

1 Dedication to our Dear Friend . . . Dr. Tor Helge Nilsen

Tor H. Nilsen, a red-haired Scandinavian who stood more than six feet tall, died October 9, 2005, at his San Carlos, California, home. This was after a valiant five-year fight with melanoma cancer. He was 63. His ashes were scattered at his family plot in Norway in 2006.

He was born in New York City on November 29, 1941, to Mollie Abrahamson and Nils Marius Nilsen of Mandal, Norway, and was the first of their children to be born in the United States. After graduating from Brooklyn Tech, he earned his B.S. in geology from City College of New York in 1962. While there, his prowess on the basketball court impressed a scout from the New York Knicks, but Tor went on to graduate school and earned his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in geology from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1964 and 1967, respectively. His M.S. thesis was a study of Precambrian metasedimentary deposits in the Lake Superior area, and his Ph.D. thesis was a study of Devonian alluvial-fan deposits of the Old Red Sandstone in western Norway.

Dr. Nilsen's principal expertise was in depositional systems analysis, stratigraphic analysis, and the relationships among tectonics, eustasy, and sedimentation. He began his industry career in 1967 as a research geologist with the Shell Development Company in Houston, Texas, and Ventura, California, where he worked on the tectonics and sedimentation of Tertiary shelf systems of coastal California. He subsequently spent two years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as the Military Assistant to the Chief of the Gravity Division at the U.S. Army Map Service (AMS), followed by continued gravity research as a civilian geophysicist for AMS. He joined the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in Menlo Park, California, as a research geologist in 1969, working on onshore geologic studies in California, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Italy. He also participated in several USGS research cruises in the eastern Pacific and Arctic Oceans and was a sedimentologist on DSDP Leg 38 to the Norwegian-Greenland Sea. Tor spent almost every summer while with the USGS in the field.

He married Paula Jeffries-Nilsen, who now teaches geology at San Jose State University, California, in 1984. The following year, Tor became President of RPI Pacific Inc., a new geological consulting firm in Redwood City, California, that conducted exploration and development studies for the petroleum industry in the western United States. In 1987, he founded and became President and CEO of Applied Earth Technology Inc., a consulting firm located in Redwood City that conducted regional and local studies for petroleum and mining companies operating in California, Oregon, Alaska, Montana, the Middle East, Indonesia, and Canada. Since 1991, Dr. Nilsen was an independent consulting geologist, completing numerous studies in Indonesia, Brunei, China, the North Sea, West Africa, the Middle East, Italy, Gulf of Mexico, Alaska, Montana, Nevada, and California. Dr. Nilsen published more than 300 geological papers, books, and abstracts, including a recent reclassification of strike-slip basins and an extensive treatise and guidebook for the giant Midway-Sunset Field in the San Joaquin Valley of California.

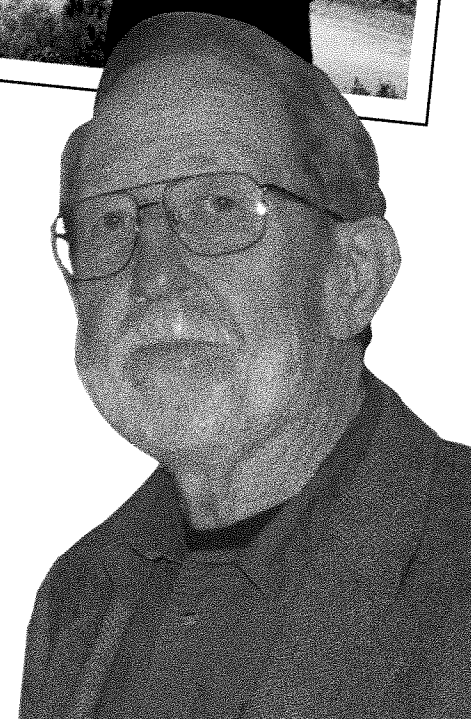
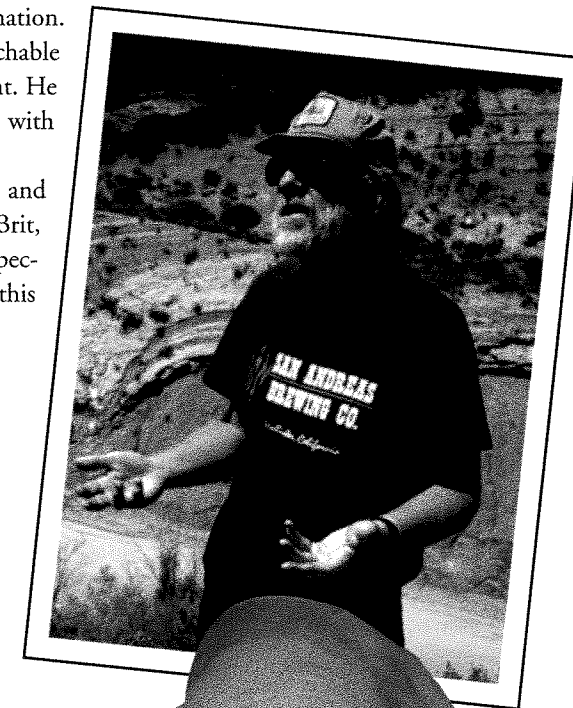
Dr. Nilsen taught numerous short courses and field seminars for the petroleum and mining industries, including two AAPG Field Seminars, one on Turbidite Systems in California since 1984, and a second on Exploration in Strike-slip and Rift Basins (with Dr. Arthur Sylvester) since 1989. He organized an SEPM field seminar on Intermediate Water-depth Reservoirs, and was a lecturer for several short courses, including the AAPG Deep-water Clastics School and the SEPM Modern and Ancient Submarine Fan Systems course (with Dr. Hans Nelson). He also taught courses in Depositional Systems Analysis, Basin Analysis, Exploration and Development of Turbidite Reservoirs, Exploration and Development of Fluvial Reservoirs, Exploration and Development of Shallow- and Deep-marine Reservoirs, Exploration in Strike-slip and Rift Basins, Fundamentals of Petroleum Geology, and Structural Geology in Petroleum Exploration. He taught in-house courses and field seminars for petroleum companies such as Shell, BP, Conoco, Texaco, Saga, Saudi Aramco, Kuwait Oil Company, and Unocal as well as for societies such as the Northern California Geological Society, San Joaquin Geological Society, and Indonesian Petroleum Association, for universities such as the California Institute of Technology, Berkeley, San Diego State, Turin, Florence, Bari, Bergen, Oslo, and Lund, and for companies such as IHRDC, Robertson, P. T. Geoservices Ltd., and Petropros. He conducted short courses overseas in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Australia, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Italy, Norway, France, Great Britain, and Sweden. Tor was an active member of the Geological Society of America and the AAPG. In recognition for his long and dedicated service to the profession, Tor was made an honorary life member of the Pacific Section of the AAPG in 2004.

Many colleagues in the energy sector were unaware of his meticulous maps that are regarded by scientists as essential in evaluating the danger of landslides in the San Francisco Bay Area. "He had the best maps around, bar none. They're extensively used in land-use planning," said his friend Harry Cook, a sedimentologist with the USGS. "He was a world-class geologist," Cook said. "Much of Tor's professional life was devoted to understanding the unseen world beneath California's crust. They're very important contributions to the

scientific community," said Cook, who recalled Dr. Nilsen as a good companion on international field studies, where getting the job done meant "climbing mountains, drinking beer, getting down and rowdy, and talking about geology."

Dr. Nilsen was a consummate connoisseur of good food and wine, an avid student of San Francisco history, a lover of all kinds of music, was fluent in five languages (Norwegian, English, Swedish, French, and Italian), and he had an encyclopedic knowledge of professional basketball and baseball statistics. He was a basketball player all his life. In the spring of 2005, only two days after extreme chemotherapy, he played in the finals of the National Seniors Olympic Basketball Championships. In the preceding year, he was the top scoring senior in the nation. Dr. Nilsen was a unique individual with a keen scholarly intellect, an unquenchable zest for knowledge, and a highly competitive level of physical accomplishment. He had many remarkable facets to his life that he perfected to the highest degree, with modesty and humility.

Tor is survived by his wife, Paula, sons Anton of Coral Gables, Florida, and Eirik, a high school student in Belmont, California, and daughters Siri and Brit, undergraduate students at UC Davis and San Diego State University, respectively. His family, friends, professional acquaintances, and admirers will miss this remarkable man.



"Tor — Throughout the past decade, we became close friends who worked well together. We are honored to have worked with you on this Atlas. Your constant energy, attention to detail, and your encyclopedic knowledge from hands-on observations of many of the outcrops in this Atlas proved invaluable.

You have touched many lives and we hope this Atlas is a fitting tribute to you and your good life."

Roger, Gary, and Joe

Dr. Tor Helge Nilsen
November 29, 1941–October 9, 2005