

John Tipton Lonsdale (1895-1960)

The unexpected death of John Tipton Lonsdale came as a shock to his many friends and colleagues throughout the United States, for he had been active with his professional and administrative duties as Director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas until two days before his death. Death came suddenly during the early hours of October 5, 1960, at his home in Austin, Texas, as the result of a heart attack. He is survived by his wife, Edna Gertrude (Van Arman) Lonsdale, whom he married August 31, 1921; a sister, Miss Bernice Lonsdale, Holly Hill, Florida; and a brother, Richard R. Lonsdale, Dayton Beach, Florida.

John Tipton Lonsdale was born November 8, 1895, at Dale, Iowa, the oldest son of Eva Mary (Connor) and John Dye Lonsdale. He was awarded the B.A. degree in 1917 and the M.S. degree in 1921, both from the University of Iowa, and the Ph.D. degree in 1924 from the University of Virginia.

During his undergraduate training, John Lonsdale held positions as field assistant with both the Iowa and Colorado geological surveys, but his distinguished professional career began in 1921 when he served as Assistant



***Editor's Note:** John Lonsdale was president-elect of the American Association of State Geologists at the time of his death. Previously he had served as vice-president of the Association and as chairman and member of a number of the Association's important committees.

We are indebted to Dr. Ross Maxwell, a long-time colleague of John Lonsdale, for this timely biography which we are privileged to include in this issue as a tribute to one who had contributed much to our Association affairs.

Professor of Geology at the University of Virginia and Geologist for the Virginia Geological Survey. He moved to Oklahoma in 1924 where he was Assistant Professor at the University and Geologist with the State Geological Survey, and in 1925, he came to the University of Texas as a Geologist on the staff of the Bureau of Economic Geology. In 1928 he was appointed Professor of Geology and elected Head of the Department of Geology at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas. While at College Station he also served part-time as Geologist for the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company. From Texas Dr. Lonsdale went to Iowa State College at Ames where, except for military leave, he was Professor of Geology and Head of the Geology Department from 1935 to 1945. He returned to the University of Texas in 1945 as Director of the Bureau of Economic Geology and Professor of Geology with graduate rank, the positions which he held at the time of his death.

John Lonsdale served in the United States Army during both World Wars, attaining the rank of Colonel, and was active as a reserve officer in between. In World War I, he was cited for bravery by both the United States and Italian Governments. In recognition of his military service, his ashes were interred at Arlington National Cemetery.

At the time of his death, Dr. Lonsdale was President-elect of the Association of American State Geologists and held membership in many scientific and honorary societies, including Sigma Xi, Sigma Gamma Epsilon, American Association of Petroleum Geologists, American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical and Petroleum Engineers, American Geophysical Union, Society of Economic Geologists, and Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists. He was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America, the Mineralogical Society of America, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

His career was marked by faithful service on numerous committees of his professional societies, as well as on several committees connected with his state services. A special task assigned by University officials shortly after his return to Texas in 1945 was to aid in the recruiting and building of an outstanding Department of Geology. His suggestions and guidance as a member of the Budget Council had a marked effect on the Department's growth.

Dr. Lonsdale's contributions to geologic research ranged from detailed analyses of complex rock and mineral systems to the economic geology of many different industrial mineral products. His work always had a strong practical slant toward the economic importance of a mineral deposit. As Director of the Bureau of Economic Geology, he began an investigation of the State's mineral resources, which emphasized minerals other than oil and gas. The full importance of this work has not been realized, but in the future it will no doubt rank as one of his greatest contributions. Among his specialties were investigations of ground-water resources in south Texas, igneous rocks of the Balcones fault region, igneous rocks of the

Terlingua-Solitario region, and igneous rocks of Big Bend National Park. The latter work, nearly complete at the time of his death, will be published as part of a comprehensive report on the Park area.

Dr. Lonsdale was active in the Austin Rotary Club and gave liberally to its projects and to other charitable organizations. He was a hunter, gun collector, delightful companion in the out-of-doors, and respected professor who had the ability to develop a strong bond of friendship with his students, of whom many now hold high positions in the scientific and business world, and among whom were many who traveled hundreds of miles to Austin in order to pay their last respects on October 7, 1960.

John Lonsdale had not only brilliant research and teaching records and an outstanding military career, but he was also an administrator capable of planning and carrying out programs involving the skills of numerous specialists in diversified fields of geology and allied sciences. He always stimulated good will and cooperation among the Bureau personnel. As a friend and professional colleague for more than 20 years, the last eight of which have been at the Bureau, I could best describe the man's character, philosophy of life, and unswerving integrity to his profession by relating incidents of our associations, which would take too long. In summarizing these associations, I remember John Lonsdale as a pleasant, modest, unassuming man who did not seek the numerous and varied honors that came to him. He was a stimulating but quiet conversationalist with the poise of one who knew his own ability and qualifications. The real worth of a life is not measured by its length but by its quality, and my memory of John Lonsdale is of a man who lived a full life always striving to maintain the highest standards. The geology profession has lost one of its truly great members; it was a great inspiration to have known him and to have had the privilege to work with and for him.

- Ross A. Maxwell