

Siegfried (Sig) J. Muessig: An Appreciation

Siegfried Muessig (SEG 1957 HF), a highly respected American mining geologist, died May 24, 2018, age 96, in Claremont, California.

Sig was born to Philipp and Irma Muessig in the historic university city of Freiburg, Germany, in 1922. Six years later the family emigrated to Sylvania, Ohio in the United States, where he grew up. He managed to catch the tail end of WWII as a 2nd Lt. in the U.S. Army Air Corps, flying a B-29, before earning B.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees in Geology at The Ohio State University and subsequently joining the U. S. Geological Survey.

In the early 1950s, one of Sig's first jobs, in support of the U. S government's desire to develop borate-based jet fuels, was to help determine the extent of boron ore reserves in the western world. That work exposed him to the U.S. Borax Company's deposits and mining operations in the deserts of California, Argentina and Chile. Sig became deeply involved with this project, quickly becoming an authority on the chemistry, deposition and distribution of the world's borate deposits. In Argentina in 1957, he discovered and named a new borate mineral, Ezcurrite, after the manager of the mine where it was discovered.

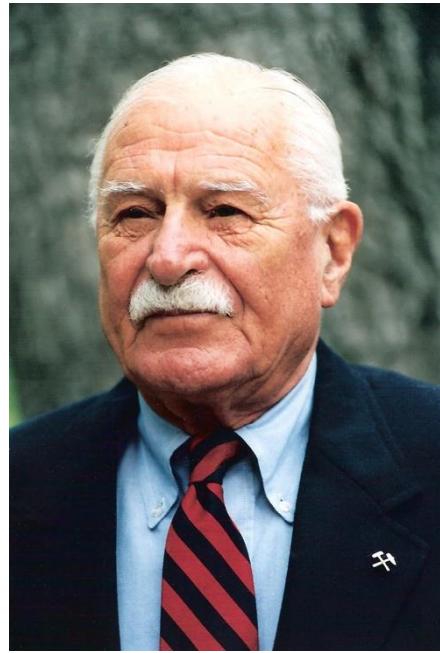
Sig next worked in Washington State, and his USGS Bulletin 1216 on the Republic District in north-central Washington remains an excellent exploration guide to the district. In 1959, U.S. Borax hired Sig as their first Chief Geologist, a position he held until 1966 when Tidewater Oil Company, later Getty Oil Company, recruited him to head up their new minerals exploration group, to be known as Getty Mining.

Getty had chosen wisely. During Sig's twenty-year stay he formed and directed a highly-regarded, aggressive, and successful, multinational exploration group well-known for its discovery of significant gold reserves in the historic Mercur District of Utah and its roles in the joint venture discoveries of the large Jabiluka uranium orebodies in Australia; the world-class Escondida, Chile copper deposit; the Casa Grande, Arizona, copper deposit.

A colleague and friend summarized the experience of working at Getty this way: "[Sig's] leadership of the Getty Minerals group, the quality of the team he built, their accomplishments, and his effective advocacy at the highest levels of Getty Oil for our programs gave us all the freedom to do our job well and to produce some of the best discoveries of that era, if not since then. They don't come any better."

After Getty, Sig directed Crystal Exploration's diamond search in Michigan and Wisconsin, consulted for major mining companies' exploration efforts and during his final year, readied for USGS publication his 1954 field report and plane table map on the Monte Blanco borate deposits of Death Valley (in press).

Sig's approach to all matters was enthusiastic and energetic. He served his profession well as President of the Society of Economic Geologists in 1978 and received their Ralph W. Marsden Medal in 1990. He was a Distinguished Member of the Society of Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration (SME) and received their Ben



F. Dickerson III award in 2007. He was also a Fellow of the Geological Society of America (GSA), and a life-term Governor of the National Mining Hall of Fame.

He always brushed away the window dressing and looked for the basic elements of a project and his pithy, insightful comments about the exploration business were always on the mark. During his career he would frequently, in print, exhort his fellow professionals with directives to keep focused on the basic issues of mineral exploration. “Drill in the shadow of the headframe!”, “Exploration is a business not a science!”, “IQ may get you there but it’s NQ that finds it!” became slogans of the profession.

Sig is survived by his wife of 69 years, Mary Catherine (Kit), his sons Hans and Philipp, their spouses and three grandchildren.

Siegfried Muessig was a remarkable geologist, a gentleman, a leader, a scientist, and a companion to so many of us.

Cheers old friend. You had a wonderful run.

Contributed by Robert C. Munro (FGS) and William M. Pennell (SEG SF 1979)

Gifts in Sig’s memory may be made to The Ohio State University Foundation, 1480 Lane Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43221, for their Edmund M. Spieker Memorial Scholarship Fund or the School of Earth Sciences Field Experience Travel Fund.