

FOLKtales





The following Tale occurred in 1953, give or take a year. I did not personally observe the event; it was related to me by a close friend of mine, probably occurred during a meeting of Dr. Folk's Sedimentation class. (I was in Grad. School at that time, so the date is good). Dr. Folk had only recently joined the UT faculty, so his personality was not well known then. However, from what I later learned, I believe this fits with his lore.

Dr. Folk was seen to have a very pleasant countenance. He remarked that if you wait, it will come back; he was referring to the attractive "fiddle-back" jacket he was wearing, and which was fashionable, AGAIN.

Personally, I admire Professor Folk for his economical customs. A couple of other happenings seem to have had a theme somewhat similar. Both took place in the same, or following year as the Tale of the Jacket; the difference being is that I was present at these.

I was president of Sigma Gamma Epsilon, and we were to have the annual banquet. Dr. Folk graciously accepted to deliver a keynote address. Prior to which, when dinner was served, it being Friday, my good friend Jeremiah McCarhy, being Catholic, did not eat the turkey-breast entree. A true conservationist, Dr. Folk rose to the occasion, saved the morsel from destruction, then delivered a lively discourse on permeability.

In order to familiarize himself with some of the local geology, Dr. Folk accompanied Professor Sam Ellison and myself for an on-site survey of the area in Erath County that I was mapping. I was doing that as my theses project; Professor Ellison was head of supervising committee. In order to be on-site early in the day, we went to Stephenville, and spent the night in a hotel. Mistakenly, Dr. Folk was awakened much too early. Although the establishment's staff was not yet on duty, Dr. Folk decided he would eat anyway. He proceeded to do so, consuming something he possibly had brought, being prepared for unknown events that do transpire, when you are in the field!

Jimmie Russell, BS '52, MA '54

In the early 1950's, as an enthusiastic young geology major in the Department of Geology at the University of Texas,

I was eager to take as many geology courses as I could. One of the courses I chose was "Sedimentation" taught by a new young geology professor, Dr. Robert L. Folk, from Pennsylvania State.

After a few weeks in his course, I began to realize that this professor was very special and I always looked forward to Dr. Folk's next lecture. His presentations and enthusiasm for teaching was infectious among his students.

One of Dr. Folk's text books he used in the course was Stratigraphy and Sedimentation by Krumbein & Sloss of Penn St., only Dr. Folk called it Krumbein & "Slush."

I also vividly remember his "Black Board" illustrations using colored chalk. Frequently, Dr. Folk got so excited drawing his illustrations, he misplaced the eraser and he simply used the sleeves of his freshly laundered white shirt to wipe off the colored chalk drawing. Many times after his "colored chalk" lectures, Dr. Folk's shirt looked like a "rainbow."

One of Dr. Folk's hobbies was to try to identify and study the source of the sand grains and sediments deposited on the window sill of his office and one time he took several of us out to the east side of the "Old Geology Building" to observe and show us the dendritic drainage pattern of the soil that had washed out on the sidewalk.

Long after I graduated from the University of Texas, Dr. Folk continued to "Blaze Trails" in the study of submarine turbidities, sedimentation, and nanobacteria, just to name a few.

Down through the years I have followed Dr. Folk's accomplishments and achievements and have had the chance to visit and see him many times at geologic meetings, conventions and Jackson School of Geosciences functions.

I feel so very fortunate to have had the privilege and honor of taking courses with and knowing one of the truly "Giants of Geology", Dr. Robert L. Folk these many, many years.

The Department of Geology at the University of Texas and the Jackson School of Geosciences is so very fortunate to have had Dr. Robert L. Folk on its faculty.

I extend heartfelt best wishes to Dr. Robert L. Folk and his family.

Walter V. Boyle, BS '54, MA '55

I first became involved with Bob shortly after his arrival from Penn State. For the princely sum of 60 cents per hour I typed the initial work on his carbonate classification. Those hours were different than any other job I ever held. For example, sitting there concentrating on what I was trying to get on index cards, I would hear whooping and hollering from the inner office. After rushing in there to see if a rattle snake had made its way into the office, I was told Lou Gehrig had just hit a home run. Lou had been dead for many years but he still played in the game where license plate numbers, etc. were used to determine what happened.

Two or three decades later I stopped by his office to introduce him to my daughter – Krista Holland then and Krista Holland Parker now. Bob as usual was staring down the lens of his microscope. I called out to see if he had a minute. He stopped what he was doing and turned toward us. His eyes were still set for close, magnified images. As he started toward us he didn't recognize me until he was about 5 feet from us. He had in his hand what appeared to be a rock, possibly granite or syenite; I realize this does not fit the image of a carbonate geologist. As he approached he tossed the "rock" hitting me on the forehead. Happily, it turned out to be a sponge and a clean one at that. He told my daughter as he has to anyone to whom he has ever introduced me – "he was one of my former slaves." I must admit I was relatively well treated for a slave.

Krista remembers him for that particular incident as well as for a sedimentation course she took. I remember him for many things not the least of which is the effort he put in to attempt to educate me, both in class, on field trips, and typing the carbonate classification cards. Thanks Bob and HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

Bill Holland, BS '54

Thirty years after my Dad, I attended the University of Texas and also worked for Dr. Folk grading papers. I too am a proud "former slave!" Dr. Folk would amaze me at how he could figure the students final course grade on his slide rule FASTER than I could on my calculator. Thanks for the memories! Happy Birthday Dr. Folk!

Krista Holland Parker, BS '84



In the summer of '57 or '58 we were on a field trip with Dr. Folk and were passing through La Grange when someone suggested we drop by the famous Chicken Ranch. (That "someone" was probably me). Folk was all for it and as we pulled up in the UT bus, the Madam stepped out and said "You boys park that bus and come on in." We had a pleasant, but chaste, visit with her and some of her girls and then went back to Smithville.

It wasn't long after that the Chicken Ranch was closed by the governor after a busybody reporter in Houston ran a story about the place. The Chicken Ranch was later immortalized in the Broadway hit and movie "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas."

Bob Folk was, and is, the Best Little Professor in Texas.

Joe Christie, BS '58

Long before "Luigi" there was a young professor who brought an enthusiasm for teaching which affected the entire Geology Department. His physical stature, youth, limited resale wardrobe and bowl haircut were the perfect cover which prevented anyone outside of the Department from recognizing Dr. "Bob" Folk as a professor. One afternoon in 1957, Bob entered the sedimentology lab and instructed his students to follow him. "We are going on a field trip," he said as we headed toward the Drag. As we reached the corner of 24th and Guadalupe, there across the street was the Varsity Theater billboard: NOW PLAYING - AND GOD CREATED WOMAN, directed BY Roger Vadim and starring BRIDGET BARDOT. As we stood in the ticket line, Bob offered to pay for anyone who didn't have the cash. I recall that we sat through two showings. For several lab sessions, many of the sand grains, that we observed through the single-lens microscope, were described in terms Miss Bardot's physical endowments.

It was not uncommon for Bob to join some of his students for lunch at the Commons. Tomato soup was one of his favorites - a cup of hot water and catsup, seasoned to taste, with saltine crackers. His comment was "Who says there is no free lunch."

All papers were graded in hieroglyphics, which required each of us to make an appointment for an

interpretation of our grade. This always included an exhaustive critique of our work. I suspected that the grade was a gimmick to provide each student additional time for learning from a very dedicated teacher. In my case it was very effective and, later, much appreciated.

Happy Birthday and thanks for all you gave to your students.

George Harwell, BS '58, MA '59

Congratulations on your 90th.

However, you are not Italian so you have no right to be called "Luigi" I am the Italian wiz kid. All that being said thanks for the memories.

Mario Messina, BS '59

Spent 5 weeks in field with Dr. Folk 1958. Three things: 1. Brilliant 2. Baseball game with his dice. 3. Music by Charlie "Polk Salad" Walker!

Stanley Stoke, BS '59

Dr. Folk in the late 50's and early 60's used to grade all of his exams in Egyptian Hieroglyphics and all of his comments.

So, if you got dead bird or some other Egyptian symbol you had to buy a Hieroglyphics dictionary to know what your grades were.

As a graduate student working under Dr. Folk, I frequently performed sieve analysis and etc. I was in his office in 1961 and he owed me \$32, but he did not have his checkbook with him. \$32 was month's rent at the married University housing project on the Colorado River. Dr. Folk reached into his trash can and pulled out an old quiz and drew check on the back of the quiz. He told me to take to the bank and they would cash it and they did to my surprise.

Dr. Folk was the most inspiring and absolute best Professor that I ever had at my 10-year stay at UT. He is a true genius and a wonderful teacher.

It was a great honor to work under Dr. Folk on my Geology MA which is one of three degrees that I received from UT.

Feather Wilson, BS '60, MA '62

I remember that in his classes Dr. Folk enjoys challenging conventionally accepted practices on every scale. Two examples relate to the words kaolin and oolite. Dr. Folk insisted on using the word gaolin when referring to the clay mineral commonly called kaolinite.

As I recall, Gaolin is the name of the location in China where the clay was first recognized. In the case of oolite, Dr. Folk pronounced the first two letters, oo, with two long vowel sounds (Try it. You'll like it.). After my first presentation to an oil company audience, all that anyone seem to remember afterwards was how I pronounced the word oolite, which I had used frequently.

Dr. Folk also has a unique takeon a common class activity, looking at petrographic slides. When he announced to the class that we would be looking at some "moving pictures" of rocks, the class did not know what to expect. Of course, he meant that he would project the image of a thin section on a petrographic microscope stage on a wall and move the slide on the stage.

These memories might not be noteworthy, but Dr. Folk does have fun with words.

Tom Bjorklund, MA '62

Dr. Folk connected me up with Tom Todd at The University of California at Davis in 1963. I needed some work to pay for grad school and Dr. Folk helped make that happen. I got my MS in Geology there. This made a significant difference in my 45 year career in the oil business. Several years ago at a UT reunion, I reminded Bob about this great boost he had given me. He did not remember the specifics but I think he helped so many students, it would be nearly impossible to remember all.

Thanks again Dr. Folk!

Bill Monroe, BS '63

"Folk Lore" is the moniker we used for Bob Folk's classes back in ancient times when I was a student (long before he acquired the nickname Luigi). The only Folk Lore course I ever took was "Sandstones" but it included highlights and fond memories. Bob made a deliberate point of being rather eccentric. If someone found something strange and unusual in a thin section, he (it was an all male class back then) would be awarded a gold star pasted on his forehead. If you started to doze off during his lecture (very difficult in such lively lectures), he would pick up a good sized hand specimen, call out your name, and toss the specimen to you a couple seconds after you opened your eyes.

His class was demanding, we estimated that we averaged 30 or more hours a week just on the lab assignments. It got to the point that most of us spent so much time with the petrographic scopes that we were seeing little gray spots around the periphery of our vision. One student from New Orleans commented that the spots never bothered him much until he realized that he was enjoying their company. This same guy fell asleep one night while using our only binocular scope and came to class the next day with a pair of black eyes!

Bob made a fetish of eating at the greasiest of greasy spoons while on field trips. After I finished sandstones, on a field trip to Mexico, he came down with a severe case of hepatitis and was told that must get a lot of bedrest. This happened during the semester so Bob thought he would get more rest by using a hammock in his office with the foot end tied to his door knob. A student, not knowing about this arrangement, opened the unlocked door and let Bob down rather suddenly.

Our lab final took up most of finals week, it consisted of a crude map of a mythical island with numbered points, each correlated with a thin section. We had to describe each section in detail then put together a geologic history based on the thin sections. A year or two later, I went into the lab as Bob readied a similar final. He had a batch of thin sections laid out, each encoded with a pattern from a pair of dice. For each numbered point on his mythical land, he would roll the dice and assign the thin section with the matching code to that spot. A number of times he looked at the assigned section and decide that it was not appropriate and roll the dice again.

Last, but far from least, he would allow students to play him in a game of three dimensional chess; if the student won, Bob would raise his final grade by one letter. Later, it appeared that the only time a student won, it was someone who otherwise had very good grades but had blown one exam, who had been ill, or had a family crisis. I salute Bob for being an outstanding teacher, researcher, and humanitarian!

Bill Akersten, BS '64, MA '67)

My wife and I made the move from Wichita Falls (Midwestern State

University BS Geology 1960) the summer of 1960. I enrolled at UT Austin and attended geology classes in September. My first geology field trip was led by Dr. Folk during the fall of 1960, the Bastrop, Smithville, LaGrange geology sites. One location east of LaGrange with all five vehicles following Dr. Folk's truck were led into the famous "Chicken Ranch" just east of town, with clothes hanging on the clothes line, as we drove around the house without stopping. For years afterwards that field trip was famous and well talked about.

Tom S. Patty, MA '68

Bob Folk was probably the most unorthodox and entertaining teacher I ever had. In his class you had to always be alert and keep your eye on him. He would roam the lab as he lectured or as we worked on some geologic puzzle he had assigned. He was often armed with a carved tan and black wooden snake that he got from an Aborigine on one of his Australia trips. He would wave it about to emphasize an important principle, or pose a semi-rhetorical question and thrust it at some unsuspecting student putting her or him on the spot. If one answered incorrectly or not fast enough—or worse, appeared to not be paying attention, he would sneak up behind you and whack the lab table right next to you. In Bob Folk's class you allowed your mind to wander at your peril.

One time he gave a lab test that was a geo- archeological detective story. Provided were thin sections made from some Egyptian ruins and a collection of thin sections from possible quarry sites. But none was a clear match and you had to figure out the closest association using your sedimentary petrology knowledge and reasoning. I was completely absorbed in this intriguing exercise. I had brought a coke and sandwich to sustain me for the duration. Suddenly I felt his presence behind me looming over my shoulder. Focusing on my open coke bottle, he dumped some CaCO₃ sand into my coke (ahead of his time he considered sugary drinks bad for one's health) which of course immediately frothed and spilled over. It broke my concentration. I never did find the

correct slide but he liked my reasoning even if it led me to an incorrect solution. For all I know there was no "correct" solution.

One of the cleverest techniques he used in his teaching was the "Cheat Sheet". For final exam he allowed us to bring one 8 x 10 piece of paper with all the information one could fit on it. The process of selecting and transferring key facts, principles and diagrams to a "Cheat Sheet" was one of the most successful learning experiences I have ever had. I did well on the final and hardly used my "Cheat Sheet" because I had committed most of it to memory through the process.

Good on you Bob Folk!! You were a curious, creative, imaginative and inspiring researcher and teacher.

I apologize for not making a career of geology. But your example was not wasted. I did OK in my chosen profession (Marine Affairs and International Relations in Asia) and part of that is due to you.

With ALOHA

Mark J. Valencia, MA '68

As a graduate student I gave Dr. Folk a new word for his already outrageous vocabulary. I was in one of his classes where he gave us a take-home exam that involved a geologic map of an area in Kazakhstan with a series of questions regarding interpretation of the geology. Of course, the entire map was in Russian. After spending the allowed week of agony working out both the language and geology (successfully, I might add), I submitted my report which I entitled: "What Makes Cossacks Keck in Kazakhstan?"

When Dr. Folk asked the meaning of the word "keck" I defined it and he immediately inserted it into his list of most used words every day for months to follow. I can still hear him spouting, "Keck, keck, keck" when we so often proved to him our status as unworthy graduate students. Ah, the good old days!

keck: v. intr. To make a sound as if about to vomit; to retch; to feel an inclination to vomit; hence to keck at, to reject (food, medicine, etc.) with loathing. Also fig. expressing strong dislike or disgust. Thanks for your work on this. Best regards to Bob.

Steve Frishman, MA '69

Amazing man! I graduated w/ a MA from UT in hydrogeology in 1972. Never had him for a course, but he was a constant presence in the department and inspired everyone to explore their intellectual ability to the fullest. There likely will never be another prof like him. I'm retired now after a 39 year career in hydrogeology, thanks to the outstanding education I got at UT Austin.

Tom Clark, MA '72

Gosh, where to start? I attended DOGs (as the Dept of Geological Sciences was known then) as an undergrad from 1965-1970 and as a grad student from 1972-73 and knew Dr. Folk as an inspiring and approachable prof for most of that time. He declined my request to supervise my graduate work, which probably worked out best for both of us. I have always enjoyed seeing him at professional meetings ever since, and I am amazed that he recognizes me and responds with a smile and "hi Chuck."

A number of real life adventures with Dr. Folk come to mind, but here is one I think I can share:

A conscientious student, I was never late for class – except once, when having made the error of taking 18 hrs of course work while working part time to pay the bills, I came in tardy for a lab. Dr. Folk paused in the middle of an energetic lecture and invited me to the front of the class. Wow, I figured that I was in for it. Standing there, the whole world suddenly turned white in a big "whoosh." When I recovered my senses and could see again, there was my esteemed instructor, laughing heartily while pointing the hose from a large fire extinguisher at me. "Did you see how Chuck jumped?" he asked the class.

Chuck Caughey, BS '69, MA '73

We arrived in Austin in 1961, lived in Bob's house on Bluebonnet Lane for the year that he and Marge went to Australia, received my PhD under his supervision, and have visited and been in touch with him over the years. In 1988 I sent the enclosed letter on the occasion of his retirement, and in 2000 sent the second letter on the occasion of being awarded the GSA Penrose medal. The sentiments expressed in both still apply. Natalie and I look forward to seeing him again in September to celebrate his 90th.

October 13, 1988

I walked into Robert L. Folk's office in the old geology building in September 1961 to introduce myself and ask Dr. Folk if he would serve as my graduate supervisor. He ignored my question by immediately challenging me to a game of "Camelot," then to a game of "Go," then to an intricate dice-ridden game of "Baseball" – of his own invention, with rules surely more complex than those governing the movement of planets. HE beat me at all three games, and I walked out of his office several hours later certain of two things. First, I would receive my doctorate from the University of Texas under his supervision. Second, I would beat him at all of his games. I eventually accomplished the former; however I never came to accomplish the latter – damn baseball game – the rules always changed!

I have had the pleasure of knowing Folk these many years, and I have unashamedly adopted his slightly bizarre and somewhat creatively skewed approach to life. His philosophy has served me well, and I have passed it on to others in turn, knowing it will serve them well. Most important, I have found that Folk's finest quality is his willingness to unselfishly share his knowledge with others – a simple, but profound trait that is the hallmark of the truly gifted person. There are other qualities I admire as well – his directness of inquiry, his breadth of curiosity, and his depth of knowledge were more than simply inspirational. They proved to be precise and accurate intellectual beacons that I gladly followed.

When George Weiss retired as General Manager of the New York Yankees in 1960, his wife was quoted as saying, "I married him for better or worse, but not for lunch." I doubt that Marge Folk will have Buck underfoot much. He's far too mobile. He will no doubt spend his retirement years tip-toeing through the Elysian Fields of Science, disproving Einstein and disposing of Darwin, battling Saga and bashing Asmirov. Finally, in his declining years a century or two from now, in an idiotrophic tour de force he will provide humanity with a unified theory that will simultaneously relate and explain bird urine, sub-micron quartz spheres, kurtosis, Smithville Texas, para-psychology,

P. D. Krynine, Italian actresses, air conditioning, turtles and chert. Impossible you say? No you're wrong. I have no doubt that he will do it all.

November 1, 2000

My good friend Roberto Luigi:

I had really hoped to be able to make it out to Reno to share your "Big Day" with you, but I can't get away right now. I've always told people that, in our profession, the GSA Penrose Medal was the closest thing to a Nobel Prize in Geology.

So it really came as no surprise that you were chosen as a Penrose recipient. I only wonder why they took so long in recognizing something that I've known since we first met in 1961- namely that as both teacher and researcher you have no equal. True, there are those who do teach well, yet eschew the vigors of the research – and there are those who are devoted to scientific inquiry, yet approach the classroom with arrogant disdain. Not so you. It was apparent to me then, as it is now, that you understand that "teaching" and "research" go hand-in-hand – to borrow from Longfellow, "useless each without the other." It takes a very special and accomplished person to achieve such success in both arenas, and there are sadly too few professors who can ever claim those highest levels of achievement.

As to the effects this engendered by slaving at your side those several years in the early sixties – please know that they were many and lasting. To say that those years were significant and inspirational would be true, if not hackneyed. It would perhaps be even more truthful to simply point out the "five easy pieces" I learned from you, namely that, despite claims to the contrary, (1) every "given" is suspect; (2) everything is related to everything else; (3) there is always more to learn; (4) everybody knows something; and (5) nobody knows everything. I suspect that your mark as an iconoclastic, nonconforming, dissenting, nose tweaking renegade has been impressed – to a lesser or greater degree – on every one of your students. Perhaps we were already somewhat this tattoos, and perhaps that is why you chose us to work with you and why there were so very few of us (though you had scores of Masters student, I understand that you

only took 16 of us as PhD students over those many years.) I am proud to be One of the Sixteen.

My expectation is that you will continue to do exactly what you have been doing, for as many years into the future as possible. My hope is that you will continue to remember me as a friend and colleague.

Murray Felscher, PhD '71

There are so many Folk tales that it is hard to select ones. I was in the Petrology of Carbonates class in Spring 1964.

Class size limited to 12 students (all that could be covered by two dice).

One day when we went to class Folk was not there, but a message was written in Egyptian hieroglyphics on the chalkboard. Steve Smith hustled to the library to check out a book on hieroglyphics. Consulting the book we deciphered that Folk was in an upstairs lab riveted on his microscope where he had made an amazing discovery. Upon our arrival he wanted to know what took us so long to get there.

On a mandatory class field trip, Dave Pederson missed it. His penalty/assignment was to go into the field and determine what governed the height/width relationship for cow pies, then present his study to the class.

Dave did such a great job that even Folk was impressed.

After an 11 year hiatus I walked through the Department without any advance notice. Folk spotted me down the hall, recognized me, got excited, invited me into his office, said what shall we talk about, rolled his dice then -- Ah, world's biggest and world's smallest. We proceeded to his microscope where he showed the specimens to me.

Folk is truly an inspiration; the purest intellect I have ever seen.

Pat Abbott, PhD '73

It was way back in 1977, I was a Masters student working with Land and Folk on Jamaican submarine cements (fantastic bacterial!), only had one semester of TA support owing to my barely minimum GRE, was working at the University Co-Op to support myself, and provide enough money for my weekend dates with Luigi's beautiful secretaries...but I digress...bottom line...I had no car.

One Friday my elderly grandmother

had a stroke and was rushed to the hospital in critical condition in my home town of Stephenville. Now I was particularly close to her as she almost alone raised me (today this is termed a "single mother" household) and to visit her I would take the Greyhound bus to Lampasas and then on to Stephenville (in that day, with connections and waiting in Lampasas, a full day's journey). There is no way I could have made it in time. Somehow, Luigi sensed something was wrong...he lent me his station wagon for the weekend...and I didn't even ask for it. But for me this was a very big deal, telling of his compassion, his generosity. I will never forget it or him.

Luigi was my greatest teacher. He opened my eyes (to the extent that actually, after his petrography classes I had to get glasses for my strained eyes) to all things. His passion for all things geologic was infectious...Indeed, because of Luigi I became a professor as well. But, once again, I digress. On the way to Stephenville in his car I met a truck full of hearses...I did not take this as a good omen. But fortunately, I am not a good reader of omens. My grandmother recovered. And when I returned to Austin that Sunday and returned his car, I thanked him...but I don't know if he will ever know how much I really appreciated him. If you can read this, Luigi, please know that I did and do.

Vi sara sempre il mio prof. Vai con Dio.
John (Giovanni) Pigott, BS '74, MA '77

I recall several Folk stories, but my favorite memory is one that happened in his graduate Carbonate Petrology class in Spring of 1966.

While lecturing on carbonate sands as forming in high energy he mentioned they sometimes contain patches of carbonate mud that accumulate where marine grasses reduce energy in an organic baffle effect. While lecturing he walked behind those in the first row, and reached back dumping a small handful of Australian Bull Dust (well-sorted silt), collected on his Australian sabbatical, into my hair. For much of the remaining lecture, as I would rapidly scratch my hair, Folk would comment "see it stays in the high energy environment." However, the crowning event occurred about a month later when Dr. Folk was lecturing on

the sticky properties of mucilaginous coating on algae holding onto carbonate grains. Again, with Aussie Bull Dust in hand, he walked past the first two rows of students and each row exhaled with audible relief. As Folk proceeded down the third row, he suddenly reached back, dumping the sediment on Neil Turner's head. Why Neil? Neil was the only student who used hair tonic.

I remember another time, in my first year when I was teaching the introductory lab in the morning, and he walked by the classroom door in his Wizard of Ooze white lab coat. Returning a few minutes later with his Aussie hat and lab coat, he stood in the doorway until he my attention, and that of the class. He then proceeded to slide a reprint across the floor to my feet. The class wondered about the apparition and the smile on my face, now it was my task to get the lab class back on their geology lesson.

Then there was Bob Folk's grading system. His use of Egyptian hieroglyphics in a secret code as your letter grade on exams, while frustrating to interpret, pushed you to continue working to your best. And his P. Cheung quizzes taught you to read geologic literature outside your field, but also to evaluate critically what you read.

Robert Merrill, PhD '74

Back in approximately 1973 I was Dr. Folk's assistant for a semester (or year - can't remember which). One of my duties was to re-file his slides after lectures. I was sitting at his desk filing slides in his office and he was in his lab when a friend of mine (computer science major), clutching his briefcase, stood outside the door (in the hall) and was talking to me. After a few minutes Bob appeared at the lab door, leaning out, and pointed at my friend and asked "Does it know any geology?"

I said "No" - he is a computer science major. Bob vanished into his office. My friend and I exchanged glances, not sure what was afoot, and continue talking.

Bob came out of his lab with both hands behind his back. He tossed one of those diorite-looking sponges at my friend who, not knowing it wasn't a rock, dropped his briefcase and drew his arms up in defense. Then the other arm came out with a squirt gun and he

started squirting my friend who beat a hasty retreat towards the elevators. Bob vanished back into his office laughing rather strangely.

That is a Folk tale I have remembered these last 40 some odd years like it was yesterday.

Art Busbey, BS '75, MA '77

I remember walking by Folk's office one afternoon, probably in fall 1973 or spring 1974. He was busy carving away on a block of animal tissue and invited me in to view. It was a section of preserved human head, which he had obtained from the Texas Department of Corrections. Nearby was an SEM that showed some small crystals. He had learned that the human ear contained calcium carbonate crystals and wanted to know if they were calcite or aragonite. Regrettably, the head section had been preserved in a liquid that had largely decalcified it.

Tom Broadhead, MA '75

In 1972, I made a last minute decision to go to college and registered at UT Austin. That meant signing up for classes at Gregory Gym, which was a mob scene of last minute folks such as myself. Everyone advised that you take Biology for your Freshman science course. The Biology sign-up line was extremely long, and I was in danger of not having enough courses to enter the Freshman class. Next to the Biology line was the Geology line, with nobody in it. I asked if they had a class I could take instead of Biology, and they put me in Folk's Introductory Geology class. Needless to say, the class was fantastic, and ultimately, after 2 years and several majors, I came back to the School of Geology, and got my BS in 1976. I am still a practicing petroleum geologist and I owe it all to the long Biology line and Dr. Folk's Intro class.

Russell Jackson, BS '76

Just for background, I was a student in the department from 1974-1976, and graduated in '76 with a Masters degree. I have since worked in the Oil and Gas Industry for nearly 40 years, first with Shell Oil Company, and now as an Executive Coach and Consultant with my own firm--Momentum Change Solutions. We specialize in helping technical-oriented leaders learn

how to manage people and navigate organizational dynamics.

When I saw the email asking for Bob Folk stories, I immediately thought of an incident involving a visit to the department from a distinguished professor, who had traveled from eastern Europe to Austin specifically to meet Dr. Folk.

As I recall, the long (3 hour) carbonate petrology class was in session, and it was mid-afternoon. Dr. Folk was in the midst of an animated lecture when the classroom door opened and a man I did not know entered the room. He was dressed in a tweed suit and introduced himself as a professor from a university in eastern Europe. He stated that he had traveled a long way to consult with Dr. Folk and that he was now ready to get started. He also let it be known by his language and demeanor that he was an important person who was used to getting deferential treatment.

I anticipated that this meant that Dr. Folk would end the class and run off to spend time with his important visitor, but to my surprise, he said 'I'm teaching a class! I will meet you when we are done'. He directed him to his office, and proceeded to complete the entire program while the visitor waited.

Later, when I was in the working world, I found that I often encountered similar situations, with choices about whether or not to cancel or end conversations with employees to run off to important meetings or take unexpected phone calls from more senior people. At those times, I often thought back to this event. I like to think that I chose wisely and respected everyone. Now that I have the opportunity to coach up and coming leaders, I often pass this along as a teaching point.

I certainly want to wish Dr. Folk a happy birthday and thank him for all that he has done for generations of students.

Ralph S. Kerr, MA '76

"Nanno Nanno"

Within a written exchange of Christmas 1992 greetings, I'd reported the extraction of a classic, egg-shaped gallstone with radiating blade-like crystals around a tiny, dark nucleus. Dr. Folk beseeched me ("Wonderful! SEND ME A PIECE!") to provide him a sample in his continuing quest for

documentation of human-housed nannobacteria, also stating that he found them in one of his own extracted teeth (not a front one). I thus provided him one-quarter of my priceless offspring.

When he later sent me a reprint of his paper,* my gallstone photomicrograph had the distinct honor of directly following similar photodocumentation of a "beard hair of the author" and then a "fecal smear produced by the author." I'm still moved -- daily.

*"Nannobacteria in the Natural Environment and in Medicine," *Alpe Adria Microbiology Journal*, Apr 1998, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 87-95.

In the mid 1970s, Dr. Folk was in possession of a rubber stamp reading "Folk You" (likely a gift from someone). He also had the requisite ink pad, so any student's exposed skin often was in danger of receiving an uninvited ink stamping.

1975/76 Abstract Oil Paintings

R. L. Folk had a brief artistic interlude whereby he created a number of abstract masterpieces in oil using rolls of toilet paper in lieu of brushes. Attached are two 150% scans of some of this original Folk Art entrusted to me. The red one is titled "Quxa" by the artist via a method of random letter selection; the blue one's title is illegible on the back and thus now indeterminate.

1974-1976 Petrology Class Final Exams

Those who took Dr. Folk's petrology classes would have a 3-part final exam with a lecture portion, a hands-on lab portion, and a keeping-up-with-the-geologic-literature portion. The "literature final" could be waived at the last moment if the students could overpower Dr. Folk at a challenge of his choosing during the prior week. One of our experiences was a week-long, come-and-go Mah Jongg game, for which I do not remember the outcome. The other year's challenge was a marathon desktop war game (name not remembered) with a European theatre of action. The hand-drawn map had its geographic battle fronts outlined by stick pins, which advanced or retreated based on rolls of the dice. In the war games event, Dr. Folk simply kept the game in progress until the tides turned in his favor and then declared the war over and the literature final "on."

Final Bedlam

At the end of each school year, graduate

students would put on an evening “program” of faculty-focused skits and commentaries called “Final Bedlam.” I don’t remember many particulars except for (probably in spring 1976) portraying Folk in a faculty-meeting skit, which included climbing onto the table and pontificating wildly.

Sandra Lindquist, MA '76

One afternoon heading from the library towards the elevator on the third floor I saw Luigi on his hands and knees moving back and forth looking at something through a hand-lens. My curiosity aroused I approached to see what was on the floor worthy of such attention. Discerning nothing special, I asked him what he was up to. He looked up and explained that he was looking at the grooves gouged into the flooring by people dragging heavy stuff in and out of the elevator because he thought they might show similarities to glacial striations. With a twinkle in his eye and a typical Folkian grin he said “Geology is where you find it” ...and turned his attention back to the floor.

Peter Megaw, BA '76, MA '79

Dr. Folk allowed me to take his graduate course in carbonates while I was still an undergraduate, which sometimes required a little extra effort on my part. At one of our Wednesday classes, Dr. Folk announced that there would be a class “field trip” to the Broken Spoke the following night. But when Thursday night rolled around, I decided instead to work on my Fustigation, just in case Dr. Folk called on me to present it for the class on Friday. So I missed the «field trip» and spent the night toiling away on my assignment. I still remember my mortification at Friday’s class when Dr. Folk stated that anyone with a stamp on their hand from the Broken Spoke was EXEMPT from making their presentation! As it turned out, I was the only one to have missed the field trip, so I was forced to Fustigate. Lesson learned: having fun isn’t optional - it’s required!

Donna Balin, BS '78

Which Nationality is this actress?

This was a slide question, worth maybe ½ point on the 401K final exam Spring '77. Her name was Laura

Antonelli, and this had something to do with research on dolomite & the Dolomites in Italy. I will not try and provide an image, even the mention of this may be too much for the PC world we exist in today.

Also tied to Italian culture, he whistled an Italian tune, I think it was “We Are Liars”.

I switched my major to Geology because of that class. I knew something about astronomy, chemistry, and physics – but nothing of glacial valleys, barchan dunes and Blue Men, Tahitian atolls, feldspars etc. - the rest is history.

Charles Goebel, BS '80

I entered graduate school at The University of Texas at Austin in September 1978 (graduating in December 1980) after completing my undergraduate degree in geology at Bucknell University. One of my former professors at Bucknell- Dr. Ed Cotter, a sedimentologist- had spent time down at the University in Austin many years back and knew people in the department there. Dr. Folk was by that time a well known name in the field of geology. His book *Petrology of Sedimentary Rocks* is considered a classic, one of the best in its field.

I had THE course- *Petrology of Sedimentary Rocks*- with the master himself. It was a great learning experience. Folk joked with the students to make sure they were engaged in the discussion. In trying to challenge our thinking, one day he wrote in “DOGMA” in BIG LETTERS on the chalk board. Then he started talking about the standard ideas on a certain topic. A few minutes later he wrote “CATMA” next to it. The class erupted in laughter. Folk often engaged individual students during the class. I was arguing a point with him one day and he disagreed... then told me to “shave off that ridiculous mustache...” Dr. Folk is the best observer I’ve ever met. He notices things that most other people never see. I remember that we had a class project- doing what’s called a “point count” on a thin section of a rock specimen, which we had to analyze. I did mine- and handed in the assignment. I received a “Lion” and a “Foot” for my final grade. After looking at his detailed hieroglyphics symbol list, I finally figured out it was an “A”. I had

to look at the symbols again just to make sure. I was a bit puzzled. I’d never gotten a “Foot” for a grade before. During the semester, Folk said there would be no final exam IF everyone showed up at The Broken Spoke. Now that sounded like fun. We did meet at The Broken Spoke- the first time I had a geology class (kind of) doing the Cotton-Eyed Joe at a dance hall. I also had related courses with Dr. Earle McBride- they’re good friends- and very much appreciated everything they both taught me.

Dr. Folk and Dr. Earle McBride both had an enormously positive impact on my life. They helped build the foundation for my career and just about everything else I’ve done since graduate school. The courses I had with Dr. Folk and Dr. McBride were excellent; first-rate. I very much appreciated everything they taught me. I not only learned a tremendous amount in my chosen field- I learned to do extensive, in-depth research which helped me in my later work as an historian and author. My education at The University of Texas at Austin was outstanding. A big part of that is due to the efforts of Dr. Folk and Dr. McBride. I’m so grateful to the good Lord that Dr. Folk and Dr. McBride came into my life. I consider them both friends and stay in touch to this day. So... a hearty “THANK YOU” to Dr. Robert “Luigi” Folk and Dr. Earle McBride!!!!

Gene Pisasale, MA '80

I give Dr. Folk a lot of the credit for getting me into geology. I came to UT in 1979, straight from the Navy, to pursue an undergraduate degree in Middle Eastern Studies (Dr. Folk’s daughter, Jenny, was in one of my Arabic classes, but that is another story). For my liberal arts degree I was required to take exactly one science class, and I never intended to do more than that. Fortunately, I decided to get it out of the way my first semester, and I chose Geology 301—as I recall, the choice was fairly random; I didn’t really know what geology was at the time.

As luck would have it, Dr. Folk

liked to teach introductory geology in those days and he taught it that Spring semester of 1979 and I was in his class. I was hooked within weeks—largely, I think, due to his provocative and stimulating lecture style, and the passion he brought to the subject. Because my interest was piqued, I decided to take another geology course the next semester, then another and another. After a few semesters of this, I changed my major and started taking all the math, physics, chemistry and biology that I needed. I've never looked back. I got my B.S. in geology in 1982, my M.S. a few years later, and my PhD after that. I have now worked in petroleum exploration and research for over 25 years. I really believe that Dr. Folk played a big role in the direction I took in my life and I will always be grateful to him.

Steve Crews, BS '82

Girls, Girls, GIRLS! Whoops, make that...women, Women, WOMEN! Maybe one of those lines popped in your head when the email arrived asking for a Folk tale. The inquirers were so wise to show our hero in his element. Whatever Elvis does for you, I figure that many of our fairer (smarter) sex claim Luigi as influential in their lives as, heck, the King is in the lives of certain others partial to...rock. And despite my lack of a tell-able tale, I am one grateful geologist, forever indebted to him for noting then promoting in me an ability to see far more than I realized and in the tiniest of places. Good on ya', mate, for your actual demonstrations of finding God in the details (not giving the Devil his due today), whether in plain, moon, or polarized light. Long Live Luigi-san!

Janie Hopkins, P.G., MA '82

I wasn't a month into my first semester in the graduate geology program at UT in the Fall of 1981, and was really excited to be taking "Dep Dump" from the highly esteemed Dr. Robert Folk. He was everything I expected, and much more. Brilliant, energetic and kinda crazy...in a good way, but crazy nonetheless.

I had just moved to Austin from NM and had a wife and 2 month old daughter, as well as a full load of classes, so my main issue at that point was finding time to get more than a couple of hours of sleep each day. And

Dr. Folk had made it very clear in the introduction to his class, which was held in a small lab in the basement of the Geology building, that sleeping in his class would be dealt with very severely. I did well initially, but unfortunately one day I succumbed to very heavy eyelids and almost paid with my life. I was sitting at a table near the back of the lab during some sort of discussion which included a quite heavy fist-sized rock sample, which he happened to be holding about the time my head slowly slipped onto the table as I settled in for what I intended to be a quick little nap. All I remember was a loud and angry exclamation from my peeved prof followed by an immediate ear-piercing crash as the sample hit the table mere inches from my head. It was an expert toss of over 20 feet that I shudder to think could have relegated me to the trash bin had it been a few inches farther to the right. Needless to say, I was bright and attentive for not only the rest of that class, but every other one I sat through. In fact, I doubt if I even blinked in his presence for the rest of my time at UT...a testament to his superior teaching techniques! Godspeed Bob and thanks for everything!

Steve Speer, MA '83

24 hour finals, throwing colored chalk at students, Luigi yelling in class "Even a baboon would know that!", playing Twister to avoid a final, the princess crown for the person with the top score and the dunce cap for the student with the worst score, class field trip to his "love nest."

I did field work in Italy as Folk's first schiava. My Dad came over to Italy before we started and met Luigi for the first time. Folk had decades old underwear that he said he used for every field season. He'd hand wash it and hang it outside the windows at the hotel. My father was concerned that this was the professor I was suppose to spend the summer doing field work with.

Dr. Folk was so incredibly impactful on my life. His brilliance and creativity were amazing. He made his students really think and stretched us to our limits.

One last note on Dr. Folk. One of the greatest gifts he gave me was an appreciation for my Italian family ancestry. I ended up working for him

in Italy as his "schiava" and have loved Italy ever since. I learned the language at UT and then saw the magic of it while working there during the summer of 1983. Have been back many times for work and vacation. My oldest daughter even attended the Yale study abroad in Sienna. Attached are a few shots of Portovenere, my study area with Folk, and one of the most beautiful spots in Italy.

Pam Darwin, MA '84

The first 5 rows, left hand side of the auditorium were always considered "no go" zones for those with folk experience. I have seen a number of males with starch white button downs, be targeted by Dr. Folk's erasers for not paying attention or not being able to answer a simple question. Ahh the good ole days...

Barry Wethington, BS '85

To this day, in my professional and personal life, I use the inquiry, "how would the common oaf off the street say about this [topic]?", to cut through jargonistic, vague, and rambling responses to questions. Granted, at times I might use a different term for "oaf" but the sentiment remains the same: if you can't explain yourself in plain language, odds are you may be confused yourself. Professor Folk, my son has also taken up the trope. Your "Folkism" will survive for at least another generation.

Megan McCrary Wisersky, MA '85

I made a "Dr. Folk joke" during the presentation of my thesis during my Tech Talk in 1987. I was showing an image of a shale compaction model that was particularly obvious and I began the description with, "and I think that EVEN Dr. Folk can see..." He scoffed. Everybody else laughed pretty hard.

One year later, I was employed by Exxon in Midland and Dr. Folk was the featured speaker at the WTGS luncheon. I suspected he might, in retribution, call me out during his talk on paleobacteria. Consequently, I not only paid rapt attention to his every word but I constantly anticipated his every question.

Then...BINGO!

"Is Dingus in here?!? Where's Dingus?!? Is he awake?" he blurted into the darkened auditorium. He then fired off a supremely technical question which I

correctly fielded with such rapidity and deft that it got a big laugh. I know Dr. Folk enjoyed that as much as I did; and, it was a highlight of my career.

Bill Dingus, MA '87

During late 1984, in an effort to bolster my application to Graduate School, I visited the Forty Acres and met with some of the faculty of the Geology Department. One appointment was with Dr. Folk, whose scientific reputation most definitely preceded him. I, like most other aspiring students of the Earth, had studied his classification schemes as an undergraduate. I was well aware of his voluminous body of research and his lofty place in the study of clastic and carbonate sedimentation. What I was completely unaware of at the time, however, was his proclivity for pranks.

At the appointed time, I knocked on his office door and was met by this pleasant, chatty, bearded gnome of a man, who proceeded to interview me about my academic and professional background. Needless to say I was a bit intimidated. Dr. Folk's eyes lit up when he discovered that I was employed as a lab tech in Getty Oil's organic geochemistry lab. He bolted into his inner office and came out with a chunk of rock in his hand. This specimen was jet black, dense, angular, extremely fine-textured, with a waxy luster (I don't remember noting any geopetal structures; it may have had white veins running through it...the stress of the moment, coupled with the passage of time has wiped those details from memory). Without providing any background or description he demanded to know my estimate of its TOC content. Suspecting acceptance to Graduate School may be riding on my answer I looked carefully at this strange rock (purely naked-eye, no hand lens or scope, not even a scratch test). I knew immediately it wasn't obsidian. If a shale, why was there no apparent bedding, and further, why such a waxy luster? If igneous the texture would be described as aphanitic, but it had too much luster to be basalt. Is it sedimentary? If so, it would be considered isotropic and either extremely fine-grained or micro-crystalline. I narrowed it down to either some weird shale or micritic limestone,

but why such a deeply saturated black color? I finally decided the color must indicate a high organic content, and so, with Dr. Folk awaiting my reply, I mustered as much confidence as I could generate and stated the TOC must be rather high, possibly 12 to 15%.

"Boo-How," he suddenly barked (the first of many times I would hear this response while a student in his classes). I didn't know what to make of that pig-latin-like phrase, but I knew it couldn't be good. Some of you may have already figured out the mysterious rock was Portoro Limestone, which Dr. Folk gleefully informed me had a measured TOC of less than 0.5%. But Dr. Folk, always the teacher, quickly explained that the rock in my hand was actually partially metamorphosed, which produced finely-crystalline, micritic dolomite. The micrite crystals were so clear that minute inclusions of organic matter gave the entire rock fabric a jet black color. I realized I had been set-up. But, as I was admitted to the Graduate program, I guess my blunder was all in good fun.

Dr. Folk is responsible for many of my fondest memories from that time, as he taught me so much about clastic and carbonate sedimentology. But more importantly, uttering his simple command of "so what", he taught me to look for the greater meaning of a rock description, the provenance, the tectonic implications, the burial history, to name a few. Field trips with him were always a treat, and of course, I'll never forget the Broken Spoke.

Happy Birthday Luigi!

Rick Paige, MA '88

My first encounter with Dr. Folk's formidable intellect was in the fall of 1986. I had just proudly printed an abstract for the American Geophysical Union meeting on our swanky Apple LaserWriter near the fourth floor lounge, and Dr. Folk asked me if I had proofread it. "Of course" I replied. Sensing the last four letters of "replied", he challenged me: "I bet I can find a typo." I nervously handed over my masterpiece. Getting to the last line, I saw that mischievous Folk smile light up as he pointed to my blunder. I'm proofreading this memory very carefully right now, but I'm not taking any bets.

John Kuehne, MA '89, PhD '96

I first met Bob Folk in 1987 when I started graduate school. Part of my reasons for coming to UT were associated with Folk's reputation as a sedimentologist and I was eager to study with him. I'd been warned by a former student that he was a bit eccentric, but nothing prepared me for my initial encounters that first year. Luigi's last year of teaching coincided with that first year of grad school, and as a last hurrah, he decided to offer a class "Petrography of the lesser rocks", taken by me and 3 other students. In a class of 4, there was nowhere to hide. Class usually consisted of Luigi's energetic scribbles on the board with a multitude of colored stumps of chalk, which he interspersed liberally with prodding questions to one or another unhappy recipient. Our answers were met with grunts of dismay, gesticulations, and the famous big black F's chalked on the board. After class, we were usually so agitated, that we would cluster in the hall and go on about one point or another we had failed to express adequately in the classroom. In lab, you had to be on your toes as Luigi was often known to sneak up on you with his wooden "snake", a trinket he'd picked up in Australia, and get in an impish poke to the ribs. Many of us sported black eyes from goring ourselves on the oculars after such an encounter.

Luigi invited me to go to Italy that following summer of 1988, as his "sciava" translated as slave-girl. Naturally I jumped at the offer, but made it a point to work hard at Italian language classes during the spring semester so I would not be entirely at his mercy. That summer in Italy made history for Luigi, as we embarked on what would be decades of his continued work studying nannobacteria and their role in the formation of carbonates.

Luigi often told me that he was a child of the depression, and he was raised to use things up. Rather than spend good money on field bags, he would send me to the ladies room to grab a supply of those white sanitary bags labeled "per la donna". I'm sure it made for interesting times for the customs agents when the rocks got shipped back in the luggage. His frugality extended to wardrobe. That summer, he proudly sported his new field boots, acquired at the salvation army store for a dollar. Unfortunately,

the sole of one boot became partially loose and would flap as he walked. Undaunted, Luigi purchased a giant tube of glue. He proudly told me that each night he would apply a generous squirt and place the leg of the bed inside the boot to cement it fast. Usually by noon the next day, the sole had come loose again and he could be seen flapping away as he walked off to catch the bus to our next field site.

Our taking the bus to field localities often put us in interesting circumstances. One time, we took the bus up into the hills over Portovenere to look at some radiolarian cherts. Unfortunately, it started to rain. Not just any rain, but a torrential, skin soaking lips-blue downpour. We took shelter under a tree, but were quickly drenched to the bone. Desperate, we came across a small shed by the side of the road and managed to squeeze into a small warm shelter the size of a dog house. It was full of rabbits, but it was at least dry. As you would know, the owner of that shed arrived soon after and gave out a surprised cry. Luigi immediately responded in Italian “Non sono laudri!” we are not thieves. The man cracked up. I think we looked so wretched, we took pity on us and invited us back to his trailer where we dried off and shared a lunch of bread, wine, and large slabs of raw bacon.

Another bizarre but spectacular memory of that summer occurred outside of the town of Viterbo, ~90km NE of Rome. We had gone there to study the travertine termi (hot springs). Again, by bus and on foot, whilst walking down the dirt road to the terme well on the outskirts of Viterbo, we were passed by half a dozen white BMWs, all with Milano plates. This naturally aroused our curiosity. Around 20 minutes later, when we finally reached the hot spring, we were met with the site of trailers, film crews, and local police all set up in perimeter around the main pool. Posing naked in the pool, covered with aragonitic mud was what Luigi would later term “the world’s most erotic coated grain”: Ornella Muti, a grade B Italian film actress of the time, was posing for what turned out to be a TV commercial. Luigi went into action with his ancient camera, slung around his neck and held together with various bits of fishing line, mastic, and any bit of twine he

happened to have found along the road. He scuttled off into the bushes, sole of boot flapping away, to get in closer, and began snapping away like any good paparazzi. I hung back and chatted with the security guys and let Luigi do his thing, trying rather unsuccessfully not to look completely embarrassed.

25 years later, I found myself back in Viterbo, of all places working on a research project with colleagues at the University of Tuscia. I visited the hot springs where Luigi and I met Ms. Mutti. They are built up – there are some fancy spas, but the pools are still recognizable, and afforded me fond recollections. Luigi, despite his impish proclivities, was never mean, and always supportive of students. Despite the jokes about “sciave”, he was one of the more supportive faculty of women in science, and one of the most marvelous, delightfully quirky and inspiring teachers I have ever had. He was great fun as a travel companion, with never a dull moment.

Happy Birthday Luigi, and I wish you many more. I will be back in Viterbo this October, and I will say hi to our old stomping grounds for you.

Paola (la studentessa un po’ amara e sempre cocciuta)

Paula J. Noble, PhD ‘93

Luigi was one of my masters committee members. When I had completed the thesis, I met him in his office so that he could sign my signature pages. He looked up from his desk, “Ah! Christophoro!” And hopped up, meandered through a maze of rock/document/etc. piles...from the top of a file cabinet produced a small black pot, “India Ink!” Winded his way to the back of his office he pulled out a great a long feather, “Texas turkey quill! Most appropriate for this momentous occasion.” He sharpened it with a pen knife and said, “Off we go to the library.”

There in the Walter Library, Luigi cleared off a row of tables, laid out a half dozen signature pages and with the greatest flourish signed each one with a magnificent R. L. Folk.

It was a great finish to my formal education at UT.

J. Chris Sagebiel, BS ‘93, MS ‘98

Somewhere in the haze of being a senior or junior, about 1992, I was working on a paper for some class.

The subject of the paper included observations and analyses of samples that I had personally collected and made thin sections myself. I was lucky enough to have worked for Prof. Cloos at the time and was trained how to make thin sections by Greg Thompson. I really wanted to show and refer to my thin sections in my paper, so, I needed to take some photos of the thin sections.

I was ambling by Folk’s office and he caught my attention and we chatted a moment and I inquired about how I could go about taking the photos. Prof. Folk indicated that he too needed to take some thin section photos but did not need to use a whole roll of film and suggested that I could take my photos on the same roll and save some money. He set me up with Dennis Trombatore to get the camera set up. We got it done and Prof. Folk took the roll to some place near campus, I can not remember where and this is why:

Prof. Folk flagged me down in the hallway and said that the development was complete and asked me if I wanted to come with him to pick up the package. I was delighted because the paper was due the next day. Mentally drained from the onslaught of being a student, Prof. Folk and I walked to his car. We were looking for his car and he seemed to be having trouble finding it. I had asked him what kind of car it was. “A fine Italian sports car” he said. Instantly what came to my mind was Ferrari, Maserati, etc. I was expecting the same but did not see any of the like anywhere. We went back and forth up and down Red River “looking” for said sports car. He was muttering “...it must be around here somewhere...”

Then, he exclaimed “Here it is!” I was looking all around when, he with a grin, placed a hand on a very bedraggled Fiat sedan. Windows down, paint flaked, OLD, worn out. Shocked, but not disappointed, we climbed in chuckling. NEXT. The short drive to the developing place brought me back to reality as the entire vehicle would shake, sputter, shimmy and jolt. I believe that Prof. Folk was a good driver, however, I was rather concerned for our safety. This is saying a lot for I was a youngster at the time and had bravely endured much worse. We made it back to campus safely and Prof. Folk dropped me off at the Geo Building

and he went home. I finished my paper and did well on it.

I look back and laugh at this memory often. It really was a comedy at the expense of my mentality at the time. I want to thank Prof. Folk again as I did the last time that I saw him which I believe it was at the Jackson Reunion in 2010. I hope to make it for his 90th birthday celebration.

Tom Warren, BS '93

In 1987, I had the opportunity to do my thesis on the Upper Triassic Portoro Limestone in the northern Apennine Mountains with Folk which included a six week venture to Italy. Folk informed me that he would require that I be able to speak Italian before departure. So with a full load of graduate courses and a part-time job at the U. S. Geological Survey in Austin, I also took on the first semester of Italian.

I now thank him for requiring that I speak Italian as I recall having to repeat this statement several times while in Italy: Non sono Tedesca, sono Americana! [I am not German, I am American!] The Italians love Americans. Actually I am 50% German Texan!

I also want to thank him for expanding my view of the world and instilling a continued love of all things Italian and a continued love of carbonate rocks.

Dianne Pavlicek-Mesa, MA '90

"As soon as I arrived to UT Austin I knew I needed to have Dr. Folk in my thesis committee. He was a living legend. During my 2 years at UT Jackson School I developed enormous respect for his dedication to work. I also became acutely aware of his great knowledge and skills as well as the endless hours he worked in all his interesting and fascinating projects.

Dr. Folk paid a lot of attentions to details, In fact, I have never worked with a person who gives as much attention to detail as he does. One example was in my MS thesis, he corrected me the proper way to use the Latin grammatical forms to name species vs family for some carbonate reef fossils I was working with Dr. Goldhammer in La Popa Basin in NE Mexico. He always spoke to us in different languages; Spanish, Italian, Japanese, etc. but I never imagine that he was also an expert

in Latin binomial nomenclature for fossils. That was very impressive.

It has been a privilege to know this brilliant and dedicated scientist."

Jose Delgado, MS '03

As a non-traditional student, I had the pleasure of working for the Professor Emeritus, Dr. Folk as one of his "schiavas" (which is Italian for slaves). Dr. Folk never missed an opportunity to teach. One day I was in his office where classical music consistently played on the radio, doing maintenance work on Dr. Folk's massive card catalog reference system, when Dr. Folk suddenly popped into the office and said, "Hey, do you like Palygorskite?" And I, who knew absolutely nothing about rare Russian minerals and only a little more about classical music immediately envisioned a Russian orchestra performing Palygorskite's Opus in D minor...and responded, "Oh, is that who's playing?" To this response, Dr. Folk immediately bent over with laughter.

Needless to say, I will never, ever forget what Palygorskite is.

I learned many lessons from Dr. Folk during the two year period I worked for him, but the most important lesson I learned from him is how to truly live life. Dr. Folk's abundant joy and zest for life have left an indelible mark on me.

Peggy Hairston, BS '05

I graduated from the Jackson school in 2008, and sometime before then I was participating in the usual resume classes and mock interview sessions. One day I walked into the building wearing a suit, carrying my leather Jackson School resume holder/portfolio thing. I pushed the button and waited on the elevator. When the doors opened and I walked in, Dr. Folk was standing there with an old sport coat that had leather patches on the elbows and shoulders. He was also wearing a civil war confederate soldier's hat. He looked me up and down and said, "You look like you're peddling the book of mormon today." I laughed and said, "Well, you look like you're ready to go shoot some yanks." He died laughing. I'm not sure what or if either of us said anything after that, but we were both still laughing when the door opened and I got off at my floor.

Will King, BS '08

I first met Dr. Folk in 1998 on the elevator of the, as yet, unaltered Geology building, during my freshman year as a PhD graduate student. He was apparently riding continuously up and down and enjoying short conversations with the more transient riders while drinking his morning coffee. My office was next to said elevator on the same floor as Dr. Folk's office. Several times during the next two years, while waiting with both arms full of books for the elevator doors to open, I would hear, "Hey!" from the far end of the hall and see him standing there, waving, with a coffee cup in his hand. He would shout, "What are you doing?" My answer was usually a sleepy and boring semi-shout, "Going to class!" Another time I was in the hallway, near the SEM lab, when he confided in me (I may have been the first to hear it) that he had discovered nannobacteria in the white precipitate from the hose bib outside his house. I thought, "Surely worthy of a Nobel." I don't think he ever knew who I was, but I figure he recognized a kinship of hirsuteness.

Lyndon K. Murray, PhD '08

It was my sophomore year, fall 2011, at my first JSG Scholarship dinner after being accepted as an internal transfer from natural sciences. It was early in the semester, but I was excited, and my parents had come in for the banquet, not realizing that this would be the first of many of these events. We get seated, and the room fills up. We were seated with Professor Folk (who I did not know, nor recognize, as I was early into my first major-sequence Geology courses), myself across the table with my father next to him. Somehow the conversation turned to Penn State, where my father's best friend had gone to school and studied geology, as had Professor Folk. It turned to the scenery around State College, PA, and then to me as a new student who had taken Italian during my freshman year. Professor Folk suddenly starts rattling off fluent italian to me, totally taken aback. The next question was 'what are the columns at the Vatican made out of?' "Um, marble?" I ventured a guess, having been there the previous summer and seen the things. Of course it wouldnt be that easy, and Professor Folk launched into a discourse on his

research into microbiology in travertine which I've seen subsequently in the JGB ground floor cases.

The next week, my father forwarded me another email from his friend Andy, expressing incredulity and jealousy at the experience we had had, sitting with a legend of geology.

A few weeks later, we started carbonate rocks in 416M, and I realized just who I was seated next to, and had asked for advice about studying geology... and it was really incredible. It was that which made me realize the power of the Jackson School, and of studying this incredible science at the University of Texas. That's when I realized the reach of the Jackson School family, which has been incredible and invaluable to me as I spent the year after my graduation (2014) preparing myself for a career with a world-class operator in O&G.

Aaron Salin, BS '14

I first heard the name R.L. Folk in the mid 1970's when I was working on a MS degree at the University of Houston with Hank Chafetz. Folk was legend. He was saturating the literature. He was at UT-Austin where all the other great names in soft rock geology roamed. Moreover, he had been Hank's PhD mentor and was clearly revered. My greatest aspiration was to go to UT-Austin and do a PhD with Folk. I applied and was rejected. Instead I went to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and worked with Bob Dott. It was a happy ending to that episode.

As the irony of life would have it, I found myself in 1980 at UT-Austin interviewing for a tenure-track assistant professor job. I suddenly found myself in the midst not only Folk, but also the other giants, E.F. McBride, L.S. Land and A.J. Scott. At the time, the Department needed another person to help in teaching the huge influx of students that came with that oil boom. Because I wanted an academic job, I had never expected to return to Texas, but the day after I returned to Madison, I received a call from Chairman Bob Boyer offering me the job.

For the last 35 years it has been an honor and pleasure to have Bob Luigi Folk as a colleague, and for most of that time just down the hall. My oldest memory is of our first meeting during

my interview. I entered the Folk den, with its chaos of overflowing mass. Piles of papers were on the floor, on the desk, everywhere, and cascading in between. Rocks and trays of sediment littered the office. The historic microscope sat in its place, and the never-erased-only-written-over blackboard was on the wall. Just the office itself was legend, remembered by all who entered. (When I was chairman years later and offices were changing, I tried to have Folk's office preserved for posterity, but that did not work out.) Bob directed me to a chair while he handed me rocks, drawings and his art to interpret, usually cutting off the answers part way. What I shortly discovered was that the chair was rigged. If I leaned back at all, the chair collapsed backward and I was spilled onto the floor. This happened a couple of times and Bob acted as if he did not notice. I presumed that it all was a test.

Otherwise over the years we talked about sand dunes, rollers of helicoidal flow that do not exist, and sedimentary structures. Bob and Earle were the people to go to for anything petrographic. Sometimes Bob left me notes in my mailbox, and like those from Lynton Land, the handwriting was impossible to read and I never knew what these messages said. Bob was in Czechoslovakia in 1968 during the Soviet invasion, he had picked up some of the language, and he and I would sometimes chat in equally bad Czech. His sed manual with free-hand drawings (really) was a ready reference then and now.

What always stood out was that Luigi Folk housed as unconventional, creative and probing mind as I would ever encountered in the science. You did not necessarily believe the answer you got from him, but you always wanted to know what answer he would give.

*Gary Kocurek, Professor
Geological Sciences, UT Austin*

It has been such a pleasure through my years at the Jackson School to work with Dr. Folk, better known as "Luigi." When I first started with the Jackson School I was housed in the JGB building and would be able to see Luigi every day. We shared many stories (and laughs); and swapped coins over the years. We both enjoy collecting the presidential dollars,

and the State quarters. I have teased Luigi many times as he would come by in the mornings to start his secretarial duties for the day, (as he always says) and give me my dollar coin, and I would exchange it for a paper dollar...That he was coming by to get his coffee money for the day.

I was later moved to the EPS building and for a while did not get to see Luigi as often. I was really happy when I found out that Drs Folk, McBride, and McDowell were moving over to EPS for the summer. I love having them near so that I can see them more often.

Luigi comes by in the mornings even though he only comes in once a week these days. I will help him to get his office door open, and we chat for a bit. He speaks to me in different languages which I totally do not understand! And, then we laugh.

Happy Birthday Luigi! I certainly hope that I can grow up to be 90 years young one day, and be as cheerful as you are.

Julie Lake, Department of Geology

I can't remember how old I was, but I remember my Dad and Mom (Dr. Keith and Ann Young) taking us out to Dr. Folk's place on Bull Creek one weekend. Bull Creek was way out in the boondocks in those days, and you felt like you were really out in the country.

Dr. Folk was having a get-together for the Geology Department, and most faculty, wives and children were there. We knew everybody and knew all the other kids. Dr. Folk had prepared a spaghetti dinner for everyone after a day of swimming for the kids, and grown-up stuff for the adults. It was a great day.

Within a couple of days of this event, my parents received a telephone call that Dr. Folk had come down with Hepatitis (at least, I think it was Hepatitis). We were told that everyone would have to get shots, since Dr. Folk had prepared the spaghetti. Before we went to the Doctor's office, we were mortified at the stories of the long needles.

My brothers and I had a Pediatrician named Dr. Ralph Hanna, whose office was on 30th Street across from the Fire Station. Mom marched Steve, Bob and I down there, and when we arrived there was a big line of all the Geology Dept. kids. Seems that everybody went to Dr. Hanna or one of his partners.

Keith M. Young



