

Peter E. Gretener

Autor(en): **Gretener, Nick**

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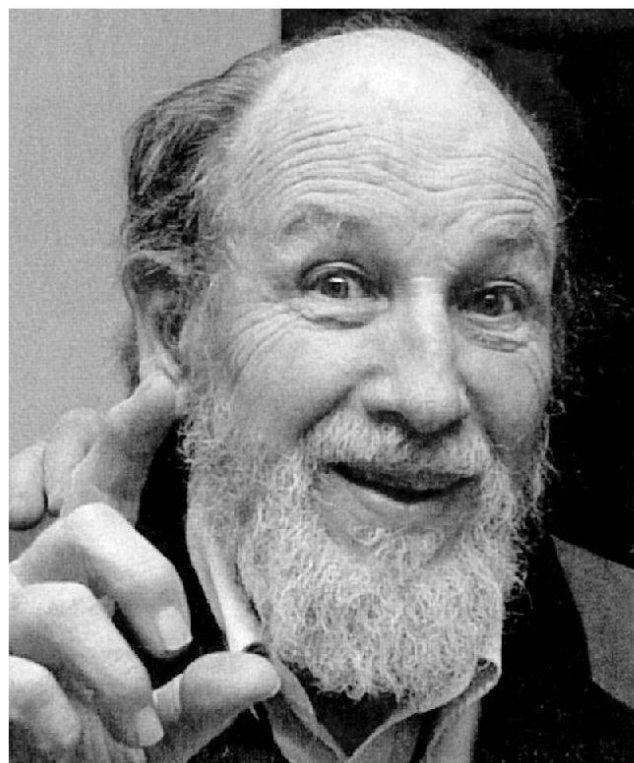
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Peter E. Gretener

1926 - 2008

Peter passed away peacefully at home in Calgary on Friday, May 16, 2008 at the age of 81 years. Besides his one love and wife, Vreni, Peter is survived by three sons and a daughter-in-law, Chris, Nick, and Daniel and Kathy; and his three grandchildren, Troy, Jessica and Kristin. Peter was born in Switzerland, where he completed his PhD studies in geology and geophysics at the Technical University of Zurich (ETH). In 1953, he immigrated to what, for a geologist, was truly a land of opportunity – the vast frontier of Canada – and completed his postdoctoral studies at the University of Toronto with Tuzo Wilson. In 1954, young Vreni, his bride to be, undertook the daunting journey to this unknown but intriguing country to marry her love and start a family and new life. The young couple, and growing family, lived in various places, including Edmonton, Calgary and Houston, before finally putting down roots in Calgary. Peter spent the first twelve years of his career in industry, including summers spent in Canada's rugged North – country he deeply loved – before entering the ranks of academe (the Ivory Tower) at the fledgling University of Calgary. He took to teaching with enthusiasm and worked to pass on his passion for «rocks» to his students. He sought to leave a mark on his students («They should love me or hate me, just not be indifferent») and for many he did just that. Rocks were not his only passion, as he spent much time thinking about the greater fate of mankind. He held seminars on topics such as Limits to Growth and how mankind could co-exist on a sustainable basis with the other inhabitants of Planet Earth, long before such topics came into vogue. He was a firm believer in teaching his students to take the big picture and work to develop a broad base of knowledge, rather than beco-



me too narrowly focused on their area of specialty. He believed strongly that interdisciplinary dialogue (geologists talking to engineers talking to environmentalists...) was the key to advancing science in a rational manner. An honest, fair, kind and sometimes contrary man, he lived life on his own terms. Money was never a driver. At the end, he was fulfilled and as he would have said, the time had come to «shut her down». We will all miss him and will try to take with us his life example.

Nick Gretener

