

# Memorial to Benjamin Franklin Hake

## 1895-1973

CARL C. ADDISON

358 Cinnamon Oak Lane, Houston, Texas 77024



Benjamin F. Hake, outstanding geologist, engineer, soldier, and distinguished lecturer, died August 5, 1973, of lung cancer at his home in Santa Barbara, California. He was 78 years old. Burial was at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, San Diego, California. He is survived by a daughter, Murray Hake Fisher, a son, Daniel Ryan Hake, and four grandchildren. Aside from his achievements in the field of geologic exploration, Ben had a rare talent for warm and lasting friendships, and his passing is mourned by many in and out of the profession.

Benjamin Hake was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on September 13, 1895, son of B. F. and Aura May (Smith) Hake. Victim of a stroke, Ben's father became an invalid and was confined to a wheelchair much of the time; however, his grandfather was a rover and his nomadic tendencies probably account for the fact that Ben spent most of his youth on one ranch or another in Wyoming. Later, Ben attended the Los Angeles Polytechnic High School. During that time, the family acquired a Pope-Toledo automobile which became Ben's. After graduation, he drove the car back to Wyoming and for the next two years operated a guide and taxi service in the town of Worland.

Ben entered Stanford University in 1914. In 1916 he worked as assistant and guide with the Wyoming Geological Survey in close association with Charles Laurence Dake, who was professor of geology (at the University of Missouri) and coauthor of two college textbooks in use at the time (*Field Methods in Petroleum Geology* and *Interpretation of Topographic and Geologic Maps*). The summer's work under the direction of Professor Dake was a stimulating introduction to field geology and could well have been the motivating influence that led Ben to choose a career in geology. Back at the university, classes were interrupted. World War I was in progress; in 1917, Ben enlisted to go overseas with an ambulance unit from Stanford. While in France, he transferred to the Railway Artillery as 2nd Lieutenant. Discharged in 1919, he resumed studies at Stanford and received an A.B. in geology in 1920. Ten years later he received an M.A. in geology from the same university.

With an A.B. degree, Ben's first job took him to Mexico where he did surface geology for the Marland Oil Company of Mexico. Returning to Palo Alto in the summer of 1921, he married Kirby Ingoldsby. He had met her when she was a student in the Stanford School of Engineering. (She was the first coed ever to enroll in that stronghold of masculine learning.) They were married October 1 in the university chapel and made their first home in Mexico. Ben remained in the employ of Marland, first in Mexico and then in California. In 1926 he became District Geologist for Hudson's Bay

Marland with headquarters in Edmonton, Alberta. Youthful years among the rugged hills of Wyoming had given him a genuine love of the north country and made him singularly well equipped for the problems and difficulties of surface geology in that part of the world.

In 1929 Ben left the Marland Oil Company to associate himself with a small new enterprise, the Nordon Corporation, Ltd., as Vice-President and Chief Geologist. He directed oil exploration in the foothills and plains of southern Alberta. This promising venture, however, was to be short-lived; it succumbed to the massive depression of the late 1920s and 1930s.

Benjamin Hake joined the Gulf Refining Company in 1934, doing subsurface geology and petroleum engineering in Michigan; he was subsequently transferred to Indianapolis as Division Geologist for the company's Eastern Production Division.

December 1941 brought the cataclysmic events at Pearl Harbor and a declaration of war. By October of the following year, Ben was again in uniform. He joined the Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army, as a Staff Geologist with the rank of Major. There is little doubt that his previous experience in Canada came to the attention of his superiors, for his first assignment took him north again to join the Northwest Service Command stationed in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory. Later, he was named Division Geologist, Northwest Command, U.S. Army Engineers at Edmonton, Alberta. In these capacities, he supplied geologic advice on the construction of the Alaska Highway and related development of oil and other natural resources by the Army. Sent to Washington, D.C., in August 1943, he was assigned to duty with the Fuels and Lubricants Division, Office of the Quartermaster General. As Chief of the Planning Branch, he had the responsibility for general overall planning and policy formulation for the War Department Petroleum Program. He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in April 1944.

In recognition of his service during the war years and, specifically, while Chief of the Planning Branch of the Fuels and Lubricants Division, Lieutenant-Colonel Hake was awarded the medal of the Legion of Merit on January 2, 1946. The citation specifies that he . . . "materially contributed to the effective planning and conduct of petroleum logistics in all theaters of operation and in the Zone of the Interior. His achievements signally aided the war effort and reflected his comprehensive world-wide knowledge of all aspects of petroleum production and supply."

At the end of hostilities in 1945, Ben was discharged from the military and rejoined Gulf as Assistant to the Vice President, Foreign Production Division and, four years later, was sent to the Pittsburg General Office as Engineering Geologist. In 1951, Hake was appointed Chief, Land and Exploration Branch of the corporation. The year 1953 found the Hakes on the move again with Hake a Special Assistant in the Western Gulf Oil Company, Los Angeles. During that period, Ben traveled as lecturer on the AAPG Distinguished Lecture Series. His last assignment with Gulf took him to La Paz to organize and manage the Gulf Oil Company of Bolivia. When he retired in 1959, the Hakes again moved to California to make their home in Santa Barbara.

During his career as Petroleum Geologist, Hake actively participated in oil exploration in Mexico, Canada, North Africa, Bolivia, Brazil, and in the United States. He was fluent in Spanish and French, could speak German and Portuguese and several South American dialects as well. He was elected to membership in the Cosmos Club of

Washington, D.C., in 1945 and was a member of the following scientific societies: The Geological Society of America (Fellow), the Alberta Society of Petroleum Geologists (Honorary Member and Past President), the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the American Institute of Mining Engineers, and the American Petroleum Institute.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF B. F. HAKE

- 1931 (with Addison, Carl C.) Sediments of Montana age in Milk River Ridge region, Alberta: Am. Assoc. Petroleum Geologists Bull., v. 5, no. 10, p. 1215-1225.
- 1938 Geologic occurrence of oil and gas in Michigan (Saginaw, Michigan): Am. Assoc. Petroleum Geologists Bull., v. 22, no. 4, p. 393-415.
- 1942 (with Willis, Robin, and Addison, Carl C.) Folded thrust faults in the foothills of Alberta: Geol. Soc. America Bull., v. 53, p. 291-334.