

Memorial to Erich Maren Schlaikjer 1905-1972

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Erich Maren Schlaikjer died suddenly at his home in Littleton, Colorado, on Sunday morning, November 5, 1972. Surviving him are his wife, Josephine Ayres Schlaikjer; three children, Mrs. Joseph DePietro of New York City; Mrs. Joseph Lola of Dallas, Texas; Michael A. Schlaikjer of Loveland, Colorado; a brother, Jes Schlaikjer, of Washington, D.C.; and eight grandchildren.

His death at age 66 followed a lifelong dedication to geologic studies and teaching and application of his extensive geologic knowledge as a consultant and entrepreneur. He also served with distinction as a member of the Air Force Reserve during World War II.

Erich was born at Newtown, Ohio, on November 22, 1905. The family moved to western South Dakota in 1907 and homesteaded near the town of Winner, South Dakota, where Schlaikjer was reared in the ranching country of northeastern Wyoming and western South Dakota, attending rural elementary schools. The determination to excel which characterized his life was evident during his high school years when he worked at various jobs to assist financing his high school education in the town of Winner. After graduation from high school, Erich worked to earn the money for his college education. His thirst for intellectual stimulation and attainment induced him to leave the family home and enter Harvard University, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1929. He received master's and doctoral degrees from Columbia University in 1931 and in 1935, respectively.

Erich's geological experience began in the summer of 1925 when he was placed in charge of a geological and paleontological expedition to the Great Plains area of the United States on behalf of Harvard University. He made nine additional consecutive annual summer field trips to the region for the university. In 1936 he led an expedition to the Yukon Territory for the American Museum of Natural History. In 1932 he commenced teaching geology at Brooklyn College, ending that career in 1950 as an associate professor of geology at Brooklyn College to enter the world of commercial petroleum and mining geology in the Rocky Mountain area.

In 1950 Erich founded Lakota Petroleum Corporation, and until 1969 served as president of this family-owned enterprise, continuing as a consultant in both petroleum and mining geology. Varied hobbies and interests with his many friends and his family, nearly always including his loving wife "Dodie," received a fair portion of his waking hours. Erich was always conscious of the part his devoted wife played in his

life, providing the loyalty, encouragement, confidence, and counsel to meet the challenges and demands of an active and purposeful life.

Erich interrupted his intensely active and varied geological pursuits and accomplishments to serve his country during World War II with honor and justifiable pride. He was commissioned a First Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps in November 1942, and was placed on inactive duty with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in January 1946. Since he had graduated from U.S. Army Intelligence School, he was assigned to USAAF Headquarters, Washington, D.C., and Intelligence Headquarters in India, Burma, and China. He was Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence Headquarters, Mariana Islands. He received Letters of Commendation, the Bronze Star Medal, seven campaign stars on the Asiatic Pacific Theatre Ribbon, and was awarded the Army Commendation Ribbon. Until his death, Erich was an enthusiastic supporter of the Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and could always be found on a fall Saturday afternoon in his stadium seat whenever the AFA football team was playing there.

Although space limitations do not permit a complete listing of Erich's many honors and memberships, selected highlights are: Parmentier Scholar, Harvard University 1924 to 1925; University Fellow, Columbia University, 1931 to 1932; awarded Cressy Morrison Prize, New York Academy of Science, 1939; Who's Who in America, 1949 Supplement, 1950 edition to date; Fellow of The Geological Society of America, 1939; Fellow of the Paleontological Society of America, 1940; and Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was a member of the American Institute of Professional Geologists, the National Society of Professional Engineers, American Association of Petroleum Geologists, Rocky Mountain Association of Geologists, American Geophysical Union, and the Society for the Study of Evolution. Other memberships included the Rocky Mountain Petroleum Pioneers, Denver Petroleum Club, Harvard Club of New York City, and Columbine Country Club, Littleton, Colorado.

I first met Erich in 1958. It is difficult to write objectively about him because to know Erich well was to find oneself personally intrigued by his character and personality. Those who knew him well were conscious of his enthusiasm and total involvement in many projects and causes, of his love and pride in his Danish-Swiss roots, and of his total devotion to his family. He was a man with so many varied interests that time did not always permit him to devote the attention to all he would have liked. Exemplifying his exuberance and varied interests, he was nearing completion of construction of a Quality Inn Motel near Loveland, Colorado, at the time of his death. The architecture is Scandinavian and significantly the restaurant will be the "Viking Flags." His able wife and son are now completing the project.

Those of us who were intellectually challenged by Erich may have frequently differed with his conclusions, but the honest debates which resulted developed mutual, personal bonds of friendship and respect which transcended any differences. He was a man of strong opinions vigorously expressed and could never be found noncommittal on important professional or social matters. Erich's high principles underwrote his verbal commitments and inspired confidence in those entrusting any matter to his keeping. He will be long remembered by those of us whose lives he touched.

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