

# FIELD & LABORATORY

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## John Daniel Boon (1874-1952)

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In the death of John Daniel Boon, for a quarter-century a professor of physics in Southern Methodist University, our academic community has lost one of its most distinguished citizens.

He was born near Thorp Spring, Hood County, Texas, on July 1, 1874, and died, after two years' illness, at Dallas, Texas, on February 1, 1952. He was the son of George Boon, native of Appledore, Kent, England, and Catherine Murchison, a native of Tennessee. His early years were spent on the home farm, and his early education was gained in the preparatory department of Add-Ran College [later Texas Christian University], then at Thorp Spring. After the death of his father in 1891, Boon engaged in the grocery business at near-by Granbury, at the same time intermittently attending Granbury College. He spent two terms at the University of Texas (winter and spring of 1899), and in 1901 received the B.S. degree at Granbury College. He spent the summer quarter of 1902 in study at the University of Chicago, and also studied at the University of Wisconsin during the summers of 1907, 1925, and 1927.

He taught at Granbury College in the fall of 1898 (as an undergraduate), and as Professor of Science during the years 1899 to 1901. He was professor at John Tarleton College, Stephenville, Texas, from 1901 to 1905; and at Polytechnic College at Fort Worth (later, Texas Woman's College) from 1905 to 1919. In the latter year, he came to Southern Methodist University as Associate Professor of Physics; was advanced to a full professorship in 1925; became in 1929 head of the department of physics (on the death of President Robert S. Hyer); and retired with the title of professor-emeritus in 1944, after 25 years' service. In all of his earlier positions, he taught several sciences, but was especially interested in physics, geology, and astronomy. After coming to Southern Methodist University, he for many

years (1919-41) taught a section of elementary geology, in addition to his courses in physics.

He was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1901-52); of the Texas Academy of Science (1899-1903), and was elected an honorary life-fellow of the same, December, 1951; a charter member (1902) of the Electrochemical Society; a member of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific; and of the Meteoritical Society. He was an original member and onetime president of the Dallas Astronomical Society.

Lecture courses which he especially developed during his twenty-five years' connection with Southern Methodist University, were ones in Advanced Optics, Modern Theories, and Astrophysics. He gave generous service to other phases of academic work outside his teaching. For many years he evaluated for the Registrar's office transcripts of credits from other colleges. For ten years he served on the Faculty Committee on Athletics, and for eleven years on the Student-Faculty Relations committee. He served at two periods on the University Council as representative of the Science & Mathematics division. From 1934 to about 1941 he was chairman of the important committee on Emergency Scholarships, which gave each year free tuition and fees to about fifty students of high scholarship who otherwise would not have been able to attend college. In many respects, the work he did on this committee surpassed in importance that of any other committee on which he served.

In the fall of 1932, Professor Boon was one of the principal agents in the setting up of this journal, *FIELD & LABORATORY*, and when later it seemed hardly possible for the University to continue its publication, his voice was strongly set against the discontinuance of the journal. To it he contributed, in the fifteen years from 1932 to 1947, 21 papers [see Bibliography]. Some of them dealt with laboratory experiments or demonstrations [1, 5, 15, 18, 22], or with broad problems, like the cause of glaciation [23], reciprocal reinforcement [26], the effect of the tilt of the earth's axis [25], and duststorms in the Southwest. [4.] In 1936, he published a paper containing for him original ideas regarding meteoric impact, a field in which he was later to make notable contributions. Stimulated in his interest by a younger colleague, Dr. Claude C. Albritton, Jr., newly returned from

Harvard, he became senior author of a series of joint papers dealing with what has come to be known as the "Boon-Albritton theory" in explanation of the formation of lunar craters, and the terrestrial formation of so-called "crypto-volcanic structures" by meteoritic impacts [7-14, 16-17, 20]. The views expressed in this series of papers were subjects of favorable critiques by Robert S. Dietz<sup>1</sup>, now of the U.S. Navy Electronics Laboratory at San Diego, and Reginald A. Daly<sup>2</sup>, then Sturgis-Hooper Professor of Geology [now emeritus] of Harvard University. The latter (writing of the Vredefort ring-structure of South Africa, which Boon & Albritton dealt with in their paper [8]), sought to publicize the Boon-Albritton idea in explanation of the geological phenomena in question. Daly did this the more readily because "they [had] developed their suggestion with extreme brevity", and because their theory, owing to relatively obscure publication, 'had not received the attention that it deserved.' Daly's attitude was one of warm receptiveness, although he reserved a doubt that "compressional waves sent horizontally into flat-lying strata from the locus of meteoritic impact should be, as it were, stereotyped in the form of concentric anticlinal and synclinal folds in those beds." The papers of this series on meteoritic impacts are among the most notable of those appearing in FIELD & LABORATORY.

Professor Boon possessed one of the most original minds that I have ever known; and he was an indefatigable worker. Every phase of his academic career was marked by integrity. He always was an inspiring teacher, especially of younger students. Not only was he most helpful to aspiring young students, but also to his younger colleagues, who often owed much to his generosity. His two sons<sup>3</sup> established for themselves careers in science. Modest and unassuming, he shrank from all pretense and self-glorification. To him the doing of the day's task, at the highest level of his ability, was his supreme satisfaction.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert S. Dietz, *Popular Astronomy*, LIV, 465-67, 1946; *Journal of Geology*, LIV, 359-75, 1946; *Science* [n.s.], CV, 42-43; Jan. 10, 1947.

<sup>2</sup>Reginald A. Daly, *Journal of Geology*, LV, 125-45, 1947.

<sup>3</sup>Professor Boon was married, June 5, 1900, to Miss Mary Alice Moore, daughter of President W. J. Moore of Granbury College. Their surviving children are Mrs. Mary B. Van Cleave, of Austin, Joseph L. Boon, Assistant Superintendent of Production, The Eastman Company, Rochester, N.Y., and Professor John D. Boon, Jr., of the Department of Geology, Arlington State College, Texas.

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