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Ellis William Shuler, Ph.D., LL.D.

When Dean Shuler retired from the deanship of the Graduate School of Southern Methodist University last September, the university lost from active teaching the last member of its original faculty of 1915. As associate professor and professor of geology for thirty-seven years, and as chairman of the Graduate Committee, or dean of the Graduate School for thirty years, Dean Shuler has been one of the bulwarks of the developing university. The editors of FIELD & LABORATORY take lively satisfaction in dedicating this volume of the journal to Dr. Shuler.

ELLIS WILLIAM SHULER was born on October 15, 1881, on the high slopes of the Appalachians, near Comers Rock, Grayson County, Virginia. He was the son of James Alexander Hamilton Shuler and his wife, Amanda (Harrington) Shuler. He was a son of the parsonage. In 1886, when Ellis was five years old, his father entered the Methodist ministry, in the Holston Conference of the Southern church. In this ministry his father spent a long life (until 1932), occupying circuits and stations in southwestern Virginia, eastern Tennessee, and (for a year) in western North Carolina. In 1899, young Shuler began college studies at Emory and Henry College in southwestern Virginia; he was graduated in 1903 with the degree of A.B. After teaching briefly in high schools of southwestern Virginia, he became a graduate student at Vanderbilt University. His major work for the M.A. degree was in English, under the notable Dr. Richard Jones. He also studied so effectively the natural sciences (under Drs. W. L. Dudley, George W. Martin, L. C. Glenn, and Professor Hollinshead) that during the years 1907-8, after taking his master's degree at Vanderbilt, he served as Instructor in Biology there.

In 1908, Mr. Shuler was named professor of biology and geology at Polytechnic College, Fort Worth, Texas, and held

this position until 1913, when he commenced his work for the doctorate in geology at Harvard University. There he received the master's degree in 1914, and the doctorate in 1915. He came to Southern Methodist University at its inauguration, in the fall of 1915. He was advanced in 1918 from an associate- to a full professorship. In 1922 he became chairman of the Graduate Committee of the faculty, and in 1926 first dean of the Graduate School. At the same time he retained his place as professor and head of the geology department.

Among the honors that have come to Dean Shuler may be mentioned: Collins Prize Medal, on his graduation from Emory and Henry College in 1903, and the honorary LL.D. degree forty years later; Founder's Medal at Vanderbilt University, when he received his master's degree in 1907; fellow at Harvard, 1913-4; fellow, Geological Society of America, 1921; president of Conference of Deans of Southern Graduate Schools, 1942; honorary life member of the Dallas Petroleum Geologists, 1944; member, Society of the Sigma Xi, Harvard chapter, 1946; honorary member of Phi Beta Kappa, Gamma of Texas, 1952.

These are but the mileposts of a long career. What were the backgrounds of Dr. Shuler's life? His paternal grandfather, a Methodist exhorter who went to Indiana in an early day, is described as "a typical, little old German." Dr. Shuler does not recall him, if, indeed, he ever saw him. On the other hand, his maternal grandfather made a great impression on young Ellis. John C. Harrington, an English Freemason, who had come to America when but turned of age, had worked as a stone-mason on the capitol at Washington, and later had moved south. Gifted as a mechanic, with a love of the soil, and of agriculture, acting by general consent as a sort of judge among his neighbors, "he was an earthy, mighty sort of man." Possessed of broad acres, with his own cane mill, sugar pans, cider mill, big kettles for making apple butter, blacksmith shop, and grist and saw mills, he made a great impression on his grandson. There was a background for the young Ellis of pioneer life and thinking. The boy's mother was of an athletic type, an admirable horsewoman, and highly competent. When the boy was two years old, she resuscitated him after drowning, by carrying him for a half-mile at breakneck speed to the

place where his father, with men, was working. The commotion of the trip effectively restored respiration.

Ellis first discovered that he was near-sighted when he went to college. Poor vision had made games almost impossible for him as a boy, so he had become a book-lover. When his father was pastor at Pearisburg, Virginia (1894-98), a friend and benefactor, Mr. Taylor, turned the boy loose in his library. It was in Pearisburg that young Shuler first came in contact with the Virginia tradition of spacious living and generous hospitality.

Ellis always thought of Pearisburg as "home." It was here that he had a great teacher, one James H. Livesay, a graduate of the "Southwestern Normal School" (as it was then called) at Lebanon, Warren County, Ohio. A good disciplinarian, an excellent mathematician, a proficient botanist, Livesay bred in his pupil an abiding interest in mathematics and botany.

There were many phenomena to stimulate this intent boy's interest in natural things. Thus, while Ellis was living in Bland County, Virginia, in 1892, the year started out with a brilliant display of the Aurora borealis. The boy made the acquaintance (through his father, interested in such matters), of Winneke's Comet in April of that year. The day of July 25, 1892, was the hottest on record in the United States; many deaths were reported from sunstroke, and much suffering, in all of the states east of the Rocky Mountains. These were impressive events when the boy was only ten years old. But the most astounding experience, and one which went a long way in developing the mind of the future geologist was the "Giles County earthquake" of May, 1897. It had its epicenter near Pearisburg in Giles County; involved an area of some 280,000 square miles; and had an intensity of 8-9 on the Rossi-Forel scale. Dr. Shuler recalls the earthquake vividly: "It made a noise like a roaring train. The dust that arose made the mountains look like volcanoes, and there was great destruction to rocks and trees. Acres of rocks were comminuted; great rocks rolled down the sides of Angel's Rest (a tall peak near Pearisburg), and fissures and landslides appeared in likely places." Answering a telegram from the Rev. Mr. Shuler, the United States Geological Survey sent to Pearisburg for a week's investigation its staff member, Marius

R. Campbell, known especially for his studies on the geomorphic history of the eastern United States. On this occasion young Shuler learned from Mr. Campbell basic ideas of mountain-making and other geological phenomena. "We stood on a great flat rock of sandstone which jutted out over the trees many feet below us," said Dr. Shuler, many years later, in his book, *Rocks and Rivers*. "I breathed deeply. 'Mr. Campbell,' I said, 'what makes mountains?' He turned from the landscape and looked at me sharply. 'You are a funny kid', he said." And then Campbell told the boy.

During the years that Dr. Shuler was teacher at the Polytechnic College at Fort Worth he made two geological field trips under Harvard auspices. One was to Montana in 1910, with Professor J. B. Woodward; and one to Colorado the next summer with Professor William Morris Davis. These were great experiences, and turned Shuler in the direction of Harvard for graduate work in geology. Later (in 1916, when newly-appointed professor at Southern Methodist University) Dr. Shuler was a member of Harvard's "Shaler Memorial Expedition to the Southern Appalachians." With his advancement to a full professorship in 1918, and his diversion to administrative work in 1922, his duties took him from active field work, and thereafter his great service to geology was in the development of his department. And this work was in no sense inconsiderable. As a much-loved student has said of him, "he was the entire Staff for many years. Beginning with literally nothing in the way of library, laboratory equipment, or students, he now leaves us—after thirty-seven years of hard work—with a library adequate for research, with handsomely appointed facilities for laboratory work and teaching, with a five-man staff, and with a record of two hundred and thirty-nine graduates in geology."

—S. W. GEISER

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Ellis W. Shuler and the University Libraries

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One day, forty years ago, curious folk in Cambridge could have seen a tall, thin young man pushing a wheelbarrow load of books across the Harvard Yard. The books, about 35 volumes of the U.S. Geological Survey reports, were the beginnings of the Southern Methodist University geological collection.

While teaching at Polytechnic College at Fort Worth, Mr. Shuler enrolled for a Harvard geology field trip into Colorado, led by the eminent William Morris Davis. With his faculty for making friends, young Shuler soon endeared himself to the Harvard professor. This friendship was one of the reasons for Shuler's later going to Harvard for his doctoral degree in geology.

The wheelbarrow load of books was stored on the top shelf of a closet in their tiny Cambridge apartment, for Mrs. Shuler had learned early that there must always be space for books, no matter what else was crowded out.

During Shuler's years in Cambridge, more books were added to the top shelf—second-hand volumes bought here and there, and an occasional gift from Professor Davis. After getting his doctorate, when Shuler was planning to come to the newly-founded Southern Methodist University, his professor-friend called him into the library of the Davis home and said abruptly, "Here, Shuler, take all of these

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