

Robert L. Taylor (-1988)

Robert L. Taylor, a former Foundation director who died March 1 (1988), combined a career in modern nuclear technology with a historian's reverence for the lore of the Old West.

Mr. Taylor died at George Washington University Hospital in Washington, D.C., at the age of 67, after being stricken suddenly with abdominal hemorrhaging.

A retired Federal employee, he lived in the Foggy Bottom section of Washington, which became his home base for frequent trips to the American West.

The main focus for his interest in Western history was the 1804-06 Lewis and Clark Expedition. He served on the Lewis and Clark Trail Heritage Foundation's Board of Directors from 1982 to 1986, where he won respect for his solid judgment and unifying presence. Mr. Taylor also was a member of the planning committee for the Foundation's successful 1982 annual meeting in Philadelphia.

His interest in the West extended well beyond the Lewis and Clark adventure. As a member of the History of Science Society, Mr. Taylor was a student of the surveying and engineering instruments used by Western explorers. He joined a mountaineering group, did some black powder shooting and enjoyed a naturalist's interest in birds.

Mr. Taylor grew up in Kearney, Nebraska, where the Oregon Trail met the Platte River. After graduation from Kearney State Teachers College in 1941, he undertook graduate studies in chemistry at Iowa State University. He entered the Army in 1944, serving at the close of World War II at a field hospital in Germany.

After the war Mr. Taylor went to work for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission at Los Alamos, New Mexico. Later, with the Commerce Department's Maritime Administration, he was involved with the design of the nuclear-powered merchant ship *Savannah*, launched in 1959. He retired from the Commerce Department in 1975.

Mr. Taylor is survived by a brother and a sister.

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(Taylor was a Director of the Foundation, 1982-1986.)

*Prepared by Bob Gatten, 2011*