Andrew James Fergus’ Legacy of Community and Scientific Research

In 2018, The Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration Inc. (SME) Foundation was honored to recognize Andrew James Fergus (1916-2015) as a Legacy Club member. Mr. Fergus was born into a family of Montana ranching pioneers where his rural upbringing fostered a love of community, nature and science.

Mr. Fergus’ collegiate education began with an Associate degree from Billings Polytechnic Institute in Billings, Montana. He went on to serve as an assayer with North Moccasin Mines Syndicate operation at Kendall Mine in Lewiston, Montana. After relocating to Seattle to complete his Bachelors of Science in Metallurgical Engineering from the University of Washington in 1942, Mr. Fergus joined the U.S. Mining, Smelting & Refining Company at their Midvale Smelter near Salt Lake City. It was in Utah where Mr. Fergus met, and later married, Ethel Dean; the two were married in 1944, and had two children - Christopher James and Andrea Lee. The family eventually left Utah, returning to Washington State in the late 1950s when Mr. Fergus accepted an opportunity with Knob Hill Mine. Returning to Washington afforded Mr. Fergus the opportunity to serve as a researcher at Washington State University in the Department of Industrial Research, as well as maintaining a career with Boeing Aerospace Co. as a metallurgist. In 1960, Mr. Fergus moved the family to Oregon where he worked in minerals research with the United States Bureau of Mines (now the Albany Research Center). Mr. Fergus lived with his family in Albany from 1960 until his death in 2015.

Mr. Fergus’ love of research, the sciences and education afforded him the opportunity to volunteer his time with many community organizations throughout his adult life. He served in various offices, including president and chairman, in several organizations such as the Society of Mining Engineers of AIME, Sigma Xi Albany Chapter, Toastmasters International 706 and the National Federation of Federal Employees Local in Albany. Additionally, he volunteered his time with the Linn-Benton Telephone Crisis Line, and served nearly 40 years with the Boy Scouts of America, where he received the 1982 Silver Beaver Award; an award designated for adult leaders who have made an impact on the lives of youth through service. Mr. Fergus also dedicated his time in leadership positions within his church, and spent many years reading to first grade students at Lafayette Grade School.

Andrew Fergus’ Legacy Gift contribution was applied to the SME Ph.D. Fellowship Grant program to incent more qualified candidates to pursue academic careers and acquire a doctoral degree in the field of mining or extractive metallurgy/mineral processing at a U.S. accredited university.