



R. STANLEY BECK
(1906-1984)

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On December 12, 1984, R. Stanley Beck passed away in Mercy Hospital, Bakersfield, California. Much has been written over the years about this distinguished, kind, generous, intelligent, and professional man. Many well-deserved honors and awards have been bestowed on him for his research, his professional acumen, and his unfailing faithful confidentiality and business ethics. Stan earned the respect, admiration, and friendship of everyone in and out of the oil business by his forthrightness, honesty, and fairness.

Recognition came quickly to Stan through his ability to determine geologic age by recognizing assemblages and individuals of foraminifers. Stan eagerly accepted responsibility for unraveling geological interpretations in surface and subsurface stratigraphy with fossil evidence. Without the evidence, Stan would not settle for guesswork.

Stan was born May 26, 1906, on a homestead farm in eastern Washington about 40 mi south of the present Grand Coulee Dam. Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, and Washington State Teachers College in Ellensburg, led Stan into general science. He taught school in Raymond, Washington (on the Willapa Harbor) and later in Aberdeen, Washington (near Grays Harbor) where he was head of the science department in the Aberdeen Junior High School.

Stan was Boy Scout scoutmaster in both Raymond and Aberdeen. It was on Boy Scout group field trips that Stan became interested in fossil collecting.

He graduated in geology from University of Washington in Seattle in 1936, and took a job with Richfield Oil Company in Bakersfield to work under Robert M. Kleinpell. He started his consulting business in 1945, which he operated until his death. During these years his consulting work prospered; he did work for large and small companies, and U.S. federal agencies.

Stan gained prominence as head of the Bakersfield El Tejon Hotel Geological Luncheon Table (after the demise of such geological illuminati as Lowell Saunders and William Kleinpell). For many years geologists gathered at noon to pass on news of the oil patch—discussing and reporting on vexing problems of unrestricted correlations, scouting well information or well completions, and seismograph survey work. These hours were most exciting and interesting when new oil and gas discoveries were apparent, rumored or pending, when new leasing was rampant, or when there were new job offerings or transfers.

Robert Kleinpell emphasized, in presenting Stan with his honorary life membership in the SEPM Pacific Coast Section in 1977, that Stan educationally had both a thoroughgoing background in biology as well as in geology. This permitted Stan to evaluate properly the significance of facies in problems of correlation from the Santa Cruz Mountains to the southern San Joaquin Valley. In earlier days the genus *Haplophragmoides* had come to be known as “the bug man’s alibi” (because nondescript arenaceous forams were generally present in any foraminiferal subsurface fauna), but the importation of the old European term, “facies,” soon replaced it as the “bug man’s alibi,” for it was promptly employed as an excuse if a foraminiferal correlation went wrong. The use of these terms was ended by Stan Beck’s work based on his biological and geological background. The term “pseudo-Saucesian” was also invented and applied by Stan in the complex “deep dark hole” of shallow-, medium-, and deep-water faunas that pass along the strike of the same strata, so abruptly and so confusingly, in the southwestern end of the San Joaquin Valley and adjacent areas. Kleinpell went on to record that Stan contributed to the exploratory effort in the celebrated discoveries of Cuyama Valley oil fields where Miocene and Pliocene unconformities in surface exposures rendered interpretations of subsurface structures unreliable. These dissimilarities were confirmed later by geophysical surveys. Stan also contributed to the geology of Elk Hills oil field, to Alaskan North Slope development, and to many other areas in the search for oil and gas.

One controversial problem that was hotly debated by micropaleontologists over the years was the relationship of the Cantua “C” fauna of the lower Eocene to the Canoas fauna “A-2” of Boris Laiming. Many argued that the Canoas fauna was reworked from the Cantua. Stan’s theory was that the Cantua bugs had just left the area, went out to sea, and did not return until several million years later. Recent information from wells drilled offshore along the Santa Barbara coast proved that Stan was right, and his hypothesis is now generally accepted by California stratigraphers.

Stan was a member of many professional societies, including honorary membership in the AAPG Pacific Section in 1976. He published numerous papers, mainly on biostratigraphy and correlation of the marine Cenozoic formations of western North America.

The oil industry will miss R. Stanley Beck. His friends and loved ones miss him, most of all his wife, Joyce.