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Memorial of Roger G.J. Strens

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Roger Strens, a Senior Research Officer in the Department of Geophysics and Planetary Physics of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, died suddenly on January 11, 1980. As he had generally been in good health, his death, which resulted from an unusual combination of circumstances, was a devastating blow to his family, friends and colleagues.

He was born on May 11, 1938 in Brussels, Belgium, but within a few years his family moved to England, and he attended several schools in and around the London area. In 1956 he entered the Department of Geology at Nottingham University, obtaining a B.Sc. in 1959, and following graduate work with Dr. R. J. Firman, a Ph.D. in 1962. During his years at Nottingham he was a keen field geologist, but became increasingly interested in mineralogy, and made a detailed study of the mineralization of the Borrowdale–Honister area of the English Lake District as part of his thesis work.

The academic year of 1962–63 was spent as a Research Fellow in the Department of Geology, Univeristy of Texas at Austin, and the following year as a Research Geologist in the Department of Geology and Geophysics, University of California at Berkeley. In both positions he gained experience in experimental mineralogy and petrology, working on the synthesis and properties of $Ca_3V_2Si_3O_{12}$ (goldmanite) and several members of the epidote family.

Roger returned to England in 1964 to take up a Research Fellowship in the Department of Mineralogy and Petrology of the University of Cambridge. In a highly productive period of two years he published several papers on stability, electronic spectra, and cation ordering in a number of minerals. Some of the spectroscopic studies were made in collaboration with Roger Burns, and also G. M. Bancroft and A. G. Maddock. The next move took Dr. Strens to the Department of Earth Sciences at Leeds University, where he was Lecturer in Geochemistry, replacing Professor P. G. Harris for one year. In 1967 he accepted an appointment at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, as a Guest Member of Staff in the Department of Geophysics and Planetary Physics, and two years later obtained the post of Senior Research Officer, which he held until the time of his death. During a period of twelve years he developed a distinctive brand of mineralogical research in a Department dominated by solid earth geophysicists. Despite being surrounded by a number of large, estab-

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lished research groups he was able to attract a steady stream of graduate students of whom the first was Bernard J. Wood. Roger was always available to his students, and an encouraging attitude earned their respect and friendship. After leaving Newcastle most of them maintained a regular contact.

In 1974 he organized, almost single-handedly, the NATO Advanced Study Institute on the Physics and Chemistry of Minerals and Rocks. The meeting drew a large international audience, and the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the problem of mineral science, high pressure physics, and geophysics was seen to be essential.

In recognition of his contributions to mineralogy he was elected a Fellow of the Mineralogical Society of America in 1975, and invited to be a founding member of the board of editors of the journal "Physics and Chemistry of Minerals" in the same year. He served as a member of the Geochemistry Committee of the Mineralogical Society of Great Britain from 1973–1976, and then as member of Council from 1978. He was in regular demand as a speaker at conferences, and in recent years these included: Mineral Physics Conference, Virginia (1977), Centenary Meeting of the French Mineralogical Society (1978), and NATO A.S.I. on Mixed Valence Compounds at Oxford (1979). During 1977 he spent two months at the Geophysical Laboratory, Washington, working on high pressure spectra and equation of state of FeO. A year of study leave (1978–79) in the Department of Mineralogy and Petrology, University of Cambridge, gave him the opportunity for further experimental work on mineral optics and spectra, and the chance to prepare a book on the same subject. He was hoping to provide a unified understanding of a subject which had lain almost neglected for over 80 years. In addition to his own book he had been appointed editor of a series of books on mineral physics, and another on crystallography. Within the space of a comparatively short academic career he was author of more than forty scientific publications[1] and left a wealth of unpublished work, some of which was never commited to paper. It is hoped that at least part of this work can be salvaged by his colleagues.

Roger Strens was a dedicated mineralogist, and will be remembered as a kind teacher, friend and colleague. The loss to the University and the scientific community of one who had so much yet to give is great, but nevertheless small compared to that suffered by his wife and three children.

[1] To receive a bibliography, order Document AM-81-176 from the Business Office, Mineralogical Society of America, 2000 Florida Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. Please remit $1.00 in advance for the microfiche.