

A remembrance of Dr. Maynard M. Miller

By Eduardo Crespo (JIRP 1978)

I am deeply and truly saddened by the news of Dr. Maynard M. Miller's passing away.

My professional career in applied ecology, protected area management, territorial planning, and international cooperation in these topics is now 30 years long, but still today it moves and delves in the soft and powerful light cast upon its earliest beginning in Alaska, when I attended JIRP as a 17 year old student, in the summer of 1978.

The teaching of rectitude, clearness of thought and healthy balance between work, cooperation and fun that simply irradiated from Mal's (M^3) behavior has been with me since then. One specific (very iceland /life minded) thing he taught me has probably been as relevant for me over the years as anyone of Emerson's or Beschel's pieces of knowledge: ALWAYS HAVE A PLAN. ALWAYS BE READY TO CHANGE YOUR PLAN. I still thank him frequently for this.

For a long time, I was the youngest person to have participated in the Juneau Icefield Research Program (it was not so open to juniors as it is now) and I might still be the only Spaniard (although I also hold a US passport). When I was chosen to participate in JIRP, all my high school and junior college training had been in the traditional Spanish system. It had its advantages. I still remember Dr. Miller's face of surprise the first day, when more than 100 of us were gathered around him, sitting on the floor of a VFW hall, and during his introductory talk, he asked us who knew what the Greek word for change was, and I (and only one other person) dared to raise my hand and came up with (almost) the right answer. (I said "tropos" instead of "entropos"). I guess he knew then, that he had given the right kid a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I am happy to say that just a few days afterward, I was on night shift radio duty, and had to coordinate chopper and land movements when we rescued our 85 year old Medical Dr., who had fallen into a crevasse (when the team physically got to him, he had already built some steps in the ice and was coming out by himself, at 85 years of age, at night!!). And the 17 year old kid, whose mother tongue was Spanish, "did an excellent job", or so said Dr. Miller. Thanks again for your trust, Mal.

In 1994 I was last in touch with Dr. Miller (already legislature representative in Boise) and his wife Joan, when they congratulated me on my PhD, and we exchanged some letters about the outdoor expeditionary/academic (JIPR idea-based) program I wanted to start in Chilean Patagonia. Actually, I did operate a small scale thing of this kind during my five years of residence in Chile, before I had to return to Spain for family reasons. Again Mal's inimitable advice in those days: Keep your raincoat handy!!

At that time, Mal offered me to go back to JIRP during part of a summer season as a visiting professor, but the circumstances of life didn't allow.
Tomorrow? Fine with me!

Maynard Miller has been one of the most important persons in my life. A gigantic everlasting reference. He and his family will always remain in my mind and heart.

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