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MEMORIAL OF TÓMAS TRYGGVASON

April 26, 1907–September 30, 1965

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Tómas Tryggvason died unexpectedly from a heart attack on September 30, 1965. Tómas was the first Icelander to study mineralogy and petrology, and his death marks an end to the first pioneering efforts in this field in Iceland.

He was born to a farmer in northern Iceland on April 26, 1907. At an early age he developed a strong interest for the natural sciences, awakened by the exceptionally inspiring features of Icelandic geology. After finishing his basic education at the "gymnasium" in Akureyri he went to Copenhagen for undergraduate work in geology. After two years in Copenhagen his interests tended towards petrology and mineralogy and in 1935 he left Copenhagen and went to the University of Upsala to continue his studies under Professor Helge G. Backlund. In 1940 he finished a *fil. cand.* degree, and obtained an Alexander von Humboldt scholarship to go to Germany where he spent a year at the University of Göttingen with Professor C. W. Correns. After returning to Upsala, Tómas worked for the next two years on his thesis *Das Skjaldbreid Gebiet auf Island*, a geological, petrographical study of one of Iceland's shield volcanoes. In 1943 he obtained his *fil. lic.* degree from the University of Upsala.

In the middle of war there was no possibility of travelling back to Iceland so he went to work for a prospecting company, Elektrisk Malmletning in Stockholm.

In 1946 Tómas gave up his work in Sweden to go back to Iceland. He obtained a position as a geologist at the recently established University Research Institute in Reykjavik and started to build up a laboratory for optical mineralogy. Supported by a good chemical laboratory in the same building he was soon able to start his pioneering work in Iceland and the opportunities proved to be many and varied.

During his study of the fine-grained products of the 1947 Hekla eruption he developed an eye infection which barred him from any intensive work with the microscope for many years to come. This must have been a serious blow to Tómas since he had acquired a highly trained skill in microscopic work which the X-ray spoiled younger generation always regarded with surprise and admiration. Being unable for the time being to continue basic petrographic studies, he turned his main interest towards



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applied geology. Geology as an engineering tool had not been used to any extent in Iceland, and Tómas had first to convince the authorities about the application of geology as an important primary step in any major construction work.

As it turned out geologists were asked on an increasing scale to act as consultants to government and private companies, and Tómas himself was involved in the investigation for all major electrical power plants built in Iceland after he came home and until his death. He also initiated systematic prospecting for nonmetallic deposits of commercial value in Iceland. This resulted in the finding of large amounts of perlite, and he investigated a recent diatomaceous deposit which proved to be the largest mine of diatomite in Europe. This is now in the initial stages of production.

But Tómas was constantly interested in petrography and he made many valuable contributions in this field as the years went by and he recovered from his eye infection. These studies were however restricted because of lack of communication with other petrologists, since most of the time he was the only geoscientist at the University Research Institute and the sole petrologist in Iceland. In his isolation he kept contacts with many friends abroad, and being an optimist who believed in the establishing of a strong geoscience section at the University Research Institute, he constantly improved the working facilities of his laboratory by obtaining new instruments and adding to the geology library.

When a new generation of geologists and petrologists started to arrive after 1960 Tómas made an all-out effort to create new positions and employ the young men as they came from their studies abroad. When he died he had succeeded in building up a strong geoscience section at the University Research Institute equipped with modern instruments and inspired by an enthusiasm which was equally shared by Tómas and his younger associates. To us who had the opportunity to work closely with Tómas Tryggvason in the last five years of his life, he will always remain as the modest helper and instructor who with endurance and patience had prepared the ground for advanced studies of the petrology and mineralogy of Iceland.

Tómas Tryggvason is survived by his wife, Kersten Janckes, from Upsala, whom he married in 1944, and by four children. He was very much attached to his family and proud of his fine children. His wife provided a beautiful home which was his constant source of happiness.

A complete bibliography of Tómas Tryggvason is to be found in *Natturufraedingurinn*, 36, p. 107 (1966), compiled by Thorleifur Einarsson.