

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

Charles Eugene Wier
1921–2019

Charles Eugene Wier was born on May 15, 1921 to Ethel and John Wier in Jasonville in the northwestern part of Greene County, Indiana. His parents divorced while he was young, and his mother moved to the northeastern United States. His father was a coal miner, and his grandmother raised Charlie on a farm east of Jasonville.

In the 1930s, Charlie served in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), part of a "New Deal" program initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to provide six months of construction training and six months of work on federal projects. He was paid \$30 a month, of which \$25 went to his grandmother and \$5 to Charlie. He trained as a mason and helped build a bridge in McCormick Creek State Park. Charlie then went to St. George, Utah, to build masonry retaining walls and bridges. Upon his return, his grandmother turned all of the saved money over to him in 1939 to attend Indiana University.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Charlie enlisted as a staff sergeant in the ROTC and obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in geology from IU in 1943. Charlie joined the army in 1943, and following basic training, he entered officer training school to become a first lieutenant, during which time he trained in chemical warfare and howitzers. He served as a paratrooper with the 11th U. S. Army Airborne, which was deployed to the southwest Pacific Theater. His unit made amphibious landings at Leyte and later Luzon to free Manila, Philippines. His only combat jump was for a battle at Aparri in northern Luzon. His next scheduled jump was to be into Japan, but it never happened. He finished his military career as a chemical engineer dismantling Japanese "backyard" nitrate factories.

The Indiana Geological Survey, a division of the Indiana Department of Conservation, came into existence in 1946 under the leadership of Dr. Charles F. Deiss, who was also the head of the IU Department of Geology (The IGS changed names in 2017 to add 'water' to the title and has been an IU institute since 1993). After Charlie returned to IU in 1946 and earned a degree in economic geology, Dr. Deiss selected him as head of the IGS Coal Section in 1949. Charlie's Masters of Arts thesis "Geology and Mineral Resources of the Jasonville Quadrangle" was published in 1950 as "Coal Investigations Map 1" by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). His entire thesis was published in 1952 as IGS Bulletin 6.

The IGS Coal Section was located in Loudon House, the site now occupied by the northwest corner of Ballantine Hall and included two other geologists, S. A. Friedman and H. C. Hutchison. Charlie recognized the need to identify specific coal beds or seams as an aid to fieldwork. Dr. Deiss contacted Butler University and hired a recent graduate paleobotanist, Dr. G. K. Guennell, and arranged to hire L. V. Miller as a coal chemist within the geochemistry section. Charlie had one hourly student who mainly worked on drafting and a full-time summer field assistant, R. L. Powell, hired in 1953. A few Coal Section publications were produced by geology department graduate students.

Charles Wier's Coal Section was compiling accurate information on active and abandoned coal mine locations and minable reserves of coal, using modern field mapping tools, such as USGS topographic maps at a 1:24,000 scale and Soil Conservation Service aerial photographs. The Coal Section used drilling logs by water-well drillers and oil field drilling records. Charlie wanted to quickly produce ½ inch-per-mile maps similar to those produced by G. H. Ashley in 1899, adding abundant new data produced by strip mining for coal with steam shovels and draglines. Eighteen Preliminary Coal Maps (PCM) were produced by Charlie and other Coal Section geologists. The first maps produced by Wier were PCM 1, 2, and 3, with the later ones aided by J. T. Stanley, and PCM 12 for Knox County, aided by R. L. Powell. Nineteen counties were mapped (northern Vermillion was included with Fountain and Warren counties and southern Vermillion was included with Parke County). Charlie produced

1:24,000 scale maps for the Jasonville, Linton, and Hymera quadrangles by 1953, the year he received his Ph.D. degree in geology.

The now Dr. Wier proposed to Dr. Deiss in 1957 that R. L. Powell prepare information of caves in Indiana. It was finished in 1961 and became a best seller. He also volunteered Powell to prepare information on the Falls of the Ohio River, a scenic and prolific fossil site, for the Indiana State Legislature to establish a state park in New Albany, Indiana, which was passed, even though the falls are in Kentucky.

Dr. Wier taught a course on Coal Geology in the geology department, starting in the fall of 1961, that was offered most years until 1974. With Dr. John Droste, he also taught for several years Environmental Geology for education majors. Charlie was a faculty advisor of theses and dissertations for 19 graduate students from 1950 to 1992.

Dr. Wier left the Coal Section in May 1974 for a year-long sabbatical to conduct foreign exploration for Amax International in Botswana, an enclave in South Africa, coal in Australia, and minerals in Borneo. He became vice president of Amax Coal Botswana in 1975, thus ending his IGS career. R. L. Powell was acting section head of the Coal Section in his absence. In 1985, Dr. Wier left Amax to become an adjunct professor of geology at Indiana University. He was a member of the Indiana Geological Survey mapping advisory committee for more than a decade, and he was a past commander of the Bloomington American Legion Post.

Dr. Charles E. Wier died May 5, 2019 at the age of 98. He was interred on his birth date, May 15, in the veterans section of the Valhalla Cemetery with full military honors.

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