

Tribute to Dr. Maynard M. Miller:

Last month, I had the honor of attending the 90th birthday celebration of one of my heroes, Dr. Maynard Malcolm Miller, at his historic home on East First Street in Moscow, Idaho. Through the years, I have made several journeys over the Palouse to visit and stay over with he and his wife, Mrs. Miller (Joan), now deceased. The home is a storehouse of geology and climbing books and cultural treasures from all over the world which always fascinated me. My Father, Charles, first met Dr. Miller at an earth science conference many years ago and it was there Dr. Miller passed on to Dad the opportunity I always wanted but had not known existed. Growing up hunting and backcountry skiing in Oregon and loving math and science, I was spellbound by the romance of exploring Alaska. Dr. Miller's Juneau Icefield Research Program (JIRP) offered it all: an expeditionary field science program traversing the high ice of the Juneau Icefield in Southeast Alaska! I applied for the 1988 Program and was accepted! I received a National Science Foundation fellowship which, years later, having founded an all-volunteer, non-profit conservation organization myself, I can appreciate the Millers' hard organizational work establishing grants for participants.

I still remember landing in Juneau for the first time and looking out the airplane window seeing the mountains rising above Gastineau Channel and feeling the excitement of a dream come true! I was immediately brought into the JIRP "family" of professors, family, colleagues, and friends with field trips to the snout of the Mendenhall Glacier, a salmon bake at Auke Bay, and carrying a large block of glacial ice in the 4th of July parade in Juneau. I was curious about everything and everyone I met. I participated in glacial surface velocity and strain rate measurements on the Icefield with German professors Dr. Walter Welsch and Dr. Klaus Blachnitzky, among the giants in my life. I am forever grateful for the awe and wonder I experienced as witness to the astounding and beautiful Creation of Alaska. Dr. Miller is a mentor to me and has given freely of his time providing me thoughtful professional advice and, as a Father's, comfort and love when life trials came my way. His kindness and concern are as an indelible mark on the way in which JIRP is operated from the "can-do" attitude instilled in students to the lamp left out as a beacon in the night for surveyors skiing in late from the field to a remote research camp, warm meal waiting inside.

I learned field expeditionary science, logistics, and operations which I applied to subsequent participation as a junior field staff member in 1990 and on two exploratory wilderness expeditions of my own leadership to ski traverse the Juneau Icefield from Skagway to Juneau (2001) and first climb Mount Blachnitzky high above the Gilkey Trench and Peak 6,500' above the Boucher Glacier (2004). My undergraduate student research led to my first published scientific journal article as a collaborator on glacial ice mechanics which has informed my chosen profession as a mechanical engineer designing medical devices for the benefit of mankind. Being on the Icefield for weeks at a time gave me the chance to think about the big picture early in my life: what kind of person and professional did I want to be, how would I develop and pursue my passions, and then simply having the time and freedom to wonder and take it all in. Thank you, Dr. Miller, for looming large in my life and for your generosity, inspiration, and love.

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