

## IN MEMORIAM



Dr. Ernst Kündig

On September 12th, 1981, Ernst Kündig passed away after a long illness in his home-country Switzerland, where he was born in 1901.

Ernst grew up in Pfäffikon, where he and his brothers became intimately acquainted with nature in the famous grandfatherly tree-nursery of Irgenhausen. This early interest in nature and its secrets was further stimulated when his parents gave him a small microscope, and finally led to his decision to study geology in Zürich.

Under the guidance of his professors H. Schardt and P. Niggli, Ernst studied the geology and petrography of the Adula and Simano nappes and their rootzones between Val Calanca and Misox, which led to a Ph. D. thesis in 1926. During this study, Ernst Kündig was confronted with the 'ophiolite-problem', and this would remain an important

theme throughout his professional life, including most of his numerous publications.

The young petrographer joined the 'Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij', and went in 1927 to Indonesia where he did most of his fieldwork in the jungles of the island Celebes. In 1930 the company transferred him to Venezuela, but in 1931 he became temporarily unemployed as a result of the reigning economic crisis, and returned to Switzerland. During the next four years he earned his livelihood as teacher in Zürich, spending much of his free time in the Tessin mountains where he participated in the mapping for the sheets Iorio and Bellinzona of the Swiss geological atlas. During this time he also published some of his Celebes work.

He married Margrit Boner, and his wife and two children would accompany him wherever and whenever possible on his peregrinations as an international geologist. This overseas life

started afresh at the end of 1935, when improving economic conditions made it again possible to earn a living as petroleum geologist, and he returned to Venezuela. In that country he did extensive fieldwork in the western and central Andean chains, and here as well as previously in Celebes he struggled again with his beloved geological problems: complex overthrust tectonics and ophiolites.

In 1938 Ernst was transferred to Rumania, but the war interrupted his stay there in the summer of 1940 and he returned to Switzerland, where he was engaged as hydrologist in military service. End 1941 he travelled to Argentina, where he worked as petroleum geologist, followed by short assignments in Colombia and Peru.

After the war, in 1947, Ernst Kündig settled in The Hague, The Netherlands, where he worked the next 14 years in the exploration department of the Shell head office; the last six years, until his retirement in 1961, as Head of Geological Planning. In this position he stimulated Shell's worldwide exploration activities and supervised studies leading to new ventures, without ever forgetting the fundamental geological problem which had intrigued him so much during his career:

the ophiolites and their origin. It is in no small measure thanks to his interest and initiative that the extensive mapping and study of the Oman Mountains by Shell geologists could come off the ground, a compilation of which was published by Glennie et al. in the Proceedings of the Royal Dutch Geological and Mining Society.

The Society honoured Kündig in 1962 with the Van Waterschoot van der Gracht Medal, in recognition of his important contributions to the science of geology, in particular the problem of the origin and emplacement of ophiolites – a problem which thanks to the continuous efforts of geologists like Kündig and the new plate-tectonic theory is now largely solved.

After retirement Ernst and Margrit Kündig returned to his paternal home in Pfäffikon, and he spent the autumn of his life there and in his summer abode in Carasso, amidst the glorious Tessin mountains he knew so well.

R. J. Murriss

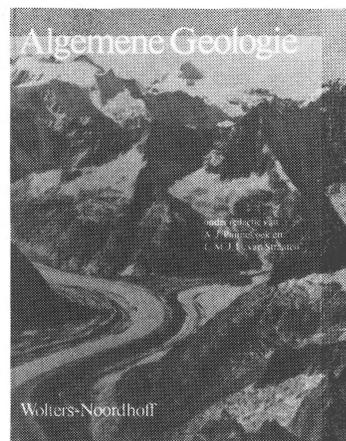
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ISBN 90 01 68975 2  
616 pag f 75,00

Wolters-Noordhoff bv,  
postbus 58,  
9700 MB Groningen,  
tel. (050) 16 23 04.  
Ook verkrijgbaar via de  
boekhandel.