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Heinrich Handschin: Wilhelm Mohler

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school with a more demanding curriculum than 5th to 8th grade, at that time it was only found in larger towns] I did not see any possibilities for learning a profession. My teacher decided to send me to teachers' college [*Lehrerseminar*]. This meant great financial burdens and I needed four different scholarships. The result: I learned for money, not for life. Each trimester I had to appear at the Education Department to show my grades, just as you go and show your clean hands. This humiliation followed me for my entire life. After having passed the state boards I was not able to repay the scholarships from the Handschin Foundation "on a voluntary basis" because I also had other financial obligations.

Today I marvel that it was possible for me, a young man without means, to study for four years in a boarding school. I can document the blessings from the Handschin Foundation with the fact that today, in my retirement, I am still writing novels about school children which my colleagues use as teaching materials. The decision of my teacher was absolutely right: I cannot imagine a more beautiful profession.

Wilhelm Mohler

Mohler, Wilhelm from Thürnen, born on July 3, 1911, moved in 1916 to Gelterkinden. Parents: Wilhelm and Elise Mohler-Mohler. The father was a watch-maker [*Uhrensteinschleifer* - grinding a part for watches], after 1916 he worked on the roads in Gelterkinden; the mother was a homemaker and silk-ribbon weaver.

Education: 1918–1924 elementary school in Gelterkinden, 1924–1927 Junior high school Böckten. 1927–1931 *Gymnasium* [college preparatory school, mathematical-scientific branch] in Basel. 1931–1937 studies in geology and paleontology at the University of Basel obtaining a Ph.D with a dissertation about micro-paleontological research in the formation of the Jura mountains in north-west Switzerland.

Work: February 1, 1938 to April 30, 1962 employed as micropaleontologist for Shell, Den Haag, Netherlands. In October 1938 I arrived in Balikpapan, Borneo, Dutch-India (today Indonesia) as director of the paleontological laboratory. I worked in oil exploration until the beginning of the Pacific War. On January 15, 1942 I fled to Java and worked there in the oil fields of Tjepu until February. After the occupation by the Japanese he fled into the mountains. In 1943 I was urged by the Japanese to move to Bandung and worked there in the Geological Museum until 1945. I also conducted relief actions for women and children of Shell employees for which I was imprisoned at times. On November 14, 1945, I returned home on a British military ship. From November 1946 to October 1949 I helped with reconstruction in Indonesia. After a short stay in Den Haag I traveled to the United States in order to be trained in new methods of stratigraphy. In 1951

I went to Maracaibo, Venezuela, as director of the paleontological laboratory and as expert for stratigraphic methods. In 1957 I established a new department of “special Studies” in the capital of Venezuela, Caracas. In January 1958 the revolution in Venezuela began, and no new oil concessions were given out as the nationalization of the oil industry was initiated. I had to choose between doing research for Shell Oil in Houston, Texas, a leading position in Holland, or retirement. In March 5, 1962 I returned to Switzerland and began my retirement in May 1962.

Family: On January 21, 1938 I married Helene Gysin. Children: Agnes Helene and Ruth Elisabeth, born in Balikpapan, Irene Barbara born in Basel, and Wilhelm Friedrich, born in Maracaibo.

After retirement: I moved to Gelterkinden, was a member of the town council from 1964–1975, a Cantonal Councillor from 1965–1975, a member of the *Freisinnige Demokratische Partei* [comparable to today’s Republican party in the US]. I was a member of many committees and associations; worked as geological expert for the geography manuals of Gelterkinden, Ormalingen, Zeglingen, Sissach, Hemmiken, Känerkinden and Rothenfluh, other volumes are in preparation. Many professional papers and scholarly publications.

The Handschin Foundation

Liquidation

The Basel assets of Heinrich Handschin were speedily liquidated. Jakob Wirz renounced the right to buy the house at the Schützenmattstrasse, and the Handschin household was liquidated at an auction and the property was sold for the Foundation. Only the disbursing of the legacies of sfr. 25,000.00 to relatives who had not been mentioned in the will took until 1895 because these people also had to prove that they were indeed relatives.

Yet the liquidation of Handschin’s assets – of sfr. 500,187.89 – in Russia presented problems. Correspondence with officials in Moscow and St. Petersburg was difficult because the documents had to be translated and notarized. According to the will of the testator the Swiss Consul in Moscow had to oversee the liquidation. Because of long delays in the handling of these matters the Cantonal Executive of Basel-Landschaft began to wonder whether the consul was trustworthy and asked the Swiss representation to check him out, but there was no ground for accusations. Yet a lower registrar in the Federal Chancery in Bern had withheld Handschin documents and notarization fees; this explained the delays. Because of this the Canton Basel-Landschaft feared that Moscow would demand inheritance taxes because the last will with the By-laws for the Foundation could not be deposited at the Russian courts in time. While this did not