Citation – Henry Sawatzky, P. Geoph.(APEGGA)
Saskatchewan Geological Society Geoscience Honour Roll

Henry Sawatzky spent his formative years on a farm near Herschel, Saskatchewan. He left the farm at Herschel to serve in the Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve in submarine tracking and detection during World War II. Following the end of those hostilities, Henry enrolled in the College of Arts and Science at the University of Saskatchewan, graduating in 1950 with a B.A. in Physics. According to his wife's book "Doodlebugging in Saskatchewan" Henry had developed an interest in the oil business during his university years and upon graduation sought employment with several companies in that industry. He eventually received a call from Petty Geophysical Engineering Company and was offered a position as junior seismologist (junior recorder). Acceptance of this offer made him the only Canadian employed by the company and initiated a four-year nomadic existence for Henry and his family, as they trekked through Saskatchewan from Gravelbourg (twice) to Central Butte, Southey, Indian Head, Swift Current (three times), Fort Qu'Appelle, Carlyle and Shaunavon. The conditions under which Henry and his family lived during that time as described in his wife's book were symptomatic of Saskatchewan's slow recovery from two decades of poor finances brought on by the depression, drought and war years. Regular rental facilities were nonexistent, and they were force to take up accommodations in odd and often rundown buildings.

Henry left Petty in the latter part of 1954 to begin 13 years of employment in the Geophysical and Evaluations Branch of the Saskatchewan Department of Mineral Resources. It was at this time that he made most of his significant contributions to geoscience in Saskatchewan. Paramount among these is his Composite Seismic map. This map dramatically demonstrates the presence of structures in the subsurface of Saskatchewan, particularly those caused by the dissolution of Devonian salt deposits. It has withstood the test of time, as it is as applicable today as it was when it was first released in the late 1950s. However, he did not stop there; Henry and his staff of two other geophysicists, Dave Surjik and Rama Agarwal, and a geologist, Bill Wilson, produced several other important subsurface studies. One dealt with helium prospects in southwestern Saskatchewan and another with the hydrocarbon potential in an area south of Regina. The helium study demonstrated the existence of Precambrian paleotopographic highs in western Saskatchewan, and described their influence on the overlying strata as well as their relationship to entrapment of oil, natural gas and helium. The second study contributed to the methodology for recognition of the timing of salt dissolution, and its influence on hydrocarbon accumulations.

Henry left Mineral Resources in 1967 to take the position of Chief Geophysicist for Francana Oil and Gas, which at that time was located in Regina. It was during his employment with Francana that he made, what was for him, personally, his most satisfying geoscientific contribution, namely, the discovery of the Viewfield Oilfield in southeastern Saskatchewan. Henry recognized that Viewfield's complex structural and stratigraphic relationships resembled those of an extraterrestrial impact feature. His paper on the Viewfield impact structure brought him international acclaim and won for him the Canadian Society of Geophysicists "Best Paper" award for 1972. Henry confided to me,

recently, that he got great pleasure out of being an invited speaker to give a presentation on Viewfield at a meeting of internationally recognized experts in the field of extraterrestrial impact structures in Tuscon, Arizona.

I’m sure all present here tonight will agree with me that Henry Sawatzky is a fitting inductee to the Saskatchewan Geological Society’s Geoscience Honour Roll.

Donald M. Kent