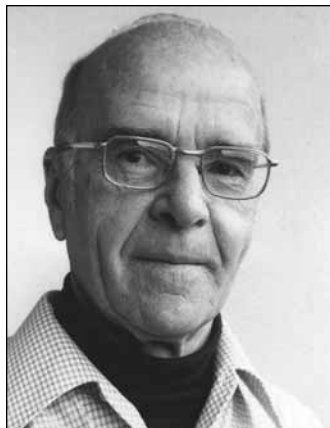


Memorial to Henno Martin

1910–1998

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Henno Martin was born on March 15, 1910, in Freiburg, Germany. He studied natural sciences and geosciences at the Universities of Bonn, Zürich, and Göttingen. In 1935 he wrote his Ph.D. on “Post-Archean Tectonics in Southern Central Sweden” with Hans Cloos, in Bonn. Rejecting a fascist Germany, he emigrated in the same year with his friend Hermann Korn, who also did his Ph.D. with Cloos, to South-West Africa (now Namibia), which was a South African protectorate at that time. For the first ten years there he earned his living as a consulting geologist, doing mainly water-exploration work, before being employed in 1945 by the government of South-West Africa, working on water-exploration projects. The success he earned for providing water on farms made him well-known throughout the country, even before his best-seller *Wenn es Krieg gibt, gehen wir in die Wüste* (*The Sheltering Desert*) was published. This book, which has been reprinted several times, tells of the two-year exile in the Namib Desert which helped him and his friend avoid the threat of internment by the South African Mandatory Government. The adventure began on May 25, 1940, with two cars, no hunting weapons, only one air rifle and one pistol. It ended on September 3, 1942, because Hermann Korn fell ill with beri-beri and needed medical attention. Martin based the book on his diaries and memories, writing it for his wife. The actual experience must have been harder than he described in his book.



Martin's scientific work included geological development of the southern continents, especially southern Africa, in which Namibia plays a special part. Before continental drift was finally demonstrated by investigations on the ocean floor and further substantiated by theoretical aspects of modern plate tectonics, Henno Martin belonged to the group of scientists who had obtained evidence for the former connection between Africa and South America. He summarized his level of knowledge in Alexander L. du Toit Memorial Lecture No. 7, “The hypothesis of continental drift in the light of recent advances of geological knowledge in Brazil and South-West Africa,” published in 1961. Numerous works on Permian-Carboniferous glaciation and the development of Gondwana followed. His comprehensive work, *The Precambrian Geology of South-West Africa and Namaqualand* was published in 1965.

Henno Martin's first great scientific achievement, research on the Naukluft nappe complex, worked out together with Hermann Korn, for the first time brought internationally recognized evidence of gravitational nappe transport. Martin and Korn started their investigations in the Naukluft shortly after their arrival in October 1935. First the whole area, 2100 km², had to be mapped; no topographic maps of it existed. The investigation of the Naukluft took several years, interrupted and delayed by consulting jobs and circumstances resulting from World War II. Results of this study were finally published in 1959 in the *Geological Society of America Bulletin*. Another milestone in the geological research of Namibia was the 1939 discovery of the Messum igneous complex, a Mesozoic ring complex about 20 km in diameter. As with the

Naukluft research, publication was delayed until 1954, mainly due to circumstances related to the war.

From 1958 until 1960 Martin lectured as a professor at the University of Sao Paulo, and from 1962 to 1965 he served as director of the Precambrian Research Unit at the University of Cape Town.

After his appointment as a professor at the Institute of Geology and Paleontology at the Georg-August-Universität of Göttingen in 1965, Martin initiated the first geoscientific collaborative research center focusing on the central European Variscan belt and on Namibia's Damara orogen. In this way, he could continue and intensify his research in Namibia in cooperation with a large group of German and international geoscientists and also in cooperation with the Geological Survey in Windhoek. He recommended numerous research projects, carried out within the framework of the Collaborative Research Center Project 48, "The Earth's Crust," as well as other projects thereafter.

Those of us who had the luck to travel with him through Namibia will always remember the hospitality, heartiness, and respect shown to him, and from which we also benefited by being in his company. Nights at the campfire were unforgettable. The normally quiet Henno Martin was transformed into a natural storyteller. He always spoke calmly, without exaggeration, but with a quiet, often enigmatic sense of humor. There was, indeed, much to tell from earlier times, when the country was not as extensively divided up by farm fences as it is now; when giraffes still wandered, undisturbed by telephone lines; and when zebras roamed in herds of a thousand and more. Martin had much to contribute. For us he was not only an unlimited source of geological knowledge about this country, but also someone who was familiar with plants and animals; when asked, he was more than willing to share his knowledge.

I have travelled for many years throughout Namibia—in the beginning, with Henno Martin, but later without him because of his failing health. I have realized how many of his experiences have influenced my existence, and how many of his adventures have now become part of my own memories. When I talk to my students today about the old South-West, my memories mix with those of Henno's. His narrative talent made lasting impressions.

Henno Martin was deeply connected to nature, knowing that he derived from it and knowing, too, that he would return to it. This knowledge along with his ideas about people's responsibility for Earth is the main subject of his most recent book *Menschheit auf dem Prüfstand* published in 1992.

Martin became a member of the Academy of Sciences of Göttingen in 1967. He received numerous national and international awards during his career, such as the Jubilee Medal (1954) and the Draper Memorial Medal (1968) of the Geological Society of South Africa, the Hans Stille Medaille (1977) of the Deutsche Geologische Gesellschaft and the Gustav Steinmann Medaille (1980) of the Geologische Vereinigung. He was an honorary member of the Geological Society of South Africa and the Geological Society of Namibia, and an honorary fellow of the Geological Society of America. Just before his death, the Geological Society of Namibia created the Henno Martin Medal in his honor; it will be awarded annually for the best scientific publication by a geologist living in Namibia.

Henno Martin died on January 7, 1998, at the age of 87. We miss this exceptional man, who never intended to be the focus of attention. He was self-conscious, but not at all vain. His attitude was straight and tolerant, and his composure well disciplined. In 1992, he expressed his basic point of view in *Menschheit auf dem Prüfstand*: "Only through variety, not through one-sided insistence; only through cooperation, not through authority, there is a chance for a higher development and through this the survival of the human race."

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