

Alfred Rosenkrantz (1898-1974)

Denmark has again lost one of her great Greenland explorers. The distinguished geologist, Alfred Rosenkrantz, professor at the University of Copenhagen and a Fellow of the Arctic Institute since 1950, died on 8 July in Copenhagen.

Geology interested him from early childhood. He spent many hours in the Geological Museum of the University of Copenhagen, where years later he taught and did all his research.

His father, an official at the court of the King of Denmark, was rather old-fashioned. When the time came for Rosenkrantz to attend the University, he insisted that the young man should study something "sound" — not geology. Rosenkrantz was therefore enrolled at Denmark's Technical Institute, from where he graduated in 1926 with a degree in engineering. While studying he also worked as a research assistant in the Geological Museum and, during the summer months, was a field assistant with the Geological Survey of Denmark. During this period he worked mainly on the Danish Danian and Palaeocene, and despite his youth published several valuable papers on those subjects.

No sooner had Rosenkrantz graduated than he became a member of Lauge Koch's 1926-27 expedition to the east coast of Greenland. He investigated the Jurassic of the Scoresbysund area which he revisited in 1929, 1934, 1935 and 1936. In 1930-31 he studied at German universities and was appointed associate professor at the Technical Institute of Denmark. In 1946 he became full professor, and in 1954 was appointed professor at the University of Copenhagen, a position from which he retired in 1966. During the years 1937-66 he also taught geology at the Teachers' College of Denmark. He retired from active field work in Greenland only a couple of years ago.

During his first stay in Greenland he — like almost everybody else — became infected by the well-known "Polar bug" *varietas groenlandica*, and the attack lasted almost 50 years.

In 1938, and again in 1939, he raised funds for, and headed, the Danish Nûgssuaq expeditions to West Greenland. These two expeditions heralded a new era in the geological investigation of Greenland. Since 1916 Lauge Koch had been the almost absolute ruler of Greenland geology. When for political reasons he switched his field of operations from North to East Greenland, the huge area became his prime interest until his death in 1964. The whole of West Greenland was however a terra incognita and no-man's land. For several years Rosenkrantz was a driving force in the establishment of the Geological Survey of Greenland, with its centre of operations in West Greenland. The Nûgssuaq expeditions were forerunners of the Survey, but World War II caused all plans to be interrupted. The summer of 1946 however saw the pioneer expedition of the Greenland Geological Survey take place with Rosenkrantz as the leader of the "Northern team", a job he took on every summer for the next 22 years. His field of activity was mainly in areas with sedimentary rocks north of Disko Bugt. The scale of this activity was gigantic. On foot he traversed the unknown interior of the large peninsulas and islands, carrying every bit of supplies in, and lot of samples out. He and his co-workers demonstrated the presence of ores, oil, and coal. Of the greatest scientific value was his own thorough investigation of the Upper Cretaceous and Lower Tertiary in West Greenland.

It is most admirable and remarkable that he taught his courses every semester, and continued concurrently his investigations of Denmark proper.

I was fortunate to be a student in his first class, to assist him in his investigations in Denmark and later to follow him to Greenland. His knowledge was wide-ranging, and his great enthusiasm for his subject made him a most inspiring teacher and leader. We all admired him for these qualities and for his legendary memory and great sense of humour. But most of all he was loved as a great personality who cared deeply for his students and co-workers. Our loss is heavy and sad.

Dan Laursen