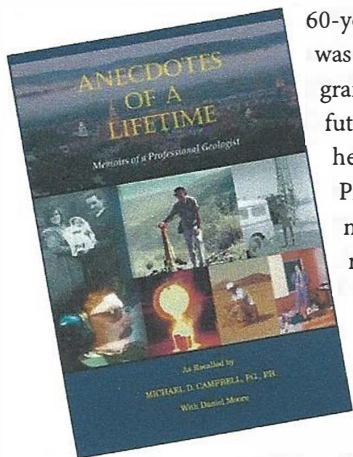


Michael D. Campbell: Anecdotes of a Lifetime

Offered Edits to *Caroline Wachtman*

“Grandpas have stories,” says Michael Campbell, who recently published his memoirs in a book called *Anecdotes of a Lifetime, Memoirs of a Professional Geologist*. Campbell recalls stories covering nearly eight decades, beginning with his childhood in Ohio and continuing through his nearly

60-year career. “The principal objective was to create a record for my children, my grandchildren and those families in the future about their geologist Grandpa,” he says. He and his wife, Mary (a Professional Genealogist), have been married for almost 50 years and raised 5 children (two sons and three daughters, all of whom have one or more college degrees in geology, medicine, psychology, archaeology, or education.



In addition, Campbell hopes that readers will see “how persistence and dedication can be the key to a successful professional and personal life.” His account speaks to a new generation of geologists as he offers insights into building a resilient and rewarding career. Careful reading of Campbell’s nearly 456 pages of anecdotes and opinions yields the following advice: making mistakes can lead to better decision-making; build maturity and confidence through work experience; and, a resilient and flexible career is based on having diverse geoscience skills.



Campbell describes himself as being risk averse, a trait that served him well during international mining environmental projects in 1960s to 1980s and as the Regional Technical Manager and Chief Hydrogeologist in charge of evaluating and remediating soil and groundwater contamination cases at Dupont from 1990-1994. Conservatively managing risk has also advantaged Campbell’s career as an independent consultant on environmental and mining issues. By 2023, Campbell had served as an expert witness, assisting both plaintiffs and defendants, on more than 40 cases.

The path to these roles was marked by learning experiences. Campbell recalls that during his high school years he enjoyed building and testing small rocket engines. He built a makeshift lab space in his parents’ basement to investigate solid-fueled rocket propulsion and set up a test stand in the backyard. Campbell on

one occasion in 1957 stood up behind the low blast barrier too quickly and the firing engine exploded and he received shrapnel shattering his upper-arm bone. Patience and following protocols became the unintentional lesson that day. As he spent the next few weeks recovering in the hospital, Campbell says he recognized his limits and realized that being a rocket engineer was not in his future, because of that no Vietnam War for him.

In another story, Campbell recalls taking on a part-time job during college at Ohio State. He got a job waiting tables and cooking at a local “greasy spoon.” Campbell occasionally noticed a large, black Lincoln sedan would pull up to the back door and a bag would be exchanged with the restaurant’s owner. Soon, he was asked by the restaurant’s manager to transport briefcases of cash to the bank. Campbell said alarm bells were raised when the briefcase — to which he was handcuffed — came undone and he found stacks of crisp hundred-dollar bills. This was obviously more money than the restaurant could reasonably make serving pancakes and burgers to students. He soon realized that he had unwittingly been lured into a money laundering operation, and he found an excuse to quietly leave the job. While it may not have been apparent at the time, Campbell was learning to be cautious in business interactions and trust his instincts when something seemed too good to be true.

BUILD CONFIDENCE AND MATURITY THROUGH WORK EXPERIENCE

In 1961, Campbell began college at San Bernardino Valley College in California, near where his grandfather lived.

After a year, he transferred to the Ohio State University OSU) to continue studying geology, but struggled to maintain his course grade-point average in psychology, calculus, etc. Friends, gym, girlfriends and fraternity activities, combined with 3-meals of part-time work per day competed for his time. He soon realized he needed money to attend school and geology could wait. After this first year in college in California, he worked at Anchor Hocking, the world’s leading glassware manufacturers, located in Lancaster, Ohio. His job involved using a jack hammer to break apart hot, melted glass coatings on the inside of the cooling blast furnace.

Then, Campbell periodically took quarters off to work at Diamond Power. After his second year of college, he took a year off to work for Diamond Electronics. He says that these work experiences gave him significant self-confidence and helped him develop professional skills, including being reminded by his boss that work started at 9 a.m. instead of 10 a.m., he recounts, although he generally worked late at the office.

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When he returned to Ohio State, he enrolled in a hydrogeology course with Dr. Jay H. Lehr. Campbell explains that Lehr was different from many of the other professors because he genuinely enjoyed teaching and engaging students. Lehr hired him as a research assistant to build groundwater models and became a mentor to him. "The more encouragement I got, the better the grades," he says. The work experience buoyed him throughout the rest of his time at Ohio State and to graduation in 1966.

A RESILIENT AND FLEXIBLE CAREER

"Before the student graduates, he/she should diversify the curriculum undertaken," says Campbell, who focused his studies on hydrogeology and mining, but also studied geophysics among other disciplines. He explained that geoscience is an integrated discipline, so it is important to have an integrated course of study.

Campbell says that his strong base in both mining and hydrogeology allowed him to be more resilient to job market trends. For example, his first job after college graduation was as a mining geologist for Conoco based in Sydney, Australia. Six years later, the uranium mining industry had declined, so Campbell pivoted back to hydrogeology and was appointed Director of the National Water Well Association (NWWA) Research Facility in Columbus, Ohio which was then moved to Rice University in Houston, Texas.

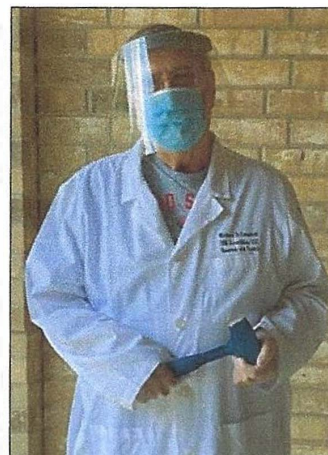
He was awarded a Rice U. Mills Bennett Fellowship. While at Rice, and after a few interesting anecdotes, he earned a master's degree in Geology and Geophysics. He then pivoted back to focus on mining issues as Manager of the Alternate Energy Group for Keplinger and Associates, Inc. in 1976* and later founding a mining consulting firm in 1982. In 1986, Campbell again pivoted back to hydrogeology as a consultant for engineering companies and then as a Regional Technical Manager and Chief Hydrogeologist for recently formed Dupont environmental group. As a consultant, he says that he was also routinely called on to serve as an expert witness. "Litigation is an integral part of business and of the science of hydrogeological and mining projects," he explains.

For current students considering a career in geology, Campbell advises to study a diverse curriculum. "They should take all the geology courses they can to explore what part of geology they find most interesting," he says. He predicts that the next generation of geologists will be mining the moon or asteroids for rare elements and critical minerals, so having planetary geology experience will be valuable. In addition, he concluded that environmental work on industrial clean-ups will continue.

Also, the oil and gas industry, critical mineral exploration and mining will remain strong sources of employment.

Campbell encourages early-career professionals to be active in their local geological societies, including the HGS. He says that making and maintaining friendships with other geologists has been integral to his success.

In addition, he has made many dinner meeting presentations of the HGS Engineering & Environmental Committee since the mid-1970s through the 2016.**



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GOING FORWARD WHILE LOOKING BACK

As Campbell reflects on his career, he says he is pleased with his work history and accomplishments. He was appointed Chairman of the Uranium and REE Committee of the Energy Minerals Division of AAPG from 2004 to 2021 and was elected President of the Energy Minerals Division of AAPG in 2010. He has also won numerous awards and honors, including

being elected as a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, the Australian Institute of Geoscientists and the London Geological Society. Campbell serves as Vice President of Eastern Texas of the American Institute of Professional Geologists (AIPG) and was awarded a national leadership citation from the organization in 2015.

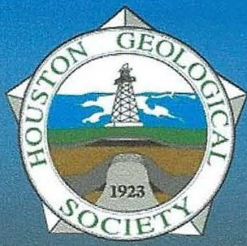
In 2004, he was inducted into the Lancaster (Ohio) High School School Distinguished Hall of Fame for "outstanding contributions to the fields of geology and hydrogeology." He is currently serving as Principal and Chief Geologist and Chief Hydrogeologist for I2M Consulting, LC in Katy, Texas.

For more on Campbell's Memoirs, see: ([here](#)). Or, purchase the hardback, paperback or the Kindle E-book (preferably) on Amazon: *Anecdotes of a Lifetime: Memoirs of a Professional Geologist*. Amazon.com: ([here](#)).

* Note: In 1977, Campbell also led the publication of "Geology of Alternate Energy Resources," by the Houston Geological Society serving as editor and contributing five chapters ([here](#)).

** Note: Campbell HGS presentations (1970s to 2016) ([here](#)).

For more on his background, see his CV ([here](#)).



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