

Zeitschrift: Bulletin für angewandte Geologie
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Vereinigung der Petroleum-Geologen und –Ingenieure;
Schweizerische Fachgruppe für Ingenieur-Geologie
Band: 8 (2003)
Heft: 1

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Hans Hermann Renz

1910-2003



Hans Hermann Renz was born on the 9th of May 1910 in Ludwigsburg. From early youth he was attracted by natural sciences. While studying for a few semesters at the Technical University of Stuttgart he developed a serious interest in geology and related sciences. When in 1930 he moved with his family to Bern he continued his studies in geology at the university. Under the direction of Professor Arbenz he obtained in 1934 a PhD degree with the thesis entitled «Zur Stratigraphie und Paläontologie der Mytilus-Schichten im östlichen Teil der Prealpes Romandes».

Following the completion of his PhD degree Hans Renz remained in Bern from 1934 to 1936 as a postgraduate. During these years he conducted investigations in the Briçonnois with Professors Gignoux, Moret and Schneegans and studied Upper Cretaceous cephalopods from Texas and Mexico. In addition he investigated the rich faunas from the Karakorum which were collected during the Netherlands' expedition under the direction of Ph. C. Visser.

The Caribbean island of Trinidad, situated in front of the Orinoco delta, is known for its rich and versatile Mesozoic and Cenozoic foraminiferal fauna. Following his stay in Bern Hans Renz moved in 1936 to this foraminiferal El Dorado, employed by the oil company Trinidad Leaseholds Ltd (TLL) as a stratigrapher/micropaleontologist. Before Hans Renz left for Trinidad he married Martha. They had two children both born

in Trinidad: a boy Hansueli born in 1939 and a girl Marianne born in 1942.

At the time Hans Renz arrived in Trinidad, collections of individual foraminifera and assemblages characterizing zones applicable to stratigraphy and environments were almost nonexistent. It was through his and his Trinidad colleague R. M. Stainforth's efforts that such collections were built up. Based on their work a zonal subdivision scheme to date and correlate the surface and subsurface sections of the formations of Trinidad was established. In practical application the zonal schemes became a reliable tool for age and environmental identifications.

During his almost 11 years in Trinidad, from 1936 to 1947, Hans Renz studied in particular the occurrence and stratigraphic significance of Cenozoic smaller benthic foraminifera. With the experience he acquired over the years in Trinidad's geology, stratigraphy and micropaleontology a change towards a new challenge became only natural for Hans' active mind.

At that time the Mene Grande Oil Company, a subsidiary of the Gulf Oil Corporation, was looking for an experienced biostratigrapher for Venezuela. Hans Renz accepted this opportunity to move from Trinidad to Venezuela in order to apply his experience to a geologically similar but much larger geographic area. So, in early 1947, the Renz family moved to Caracas where they remained for 16 years until 1963.

During the early years of Hans Renz' stay in Venezuela an editorial committee was formed by the government with the purpose of publishing a stratigraphic Lexicon of Venezuela, both in Spanish and in English. Hans Renz became an active member of this committee to which he contributed substantially with the preparation for publication of 27 stratigraphic units of varying rank, including seven formations. Most of the units dealt with concerned the State of Falcon in NW Venezuela. Along with his investigations on the foraminifera of Trinidad and Venezuela Hans spent considerable efforts to have his results published. With his paper «Stratigraphy of Northern South America, Trinidad and Venezuela» (8th Am. Sci. Congr. Proc. IV, 1942) Hans Renz provided at the time a welcome and valuable regional compilation. Of the 35 titles on his bibliographic list several appeared in co-authorship like those with J. A. Cushman on Cenozoic benthic foraminifera of Trinidad. Hans Renz' principal publication is his monograph «Biostratigraphy and Fauna of the Agua Salada Group, State of Falcon, Venezuela» (Geol. Soc. Am. Mem. 32, 1948).

From 1963 until 1969 Hans Renz was on loan to the Gulf Oil Company. During this time he travelled widely to Gulf's exploration and production activities throughout Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

In 1969 Hans Renz retired from the Mene Grande Oil Company and moved to Corseaux above Vevey overlooking the Lake of Geneva, Switzerland. From here and up to 1972 Hans Renz continued doing occasional

consulting work for Gulf. During this time he was also particularly concerned with questions relating to biostratigraphic research.

From 1972 until 1982 the Renz family was again living in Coral Gables, Florida, where Hans continued to stay active as consulting geologist for Gulf Oil. During this time he participated in Gulf's exploration activities in the Caribbean region, Eastern Canada, Middle East, Taiwan, Sulawesi, Sumatra and Colombia.

Following Hans' and Martha's return from Florida to Switzerland in March 1981 his varied activities in the field of petroleum geology came after 45 engaged and fruitful years to an end. As much as Hans was absorbed by his professional activities during these years, he also found time for his family. At home they enjoyed an occasional card game with friends or swimming and playing tennis at one of the Caracas country clubs.

In 1986 Hans and Martha Renz moved to the Elfenau Park residence for seniors in Bern. Martha died there in 1993 at the age of 88. Except for the last couple of years Hans Renz continued in good physical health and remained mentally alert until his last days. On the 10th of January 2003 he passed away in his 93rd year.

Hans Hermann Renz will be remembered as one of the rare earth scientists competent in wide fields of geology, stratigraphy and paleontology.

H. M. Bolli