

# Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. em. Hubert Miller (1936-2020) An articulator of international cooperation

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Acceso abierto diamante

## Resumen

Prof. Hubert Miller passed away February 26, 2020, near his hometown München in Bavaria. It is the end of a remarkable life, devoted to geological research mainly in Germany, Argentina, Chile and Antarctica.

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Hubert was born in München on April 3, 1936. He coursed his primary studies in Augsburg between 1942 and 1946, hard times because of the Second World War. The technical high school also in Augsburg. In winter of 1955, he began to study geology at the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich and after completing his undergraduate studies, he immediately devoted himself to his doctoral thesis. He obtained the Ph.D. on 1962.

The Chilean co-authors, met him when he arrived in June 1963 to the Geology Department at Universidad de Chile in Santiago, where he taught Structural Geology, Mineralogy and Glaciology until end of 1965. He came to Chile supported by the DAAD, a program which also involved other distinguished German professors. We realize now that he was then only 26 years old! EG will always remember when during his first field trip to the metamorphic basement north of Caldera, invited by our chairman Humberto Fuenzalida, he enthusiastically joined us freshmen in an improvised football match.

Apart from teaching in the field how to study the effects of deformation in metamorphic rocks he also published a small, much used at the time, booklet in Spanish on the use of the Schmidt canvas in structural geology. He made some glaciological studies in the Andes of central Chile, and travelled to Antarctica on summer of 1964, where he studied the dynamics of ice in the glaciers near Base O'Higgins, the Chilean base near the northern tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. He became the most popular person among the base personnel as well as with the navy people in the Piloto Pardo vessel which transported him, becoming the center of celebrations in both communities. Two of his children were born in Chile during both this and his second stage in Chile, which took place at Universidad Austral in Valdivia between 1971 and August 1973. These were hard political times in Chile, and after the military coup it was very difficult for the scientific community in Chile to cooperate with scientists abroad. Once it became impossible for him to continue in Chile, his way opened up in Argentina, where he also started a long lasting and fruitful cooperation. His first base-locality was Tucumán, where he and his German graduate students studied the metamorphic complexes of Sierras Pampeanas. During the long years of dictatorship in Chile he tirelessly continued his efforts to exchange ideas, experiences and scientists between Germany, Chile and Argentina. He thus managed to involve the efficient German institutions of international collaboration, which allowed many southamerican scientists to work with him, and obtain qualification and degrees at the universities of Münster first, and München afterwards, where he continued to develop his scientific career. EG was promoted in the former through his close support.

He became one of the most important German scientific leaders in Antarctic research, which saw the Polarstern research vessel include southamerican scientists (including FH) in memorable trips to the white continent, together with scientists from all over the world. As he was very fond of meetings and congresses, he organized many of them of different sizes and importance. It was a classic to arrive to the ice breakers in Chilean and Argentinian geological congresses and see Hubert from the distance in the middle of the crowd, as he was taller than most of us. He never failed to give talks in all the conferences he attended to. A coauthor of papers with many southamerican geologists, he opened new lines of cooperation and research.

A strong supporter of the geological institutions in Chile and Argentina, he was a member of Sociedad Geológica de Chile, which nominated him as Honorary Member in 2012 and awarded him the Herbert Thomas prize, a recognition to his geological achievements and involvement in joint research with Chilean geologists. His commitment to the Sociedad Geológica de Chile was so great that once he could not come any more, FH remembers, that at some stage during a harsh year in the eighties, he was the only member to have payed the annual fees! Until present he belonged to the editorial committee of Revista Geológica de Chile and of her follower, Andean Geology. He was made a member of the Academia Nacional de Ciencias, en Córdoba, Argentina, to mention some of the institutions he supported. Hubert was President of the German Geological Society and took special interest in valuing southamerican scientists in front of that Society. He

was elected Doctor honoris causa at the St. Kliment Ohridski University in Sofia, Bulgaria, and was awarded the Hans-Stille-Medaille from the Geological Society of Germany. Among other several awards received there is a sea-mount with his name in the Amundsen Sea in Antarctica. On 2011 Hubert Miller was honored by the University of San Martín with the prize “Dr. José María Sobral” (first Argentine Geologist and first Argentine winterized in Antarctica between 1901 and 1903) because of his research in Antarctica.

His never ending enthusiasm for collaboration and research resulted in that at the end of 2007, he asked CP to visit together the Tandilia System at the south of the Buenos Aires Province with the purpose to start a research project about the structures and the geochronology of these ranges.

His beautiful house near Munich often hosted foreign scientists, which he did not hesitate to support in different needs of a stay abroad. His wife Gabriele was a wonderful host, and the South American influence in their home was evident, including food and fluent Spanish.

We will miss Hubert in the wide panorama of scientific cooperation, but we have been inoculated with his gentlemanly spirit which will be transmitted through generations. The development of geological sciences in Chile and Argentina owe much to Professor Hubert Miller.



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