachers had decreed that he must hew to the line of scientific rectitude, and he never forgo! it.

Under the tutelage of Waldemar Schaller, Joe

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