To: Award Recipient

Congratulations on being named the recipient of the "Bill and Grace Waldschmidt Scholarship Fund."

I thought that you might be interested in knowing who the Waldschmidts were and how the scholarship fund came about.

Bill taught in the Geology Department for twenty years, beginning in 1922. He was the kind of teacher we have all enjoyed, who becomes a special part of our Mines education. Both he and Grace were very popular with the students and their home was always open to them.

After he retired from teaching, they moved to Midland, Texas, in 1944. He was a highly respected member of the geological profession in the Permian Basin and they both were very active in civic affairs. They had no children so, besides their nieces and nephews, their many friends became their family. Grace died in 1983 and Bill lived alone in their home until his death in 1990 at the age of 93. At that age, he could still explain anything you wanted to know about the geology of the Front Range.

Attached is a more complete history of Bill when he received an honorary membership in the American Association of Petroleum Geologists in 1979. He was also awarded an honorary membership in the CSM Alumni Association in 1981.

A number of years ago, a fund was established here in Midland by alumni to help a local student go to Mines. Because of their connection to the school and interest in the students and alumni, the fund was named for the Waldschmidts. It was later transferred up to the CSM Foundation and was dormant for many years. In 1988, in accordance with Bill's wishes, it was changed into an endowed scholarship fund for students in geology and geological engineering. Upon his death, part of his estate went into the fund.

Bill and Grace would be pleased to have had a small part in helping you achieve your education at Mines.
William Albert Waldschmidt
Honorary Member
American Association of Petroleum Geologists

Success and enjoyment in living as a student, teacher, research worker, miner, petroleum consultant, and in civic duties have been the story of William A. Waldschmidt’s life.

Bill, as he is known to all his friends, was born April 14, 1897, in Riverton, Nebraska. He attended elementary and secondary schools in Lead, South Dakota, where his father was employed as a miner in the Homestake Mine. Bill, himself, worked as a mucker in the local mines during vacations while attending high school. This mining and geologic environment of the Black Hills undoubtedly influenced him to select geology as a career. Upon graduation from high school in 1916, matriculation in the South Dakota School of Mines was a logical sequence. He aided himself financially by working as a student assistant and as a collector of minerals in the surrounding Black Hills area. In 1920, he received a bachelor’s degree in metallurgical engineering and in 1921 an engineer of mines degree. The following year he studied under Waldemar Lindgren at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, receiving a master’s degree in geology in 1922. While earning a living in the following years he managed to find time to satisfy the requirements for a doctoral degree in geology at the University of Colorado in 1938.

On June 30, 1918, Bill enlisted in the Engineers Reserve Corps and was called to active duty October 28, however, World War I ended two weeks later. He remained in the Engineers Reserve Corps as a second lieutenant until 1942, when the United States entered World War II. Because he was employed in an essential profession, he was not inducted.

Bill commenced a long and successful teaching career in the fall of 1922 at the Colorado School of Mines where, except for two years, he remained until 1943. He taught basic geology courses, mostly those requiring the microscope in the study of minerals, ores, rocks, and microfossils. Bill’s knowledge of practical geology, gleaned from years of experience as a teacher and a consultant, made him one of the teachers most sought after by students at Colorado School of Mines. As one of his students told me, “He could tell you by glancing at a mineral specimen where it came from.”

Bill married Mary Grace Love on March 10, 1928. Bill and Gracie Waldschmidt’s home in Denver became the headquarters for many students, especially those too far away from home to leave the campus during holidays. After leaving teaching, Bill and Gracie remained active in the Colorado School of Mines Alumni Association and, because of this interest, a fund was created in Midland, Texas, by ex-students at the Colorado School of Mines. This fund was designated the “Bill and Gracie Waldschmidt Student Loan Fund.”

In addition to a full teaching load, Bill’s services as a consultant were in demand by the mining and petroleum industries during extra hours and vacation periods. From 1924 through 1927 and 1929 through 1931, he examined well samples in his spare time for the Midwest Refining Co. of Denver: from 1927 to 1929 he was surface and subsurface geologist for that company, mapping structures and measuring cross sections in...
Wyoming and Montana. In 1935, L. M. Hughes, of Denver, employed Bill to locate a test well on his property in Archuleta County, Colorado; that well became the discovery well of the Gramps field. Bill guided the development of the field.

Upon leaving teaching in 1943, he entered the petroleum industry full time as exploration geologist for Case, Pomeroy and Co. in Midland, Texas. In 1945, he joined his close friend, Ronald DeFord, as a geologist for Argo Oil Corp.

Bill began a full consulting career in 1951 when he opened an office in Midland, Texas. The two main clients were: Kennicott Copper Corp., for whom he guided exploration and development work on oil properties in the Delaware basin; and Dowel Inc., for whom he did petrographic research studies of oil and gas reservoir rocks.

Teaching a full load at Colorado School of Mines and consulting for mining and petroleum companies during one’s spare time were not conducive to the production of scientific papers. However, Bill managed to publish at least 30 papers on mineralogy, economic geology, stratigraphy, and petroleum geology. His more important papers on petroleum geology were: “The Value of Oil Well Samples,” “Characteristics of the Older Cretaceous Formations of Northeastern Colorado,” “Cementing Materials in Sandstones and Their Probable Influence on Migration and Accumulation of Oil and Gas,” and (with P. E. Fitzgerald and C. L. Lumsford) “Classification of Porosity and Fractures in Reservoir Rocks.”

Bill has been an active member of AAPG since 1925. He was chairman of the Resolution Committee in 1942 and served on the Publicity Committee that year. He also served on the Research Committee, 1946, 1947, and 1948; Business Committee, 1951, 1952 (vice-chairman), 1956, and 1957; and Committee for Publication, 1953, 1954, 1960, 1961, and 1962 (chairman). Before there were separate offices of secretary and treasurer, Bill was secretary-treasurer for two terms, 1955 and 1956.

Bill was very active at the local level in geology society affairs. He served as vice-president (1947) and as president (1948) of the West Texas Geological Society, which elected him an honorary life member. He is a member of SEPM and served as president of the Permian Basin Section in 1958.

The Waldschmids were active in civic and cultural activities wherever they resided. Both were involved in the organization of the Midland Community Theater and both served on the Board of Governors. Because of their many contributions, this organization made them honorary life members.

For his outstanding contributions to the profession of geology, William Albert Waldschmidt has been awarded in 1979 honorary membership in The American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

George R. Gibson
Response from William A. Waldschmidt

Being chosen as a 1979 recipient of The American Association of Petroleum Geologists Honorary Membership award was indeed a most heartwarming and pleasant surprise. To express my appreciation may be somewhat difficult because, when one has joined the ranks of octogenarians, words do not come to mind so readily as they did in younger and more active years.

In receiving this honor I alone should not take all the credit. Had it not been for the many individuals from whom I have received encouragement and help throughout the years, my interest and what little I have accomplished in the geologic profession might never have materialized. In this response I wish to mention some of these individuals.

As a teenager my interest in school was minimal but, because of constant persuasion of my father and mother, I did graduate from the Lead High School and to them I am thankful. L. P. Dove, my science teacher, was also helpful during this period of indecision, and it was he who finally convinced me that I should continue my education at the South Dakota State School of Mines at Rapid City.

At the School of Mines, although I was majoring in mining and metallurgy, I was fortunate in being given a job in the geology department. To J. J. Runner, who headed that department, I am indebted because it was through his influence that I gradually switched from mining and metallurgy to geology.

Naturally, mining geology seemed to be the logical field to follow so, after receiving my engineer of mines degree in 1921, I went to Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study under Waldemar Lindgren, the noted ore-deposits geologist. There, I was also fortunate to have H. W. Shimer as my instructor in paleontology.

Although I had no special interest in teaching after receiving my master’s degree, Lindgren thought that the position open at the Colorado School of Mines might be interesting work for me so I applied for and got the job. During my 19 years of teaching there I worked under F. M. Van Tuyl and with J. Harlan Johnson, who, incidentally, had been a classmate in the class of 1920 at the South Dakota School of Mines. Those years of teaching were enjoyable and inspiring: the students respected the faculty and the faculty respected the students. It is disturbing to me that such mutual respect is lacking in many of our present-day schools. To the students of the Colorado School of Mines who through the years have been friends and associates I express my appreciation.

My real push into petroleum geology came in 1924 when John H. Wilson, an employee of the Midwest Refining Co., asked if I would be interested in examining samples from a well being drilled by that company. I took the job and fortunately was retained on a part-time basis and then two years full-time until Midwest was absorbed by the Stanolind Oil and Gas Co. R. Clare Coffin and John G. Bartram were my immediate supervisors. Who could ask for better bosses?

I cannot overlook members of the AAPG headquarters staff in Tulsa, especially Robert H. Dott and J. P. D. Hull, who were always willing and ready to help with any problem.
Another person to whom I am especially indebted is my wife, Grace. Through the years she has typed and edited my reports and manuscripts; has served as rodman on some of my surveying jobs; has supplemented the family income by working; and has been my excellent, devoted wife for 51 years.

I am proud to be a member of AAPG. I thank the Executive Committee, the Advisory Committee, the Awards Committee, and all others who have been responsible in designating me a 1979 recipient of honorary membership in The American Association of Petroleum Geologists.

William Albert Waldschmidt

AAPG Bulletin
September 1979

Grace: 7-17-83
Bill: 12-28-90