

Memorial of Paul Francis Kerr January 12, 1897–February 27, 1981

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Paul Francis Kerr passed away on February 27, 1981, after a brief illness. His death came just one day after his Keynote Address, "Reminiscences in Applied Mineralogy," had been presented at the AIME Symposium on "Process Mineralogy—Extractive Metallurgy, Mineral Exploration, Energy Resources," held in Chicago from February 22 to 26, 1981.

He was born on January 12, 1897, in Hemet, California, at the base of the San Jacinto Range along the San Jacinto fault of the San Andreas fault system. With savings from work in citrus orchards and bean fields, he entered Occidental College, receiving his B.S. in 1919. He received his Ph.D. from Stanford University in 1923. Occidental College conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science in 1960. He taught for a year at Stanford before assuming a teaching position at Columbia University in 1924. In that same year he married Helen Richardson Squire in the Serene Memorial Chapel at Stanford. They had three children, Paul Squire Kerr (who died as a young man), Ruth Elizabeth Kerr Jakoby, of Phoenix, Arizona, and Nancy Ann Kerr Del Grande, of San Leandro, California. His beloved wife, Helen, passed away on September 13, 1978.

The years at Columbia were busy and productive. It would be difficult to list all of his many accomplishments and honors during the period from 1924 to 1965; however, a partial list may serve to indicate the scope and breadth of his activities. During his tenure at Columbia, he shepherded 113 students to their graduate degrees and he produced 226 publications (including several books and monographs). He was Department Chairman at Columbia during the period 1944 to 1950 and the first Newberry Professor of Mineralogy from 1959 to 1965. After his retirement, he continued as Newberry Professor Emeritus, guiding his remaining graduate students to their degrees. He was instrumental in securing the property for, and naming, the Lamont Geological Observatory. Paul served as Secretary of the Mineralogical Society of America from 1934 to 1944, and was its President in 1946. He served as the Vice-President of the Geological Society of America in 1947. He received the third K. C. Li Medal in 1957 for his studies of tungsten minerals and the third Distinguished Member Award from the Clay Minerals Society, in 1970. Great Britain's Mineralogical Society made Paul an Honorary Member in 1972. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. He received many other



awards and honors, and he served the geological community well throughout his life. An enlightening account of his activities was prepared by Ralph J. Holmes, Marjorie Hooker, Waldemar T. Schaller, Clarence S. Ross, and Donald M. Fraser at the time of his retirement in 1965. Many of his former students and friends contributed to that special Festschrift Volume of *The American Mineralogist* published in 1965 (Mineral Studies, Dedicated to Paul Francis Kerr, Volume 50, number 10). That volume contains a list of his publications through the time of his retirement in 1965. This Memorial completes Paul's list of publications by adding those published since his retirement.

He and Helen returned to California, where he continued to be active as Consulting Professor at Stanford University until 1977. During that period he gave seminars, assisted graduate students in mineralogical research, revised his well-known optical mineralogy text, and maintained an active research program on clay minerals and landslides.

We remember Paul as a pioneer in the application of mineralogical techniques. He is considered to be one of the fathers of applied mineralogy. His publications span a range of topics that would make most teachers and many researchers envious. They include studies on the X-ray diffraction process, clay minerals, uranium mineralization, quartz, tungsten minerals, differential thermal analysis, gems, alteration minerals, etc. Many members of the profession may have had their first contact with him

through his text, *Optical Mineralogy* (1977), originally co-authored with A. F. Rogers, his mentor at Stanford, in 1933.

Those of us who were his students, his friends and colleagues will remember him as a patient teacher, a wise and helpful counselor, and a good friend. He expected much, but he gave much in return. Paul's genuine concern for generations of students earned him the affectionate nickname, "Pappy". We felt as close as his family, as if we were his adopted sons and daughters.

Some aspire to high places and personal honors, caring little about what happens to those they pass along the way. Paul Kerr was one of those special people who was more concerned about others than about his own esteem. In his quiet, unobtrusive way he was always there providing support and encouragement when it was most needed.

Paul Francis Kerr lived a long and productive life. Still, his death came as a shock. He is sadly missed by his family, his former students, and his many friends.

Acknowledgements

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¹ This bibliography includes all of Paul Kerr's publications since his retirement in 1965. A complete list of his earlier publications is included in Volume 50, number 10 of *The American Mineralogist* (1965), p. 1532–1545.