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Memorial of William T. Holser, 1920–1999

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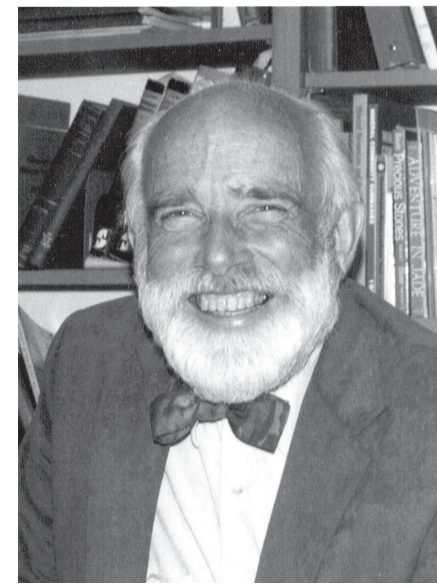
William "Bill" T. Holser, a former editor of, and regular contributor to this journal, died at his home during the night of December 25, 1999 after battling Parkinson's disease for several years. In the course of his 79 years, he achieved an honored place in the scientific world and a warm place in the hearts of all who knew him.

Like many who grew up during the depression, his early life was a constant challenge. His father, a self-taught surveyor, died when Bill was only eleven and his mother eked out a living by teaching in out-of-the-way places, including San Nicolas off the coast of California where the student body consisted of just two small girls. Despite her meager income, she managed to put Bill through school, for she recognized very early that Bill had an exceptional mind. He was a quiet, studious child with an inquiring intellect and a conscientious character. He wanted to understand the world around him. At an early age, he became interested in photography and learned to develop his own pictures. He was also fascinated by radio and spent many hours building equipment and experimenting with new ideas.

Bill obtained his bachelor's degree at Caltech in 1942 and, after serving in the navy during World War II, he returned to obtain a master's degree in 1946. He then went east to Columbia University where he obtained his doctorate in 1950. His thesis was on metamorphism and mineralization associated with plutonic intrusions in Montana, but he pursued other broad interests in field-based geology and for several years he spent his summers studying ore deposits for the Geological Survey. Meanwhile, he continued to study electronics and in 1952 obtained a patent for a method of contouring topography from reflections of radio frequency emissions.

Bill began teaching as an assistant professor at Cornell even before he had completed his Ph.D., but he left Cornell in 1954 to devote his energies to research in mineralogy and petrology at the Battelle Institute in Columbus, Ohio. It was here that he met Mary Ann, his devoted wide of 45 years. Looking for a better outlet for his eclectic interests, Bill went to U.C.L.A. where he joined George Kennedy to carry out what is now viewed as a landmark study of the thermodynamic properties of supercritical water. Four years later he moved to the Chevron Research Laboratories in La Habra, California, to work on a variety of topics ranging from evaporite deposits to the history of the oceans and atmosphere.

Bill joined the faculty of the University of Oregon in 1970 and the following year became chairman of the Geology Department. He was selected for this position because he had all the qualities of patience and understanding that were needed during those turbulent years. Throughout his time in Eugene,



Bill was never heard to utter a negative word against anyone, even when he had good cause to. He served well and guided the department through a difficult period of growth and development, but he disliked administration and was happy to return to research.

Few geologists appreciated the true level of Bill's scientific achievements, partly because he worked in so many diverse fields, but also because he was too modest to bring his work to their attention. The long list of Bill's publications reflects his broad interests: crystallography, ore deposits, petroleum resources, evaporites, geophysical exploration, meteorite impact, and biological stratigraphy, to name just a few.

Bill's professional activities included service as editor of *American Mineralogist* and the *M.S.A. Special Papers* from 1966–1972, and editor of the *International Tables of the International Union of Crystallography* from 1963–1965 and 1971–1976. Bill was an honorary life fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America, a fellow of the Geological Society of America, the American Geophysical Union, and the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, and in 1976 he was an honorary Fulbright Fellow.

Scientific inquiry was an essential part of Bill's life, but it was not his only interest. He loved the outdoors and was a master at capturing the beauty of nature in his photographs and poems. He was also active in countless political and social causes. Indeed, one of the last things he did was to help organize a movement to preserve the magnificent library at the U.S.

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Geological Survey, which was slated to become a target of government retrenchment.

In short, Bill was a man of many facets with a marvelous mind and a sensitive soul. His loss leaves a void that will be difficult to fill.

Donations in William Holser's memory may be made to the Holser Visiting Scholar Fund, Department of Geological Sciences, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403.

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