Memorial to Vladimir Stephen Papezik
1927–1984

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V. Stephen Papezik, Professor of Geology at Memorial University in Newfoundland, was an inspiring teacher, a congenial professional colleague, and a devoted scientist. His death on June 23, 1984, after a year of illness, caused a serious loss to the geologic and mineralogic fraternities and to his many friends throughout Canada and the world. Stephen lived through a period of uncertainty and turmoil, but he was decisive and uncompromising in maintaining the high principles and standards that characterized all aspects of his life.

He was born in Brno, Czechoslovakia, on February 5, 1927, and entered the University of Masaryk in Brno in 1946, to study geography and history. His interest in geology was aroused in his second year, and he changed his emphasis to geology and physical geography. In one of his personal papers he notes, “After the Communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia, at the beginning of my third year at the University, I decided that the new government and I were mutually incompatible, and I escaped to Austria, then under Four Power occupation.” The story of his escape to freedom is sensational reading; one incident in it illustrates a major attribute of his character. Because of currency reforms in Austria, he made a secret return trip to an Austrian town which was under Communist occupation at the time to see that a priest who had assisted him was properly repaid.

After escaping Czechoslovakia, Stephen was determined to reestablish himself in a scientific career. A transition period that followed included work in the steel and textile mills in England from 1949 to 1951, and as a miner in Sudbury, Canada, until September 1952. At that time, he entered the third year geology program at the University of British Columbia.

Having become reestablished in a university, Stephen's years of professional training followed a pattern similar to that of many other Canadian geologists who were rehabilitating themselves after World War II. He graduated with first class honours from the University of British Columbia in 1954 and received his M.Sc. degree with honours in 1957. During this time he spent a full year, plus field sessions, gaining practical experience in mine geology and mineral exploration in the Yukon, British Columbia, and at Blind River, Ontario. Stephen received his Ph.D. degree in 1961 from McGill University in Montreal. There his research on the mineralogy of anorthosite rocks was supported by fellowships from The International Nickel Company and the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company. He acquired an impressive record as an exploration geologist, conducting field mapping and mineral deposit investigations with prominent exploration companies and Quebec and Newfoundland government agencies, in areas from the Yukon to the iron ore region in Labrador and Quebec. His experience in mineralogy and detailed mapping ranged over many different types of mineral deposits, including gold-silver-tungsten skarns, stratiform uranium, metamorphosed iron formations, pegmatites in the Grenville Province, asbestos, and nonferrous sulphide deposits.
Stephen joined the faculty at Memorial University in 1961, when major development in the earth sciences was planned. He applied his personal thoroughness, depth, and scientific integrity toward developing a foundation for long-term growth and expansion. Specializing in mineralogy, he dedicated his efforts to teaching and building first-class courses in mineralogy and petrology. As a necessary adjunct to teaching, he concentrated on developing an extensive mineral collection. That collection is now being continued in his memory; donations of mineral specimens and financial support are being received by the Earth Sciences Department. A close colleague, Heward R. Peters, writes, "Perhaps more important was his work with graduates and undergraduates who had the good fortune to be associated with him. He always demanded maximum performance and inspired his students to excel. He was both impatient and forgiving with any who were at all inclined to be slack or careless." Students held the highest regard for their professor and always referred to him as Dr. Papezik, admiring his fair standards and fine human qualities. His strong opinions, honestly and directly expressed, were highly valued by his colleagues. He was a mainstay in his department and a source of good, clear judgement on a wide range of matters.

Throughout his career, Stephen maintained an active interest in applied geology, while concentrating his research on mineralogy and volcanology in Newfoundland and the Maritime Provinces. A number of papers on descriptive mineralogy were published in the Canadian Mineralogist, and he made major contributions to understanding the pyrophyllite deposits on the Avalon Peninsula. He contributed extensively to petrological studies of volcanic rocks of all ages on the Avalon Peninsula, helping to unravel the metamorphic and geologic history of this region. In recent years, he became deeply involved in research on the dykes and sills intruded during the later rifting events which created the Atlantic Ocean basin. He related his findings to similar rocks in the Appalachians, Europe, and Africa. That his perceptive scientific work was well received is shown by the fact that he published more than forty papers and abstracts. He was also a regular recipient of major support from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada.

During his twenty-three years at Memorial University, Papezik contributed extensively to the life and academic development of the institution. He served as president of the Faculty Association in 1965–66, as an elected member of the University Senate, and vice chairman of the Academic Council. He chaired the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Committees; the Rules, Regulations and Courses Committees; and the Constitution Committee of the Faculty of Sciences. He acted as head of the Earth Sciences Department on many occasions and as chairman of several department committees. He was active and influential in many aspects of university life and was instrumental in establishing the Academic Council of the School of Graduate Studies.

A dedicated professional, Stephen was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America and the Geological Association of Canada, and a member of the Mineralogical Society of America, the Mineralogical Association of Canada, and the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy. He served two terms as a member of the Executive Council of the Mineralogical Association of Canada, and was an associate editor of the Canadian Mineralogist. He also served as Canadian representative to the Commission on Teaching of the International Mineralogical Association, 1975–1979.

Stephen thought as a citizen of the world and believed in those high principles of conduct by which all mankind must be governed. In spite of the devastation and transformation of the culture he knew as a youth, he never lost his appreciation of the deep and abiding qualities of life which are achieved through giving your best, whatever the circumstances, in completion of a worthy task. Steve was proud of his Canadian
citizenship and he gave his time generously to community affairs. His appreciation of fine wines was part of his European heritage. He founded the St. John's branch of the Opimian Society and served as its first area secretary, competing in several national wine-tasting competitions. Also in St. John's, he established the Italian Wine Society, Amici dell'Enotria, which now has a thriving and growing membership.

Steve is survived by his wife, Hope Ross Papezik, an assistant professor in the English Department at Memorial University, and by his mother and brother in Brno, Czechoslovakia. He will long be remembered by a host of friends throughout the world whose lives were touched by his kind, affable nature, sensitivity to others, and deep appreciation of life's finest qualities.

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