

In memoriam **Victor Vacquier, Sr. (1907-2009)**



Victor Vacquier Sr., professor emeritus of geophysics at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in California, died January 11, 2009, in La Jolla, California. He was 101 years old.

He was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, on October 13, 1907. In 1920, following the Russian Revolution, he and his family escaped across the frozen Gulf of Finland to Helsinki on a one-horse sleigh, eventually to reach the United States in 1923.

Victor received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the University of Wisconsin in 1927 and a master's degree in physics in 1929. His active research career in both industry and academia spanned more than seven decades. It included the invention of the fluxgate magnetometer and airborne and marine

magnetic surveying, which led to the discovery of magnetic anomaly patterns preserved in the seafloor. These patterns played an important role in establishing the paradigm of plate tectonics in the late 1960s and early 1970s. His research also encompassed the measurement and interpretation of the heat flux from Earth's crust, particularly in oceanic areas. It was through this latter interest that he was a frequent attendee at the quadrennial geothermal conferences held in the Czech Republic. The entire geothermal community remembers his gentle manner, extraordinary insight and incisive commentaries at these meetings.

Vacquier received numerous honors for his pioneering work in geophysics. In 1960, he was awarded the Wetherill Medal of the Franklin Institute for his development of the magnetic-airborne detector and its application to geophysical prospecting for oil and minerals. He received the John Adam Fleming Medal from the American Geophysical Union in 1973 for "original research and technical leadership in geomagnetism." In 1976, he received the Society of Exploration Geophysicists' Fessenden Award in recognition of his invention of the airborne magnetometer and in 1995 received the Alexander Agassiz Medal from the U.S. National Academy of Science for his contributions to geomagnetism and tectonics.

Victor is survived by his wife Mihoko Vacquier who always accompanied him to the Czech meetings, his son Victor D. Vacquier, daughter-in-law Judith Vacquier, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Henry N. Pollack
Ann Arbor, 17 November 2009