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Henri Guillaume

1927 - 2007



Henri died in Australia, near Melbourne, where he and Léa had settled in 1986, once all their children had completed their studies. To become an Australian had been Henri's dream ever since his assignment there as a roving geologist from 1961 to 1965. His assistant for a while was a young geologist by the name of John Jennings. Henri was then so taken by the local way of life - even becoming a cricket umpire! - that he hesitated to leave the Group in order to make his life down under. It took him another 22 years of Shell life before making his dream come true at last.

Born in Romont, a small historical walled city on a hill, he attended first the local school, then commuted daily for four years to the College St. Michel of Fribourg in order to obtain the university entrance diploma (Greek and Latin) in 1946. He then chose to study geology at the University of Fribourg under Professor Jean Tercier; in addition, towards the end of his studies, he spent a few months with Professor Augustin Lombard at the University of Brussels.

In 1955 he received «Summa cum Laude» the PhD for his thesis «Géologie du Montsalvens» (Préalpes fribourgeoises); this thesis was published in 1957 in the «Matériaux pour la carte géologique de la Suisse».

As Professor Jean Tercier was nearing retirement, he offered Henri the opportunity to remain at «home» as his successor designate. Henri declined the offer, preferring to travel the world to a quiet university life.

It is in 1955, upon leaving university, that Henri became a member of the VSP/ASP.

Joining the Group in 1956, Henri and Léa and their young family were based in The Hague. Henri was sent on several field assignments, one in Spain in particular where he accompanied Otto Renz who - Henri was fond of recounting - had the knack of spotting ammonites in the road side outcrop while sitting in a moving Landrover. From The Hague to eastern Venezuela (1958 - 1961) working with Indios and mules, up and down the Cordillera del Este: a physical challenge and a fascinating field experience. Then came Australia and the discovery of an infinitely empty dry space with a few scattered people and, unfortunately, too many flies. In 1965, back to reality in the Netherlands: many people and water everywhere. An office job for Henri in the Area Geological Team Africa and the French Lycée of The Hague for the Guillaume youngsters now numbering seven.

The next transfer came in 1969 to Port Gentil in Gabon, where they remained four years before moving to the U.K. Henri was then suffering from an acute hepatitis which took many months to clear. He began to work again, then seized the opportunity of an early retirement in 1978.

In spite of the distance, Henri and Léa managed on some of their visits home to attend the annual gathering of the swiss pensioners, to the happy surprise of all their friends and colleagues. It was always a pleasure to meet again such a cheerful friend and to enter into animated discussions about history or politics, his favourite subjects.

We convey our deepest sympathy to Léa and her children in Switzerland, Australia, Oman and the UK.

J.-P. de Loriol

