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Delos Edward Flint

SECTION: OBITUARIES

Delos Edward Flint

December 5, 1918

November 12, 2014

Delos Edward Flint passed away peacefully on Wednesday, November 12, 2014 at the age of 95 in the cardiac intensive care unit of Stanford Medical Center in Palo Alto, California, in the presence of his wife Frances, his five children, and a grandchild.

He was born in Pasadena, California on December 5, 1918 to Moses Delos Flint and Letha Lindemann Flint. Del Flint grew up in Pasadena, and graduated from Pasadena High School in 1935. He majored in geology at California Institute of Technology, graduating with a B.S. in 1939. After earning an M.S. in geology at Northwestern University in 1941, he took a position with the U.S. Geological Survey, and in support of the war effort he mapped deposits of chromite, first in Montana, Oregon, and California, and then in Camaguey, Cuba. (His chromite mapping studies in Camaguey were later published as an official Geological Survey.)

In 1944, Del entered the U.S. Army. After completing basic field artillery training at Fort Bragg (North Carolina), and officer training at Fort Sill (Oklahoma), he was commissioned as Second Lieutenant, Field Artillery. Shortly after V-J Day, his unit was sent to Japan as part of the occupation army, and on arrival he was assigned to military police duty with the 89th Field Artillery Battalion in Nagoya. He was soon transferred to the Tokyo Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and was sent to Okinawa, where he served as the fourth and final chief of the Pacific Geological Mapping Program field party assigned to map and analyze the military geology of Okinawa and the Ryukyu Islands. He oversaw completion of field activities in Okinawa in 1947, was discharged from military service in Japan, and rejoined the U.S. Geological Survey as a member of Military Geology Branch, and returning to Washington, DC, to prepare reports with his colleagues on the Okinawa project, which were published by the Survey as Volume I of Military Geology of Okinawa-Jima, Ryukyu-Retto.

In Washington, Del met Frances P. McCormick, a recent graduate of Mount Holyoke College, who was

working in summer 1949 as a temporary employee of the Survey. After Fran returned to her position as a geology department assistant at Wesleyan University (Middletown, Connecticut), Del spent many a weekend commuting between Washington and Middletown. They were married in New York City at St. Patrick's Cathedral on July 8, 1950 and lived in Arlington, Virginia until 1954.

Early in 1954, Del and his expanding family moved to Santiago de Cuba, where he headed a Point Four program studying the chromite deposits of Camaguey and Oriente. While in Cuba, Del came in contact with Freeport Sulphur Company, which was opening a nickel mine at Moa Bay in Oriente. Freeport offered him a position as a geologist, and in 1957 (shortly before Castro took power), Del left the Survey and moved the family to New Orleans, Louisiana. Del spent the remainder of his professional career as an exploration geologist for Freeport Sulphur Company and its successor companies, retiring in December, 1983. During this period, the exploration department headquarters were relocated several times. The Flint family lived in New Orleans, Louisiana (1957 -1964), Wilton, Connecticut (1964 -1971), and Tchefuncta, Louisiana (1971-1975), before moving to Reno in 1975.

Del's exploration activities with Freeport took him all over the world. He worked on sulfur deposits and prospects in the U.S., Mexico, Poland, Egypt, Argentina, China, Chile, and the Canadian Arctic, potash and sour gas deposits in the U.S. and Canada; kaolin in France; asbestos in Mexico; and metallic mineral deposits in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Australia, Chile, Spain, the Philippines, and Indonesia. He contributed to the discovery and development of the Nepean and Mount Keith nickel mines in Australia, the Reid Lake mixed sulfides deposit in Canada, the Jerritt Canyon gold deposits in Nevada, and - most importantly - the Ertsberg-Grasberg copper-gold district in western New Guinea (now Irian Jaya), which developed into one of the largest and richest copper-gold deposits in the world.

In 1960, Del spent 76 days in the remote jungles and mountains of New Guinea as a member of the advance team of the initial Freeport exploration and sampling expedition to the Ertsberg district. They traveled more than 60 miles in canoes through the coastal swamps, walked over 150 miles, and climbed from sea level to over 13,000 feet, relying on air drops for supplies and on locally recruited mountain people for portage and support and communicating with the outside world only by a bicycle-powered portable radio. Del described this expedition as "a trip into the Stone Age" and the ore deposits as "all one could hope for". In 1967, Freeport negotiated a contract of work with the Indonesian government to develop this ore deposits and the adjacent area, and Del returned to New Guinea (now named Irian Jaya), where he was involved in drilling and sampling, training Indonesian geologists and professional personnel, and discovery of additional rich ore deposits, one of which was named the "Flint Extension", and returned to Irian Jaya many times after the mine went into production.

Del retired on January 1, 1984 as vice-president and chief geologist of Freeport Exploration Company, the exploration arm of Freeport McMoran Minerals Company. After a few years of consulting for Freeport, he took up gardening, art, travel, and writing. Del, an accomplished vegetable gardener, volunteered for about ten years in the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Program. He enrolled in art history and studio classes at the University of Nevada-Reno, and had had two one-man art shows of his oil paintings at UNR. Del and Fran traveled extensively, visiting

much of Europe, parts of Africa, South America, Asia, and Australia. In 2000, Del joined the Lifescapes senior writing program (sponsored by Washoe County Library System, University of Nevada-Reno English Department, Nevada Humanities Committee, and Osher Lifelong Learning Institute), and published his memoirs through Lifescapes in three volumes (2004, 2007, and 2011). His memoirs and additional writings were compiled in 2013 in the book *Recollections of a Hard-Rock Geologist*, which was published privately in hardcover in 2013 as a gift to family and friends.

Del was a long-term member of several professional societies, including the Society of Economic Geologists (serving as a councilor in 1966-67 and Vice President in 1974); the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers (serving as Chairman of the National Nominating Committee in 1973); the Geological Society of America (of which he was a Senior Fellow); and the Nevada Geological Society (he served as president in 1976-1977 and was elected an Honorary Member in 1992).

Delos Flint is survived by his wife of 64 years, Frances McCormick Flint, and five children: Elizabeth Parker Flint [Betsy] of Durham, North Carolina; Caroline Frances Flint of Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Delos Edward Flint, Jr. [Dee] of Metairie, Louisiana and his wife Elizabeth [Libby] Putnam Flint; Kenneth James Flint [Ken] of Roanoke, Virginia and his wife Jennifer Anne Flint; and Andrew Paul Flint [Andy] of Houston, Texas and his wife Sharon Longley Flint. Del is survived by ten grandchildren: Colleen Jackson (daughter of Caroline Flint and the late John Jackson); Dale, Connor, Brian, and Caitlin Flint (children of Dee and Libby); Dallas and McKennon Flint (children of Ken and Jennifer); and Kristen, Kathryn, and Kelly Flint (daughters of Andy and Sharon).

Del was preceded in death by his brother Thomas Atwood Flint, and his sisters Frances Flint Gulick and Dorothy Flint Foytik.

The memorial service for Delos Edward Flint will take place on Saturday, November 22 at 4:00 PM at O'Brien-Rogers & Crosby Funeral Home, 600 West 2nd Street, Reno. The service will be followed by a short reception for friends and family at the same location.