

Memorial to Hubert Gregory Schenck 1897–1960

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In two ways Hubert G. Schenck could be called a World War II casualty. That war cut short the career of an educator who, at the peak of his powers, had been achieving international recognition. Then, although he survived it by several years, the reconstructive work he did with the war-torn economies of the Far East exposed him to an infection that undermined his health and eventually took his life. Shortly after his death in 1960, a committee of his Stanford University colleagues prepared a memorial, but through an administrative oversight now hard to explain, it remained unpublished. In somewhat expanded form, that memorial is here offered as a tribute to a man of exceptional talent.

Hubert G. Schenck, son of William and Lida Egbert Schenck, was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on September 24, 1897. His father was a descendant of Roelof Schenck from Holland, who had settled in New York in 1650. The family's pronunciation of the name—"Skenk," not "Shenk"—reveals this Dutch heritage. His mother's people were early residents of Pennsylvania and later of Ohio.

In 1916 Hubert Schenck, planning to go into medicine, enrolled at the University of Oregon. That same year, he enlisted in the United States Army. His college training was interrupted by nearly three years in the Coast Artillery Corps and then by a year (1920) as a geologic aide in the Philippines. The latter experience confirmed his decision to change his major field, and he received his A.B. and M.A. degrees in geology at the University of Oregon in 1922 and 1923, respectively. Despite the interruptions, his scholastic record won him election to Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi. Further graduate work was completed at the University of California, Berkeley, where he received a Ph.D. degree in 1926. During the summers of 1924 to 1927 he was an instructor in the field geology course at Stanford University. Appointed in 1926 to the teaching staff as Instructor, he continued as Assistant Professor (1927), Associate (1935), and Professor of Geology (1940).

While still an instructor, Hu Schenck—as he was known to his friends—became aware of the importance of micropaleontology as a stratigraphic tool, and he set up one of the first micropaleontological laboratories on the West Coast. His course in micropaleontology was the first to be offered formally by any university in the west or perhaps even in the country. He established and edited for eight years a journal, the *Micropaleontology Bulletin*, to give his students experience in publishing research. Few outlets for such papers were then available (the *Journal of Paleontology* had not yet been founded).

During his first—and, as it turned out, his only—sabbatical year, 1933–1934, Hubert Schenck was an Advanced Fellow, Commission for the Relief of Belgium Educational Foundation (the Belgian C.R.B.). He worked at the Royal Museum of Natural History in Brussels, and it was there that the problem of defining Oligocene strata came alive for him. Returning to Stanford in 1934, he soon attracted an eager group of students to the relatively new field of biostratigraphy. Three years later another opportunity came for broadening his

training, when the Amiranian Oil Company asked him to do some exploratory work in the Middle East. On leave from Stanford for the year 1937-1938, he made paleontological reconnaissance studies in Iran, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan.

Back at Stanford again he involved himself not only in following the day-by-day research progress of his many students and close associates but also in carrying on simultaneously half a dozen systematic and stratigraphic projects of his own. He had an encyclopedic memory for details and a genius for organization of material. His work habits were exemplary. One project was the expansion of his long-used micropaleontology syllabus into a textbook that he felt was much needed. Three chapters of the work were published as journal articles (Schenck, 1940; Schenck and White, 1942; Schenck and Adams, 1943). The other chapters of the book, although in first draft, remained incomplete when, in 1943, he felt constrained by the events of World War II to go into uniform again. The book, of course, was never finished.

Commissioned as a major in the United States Army, he received special training for Civil Affairs duties and served in New Guinea, the Philippines, and Japan. After the fighting had ceased, the military authorities requested that Stanford University grant a leave of absence for him so that he could accept the post of Chief of the Natural Resources Section of the Occupation Forces in Japan. He served there from 1945 to 1951.

Of these new duties one of his colleagues, Professor Konrad Krauskopf, wrote in Stanford's *School of Mineral Sciences Newsletter* (December 1960):

The new section faced a formidable task: to survey Japan's natural resources, to help the Japanese revive war-shattered industries, to modernize the methods of production, and to re-organize the raw materials industries along democratic lines in place of the old feudal, military-oriented system. To meet this challenge Dr. Schenck, now a lieutenant colonel, quickly set up a staff section with groups of experts in agriculture, fisheries, mining, and forestry. A talent for administration blossomed, as his talent for research and teaching had flourished earlier. Through intricate negotiations with the Japanese, many of whom resisted the proposed changes, through arguments within the Occupation forces regarding the purpose of the new section, through all the growing pains of his large and untried staff, Colonel Schenck maintained his course with dignity and firmness and good humor. When I visited Japan as a member of another section, scarcely a year after the Occupation began, Colonel Schenck's Natural Resources Section was a smoothly-running organization and one of the bulwarks of the whole Occupation effort.

In 1951, having been promoted to the rank of colonel, Hubert Schenck was nominally retired but reassigned on loan to the U. S. Department of State to act as Chief of the Mutual Security Mission and the Economic Cooperation Administration in Taiwan. Of this service Professor Krauskopf comments:

Here his administrative responsibility was even broader than in Tokyo, for now he had charge of supervising the rehabilitation of the entire economy of the island. With characteristic energy he set to work, smoothing relations between the Americans, the islanders, and the mainland Chinese, starting surveys of natural resources, improving techniques of production and manufacturing, helping to control inflation, and raising public health standards.

It was in Taiwan that a viral infection of the liver, contracted in 1953, cut short his activity and sent him home an invalid. He recovered enough to return to teaching at Stanford on a limited basis in 1955. Again he attracted a number of enthusiastic students. Although physically unable to supervise their field work, he found he could give the necessary guidance and direction to their studies. He also prepared several papers for publication, two of which were in press at the time of his death, which came quietly on June 19, 1960.

These, then, are the outward facts of a productive life. How can one analyze the effects upon others that this dynamic individual had?

As a teacher, Professor Schenck demanded his students' best efforts. Each year's course was a fresh, new adventure, and a student might expect at any time to find old ideas being challenged. He was not a professor whom a student could regard with indifference, and those who had resilience enough to continue working under him for a second or a third course or as majors became intensely loyal to the man and to the ideals for which he stood. His attitude, that of challenge coupled with fresh evaluation, is reflected in the title of one of his early papers (1935): "What Is the Vaqueros Formation of California and Is It Oligocene?" His own attempts to answer this inquiry ran as a connecting thread through many of his subsequent papers as he sought for evidence to settle the issue—evidence that was not always accepted by some of his contemporaries in paleontology. The ultimate effect of his search, however, has been a trend toward more precise stratigraphic terminology. Especially influential in this endeavor was an all-day symposium on Tertiary correlation that he convened in 1939 during the Sixth Pacific Science Congress at Berkeley. There he demonstrated the utility of the European concept of stages. Before that time West Coast workers in paleontology had given lip service to stage terminology, yet had not clearly realized the basic distinction between "stage" and "formation." Following the symposium most of them ceased using those terms interchangeably.

His final contribution to West Coast stratigraphy was his participation in the work of a committee headed by Charles E. Weaver that was set up to prepare a correlation chart for Cenozoic formations in western North America. Because the committee could not reach consensus, the chart was drawn up to recognize two schools of thought, with parallel columns to show the boundary lines each would draw, the first column being the correlation accepted by Weaver and others, the second a modified version recommended by Schenck and a number of other, mostly younger, workers.

Publication constituted a second field of his influence. Most of Hubert's early papers were in micropaleontology and stratigraphy; later, molluscan systematics attracted his attention. During the years 1925 to 1945 he published sixty papers, the largest a book-sized monograph. Abstracts of papers given at conferences are not in this count; they would bring his total list of geological and paleontological works to about seventy-five titles. His publications on world resources are not as numerous, spanning only the years 1946 to 1955, and are not cited here. His last three papers, completed in 1960–1961, reverted to geological topics of stratigraphy and basic principles.

One measure of the value of Hu Schenck's contributions as world citizen might be the citations that were made by the various governments of countries where he had worked: a Philippine award as Commander of the Legion of Honor; the Nationalist Chinese Order of the Auspicious Star from Chiang Kai-Shek's government in Taiwan; and, on recommendation of General Douglas MacArthur, the Distinguished Service Medal for his work in Japan, a high military honor seldom given to officers below the rank of general. The United States Government also awarded him three other medals.

As might be expected, Hubert Schenck was member of a number of professional societies. He was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America and of the Paleontological Society. He was also a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, the Geological Societies of France, Belgium, Switzerland, and the Philippines, and of the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, the Malacological Society of London, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the California Academy of Sciences.

In 1924 Hubert G. Schenck and Inga Bergstrom were married in Berkeley, California. She died in August 1978, having survived him by some eighteen years. He is survived by a daughter, Ingrid Schenck Beach, and by three grandchildren.

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