

Paul K. Sims

1918 – 2011

Director of the Minnesota Geological Survey, State Geologist of Minnesota, and University of Minnesota Professor of Geology, 1961-1973

Paul Kibler Sims died in Denver on October 29, 2011, at the age of 93. P.K. Sims was born on September 8, 1918, in Newton, Illinois, where he excelled in basketball and baseball as a youth. A teacher urged him to go to college, and after two years in the University of Illinois Business School, he became enthralled by a geology course taught by Harold Scott.



In 1940, he completed his A.B. in Geology, and he married the homecoming queen, Dolores Thomas. He then completed a Master's degree in Geology at University of Illinois in 1942, he worked for the Illinois State Geological Survey for a year, and he then worked with the US Geological Survey (USGS) from 1943 to 1944. At USGS, he initially worked on the lead-zinc deposits of the Wallapai mining district of Arizona, and lead-zinc deposits in the Metaline district of Washington state.

Paul then served two years with the Navy in the Pacific theatre. In 1946, Sims returned to USGS, where he then worked on the gold deposits at South Pass, Wyoming, and he also enrolled in the PhD program at Princeton. In 1947, he worked on iron ore at Dover, New Jersey, followed by work in 1950/1951 in the USGS Manuscript Processing Office of the Branch of Mineral Deposits. He completed his Princeton PhD in 1950.

From 1951 to 1953, he was in charge of the Reports Unit of the USGS Reconnaissance Group in Denver, and he spent a month of 1953 in Washington on special assignment working on uranium in Russia. From 1953 to 1957, Sims was a project chief in the USGS Colorado Front Range project. From 1957 to 1958, he was District Supervisor for the USGS Mineral Deposits Rocky Mountain area, and during this time, he also became responsible for supervision of the Geochemical Exploration section. From 1959 to 1961, Sims was project chief for the USGS Colorado Front Range project, and he conducted geologic mapping in the Central City region.

As Sims' reputation in Precambrian geology grew, he was invited by Preston Cloud of the University of Minnesota to lead the Minnesota Geological Survey (MGS), as successor to George Schwartz. He held the position of Director of the Minnesota Geological Survey, State Geologist of Minnesota, and University of Minnesota Professor of Geology from 1961 to 1973. Sims assembled the first full-time Minnesota Geological Survey staff, and he focused on geologic mapping of the Precambrian rocks of the state, using the same standards required by the USGS. A major achievement resulting from Sims' time as MGS

Director was publication of 'Geology of Minnesota: A Centennial Volume', edited by P.K. Sims and G.B. Morey, in recognition of the hundredth year of the state geological survey. Sims left the Minnesota Geological Survey in 1973, and his successor was Matt Walton.

Sims then re-joined the USGS at the Denver office, from 1973 to 1995, followed by service as an Emeritus Scientist. From 1973 to 1980, Sims worked as project chief on Precambrian greenstone belts of Minnesota and their regional tectonic framework. From 1980 to 1992, Sims was USGS project chief on Precambrian tectonics of the Lake Superior region. From 1992 to 1995, PK was chief of a USGS project on Precambrian rocks of the Hartville uplift, southeastern Wyoming. As an Emeritus Geologist at USGS after 1995, Sims worked on several projects, including effort on unpublished geologic data obtained by George Snyder before his untimely death, as well as Precambrian basement geologic maps.

Sims' principal scientific achievements thus were contributions to knowledge of the Precambrian rocks of North America, especially the regional geology and metallogeny of the Lake Superior and Rocky Mountain regions.

P.K. Sims became a Geological Society of America Fellow in 1948. He was Colorado Scientific Society President in 1957, and became an Honorary Member in 1977. He was a member of the Society of Economic Geologists (SEG) beginning in 1954. He was an SEG Councilor from 1965 to 1968, Chairman of the Publications Committee from 1967 to 1968, Vice-President in 1972, President in 1975, and Councilor from 1979 to 1996. He also was a Trustee of the Society of Economic Geologists Foundation from 1979 to 1984. He was the SEG Thayer Lindsley Distinguished Lecturer in 1984-1985. In 1989, Sims received the SEG Ralph W. Marsden Award, presented for outstanding service to the Society.

Sims was Secretary of the Subcommittee on Precambrian Stratigraphy of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) from 1975 to 1984. He received the Minnesota Geological Award of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers Minnesota Section in 1973. In 1983, he became an Honorary Member of the Association of American State Geologists (AASG), and of the International Association on Genesis of Ore Deposits. He received the Meritorious Service Award of the U.S. Department of Interior in 1984, and a Department of Interior Distinguished Service Award in 1991. He received the Sam Goldich Medal of the Institute on Lake Superior Geology in 1985. In 2009, Sims received the Central Region Best Publication Award under the USGS Scientist Emeritus Program, for his map, "Precambrian basement structure map of the continental United States – An interpretation of geologic and aeromagnetic data"

Sims was preceded in death by his wife, Dolores, and he is survived by his friend Holly Stein, daughter and former Miss Minnesota Charlotte Olein, son Thomas, as well as his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. PK Sims was a consistent, reliable, unselfish, dignified gentleman. He will be missed.