

OBITUARY

Guy Camus

Guy Camus left us prematurely at the age of fifty-seven, having passed away suddenly at his home in Clermont-Ferrand, France, on 19 June 1999.

Guy was born in the Livradois region of the Auvergne on 20 November 1941. He trained at the “Ecole des Alpes” in Grenoble before obtaining a university teaching post at Clermont in 1967. He subsequently spent his entire career there, first as a teaching assistant and later as lecturer, until his retirement a few weeks before his death. In 1967 the department specialised in crustal studies and in the new radiometric methods of rock dating. As a young researcher, Guy focussed his attention on the Chaîne des Puys of his native Auvergne. Having been one of the cradles of volcanological research and concepts at the beginning of the 19th century, this chain of approximately a hundred lava domes, scoria cones and maars was ripe for re-evaluation using the principles of modern volcanology. A field geologist by training, Guy focussed his attention on the structure and evolution of the chain, and on the eruptive processes recorded by the complex stratigraphy of overlapping tephra sheets. Guy synthesised available geophysical data, mapped the region geologically and reconstructed in remarkable detail over 100,000 years of volcanic evolution. He

also initiated an innovative programme of dating using carbon-14 and thermoluminescence methods, and was one of the first workers in France to apply sedimentological principles to the study of pyroclastic deposits. His thesis, completed in 1975, subsequently led to the first edition of the volcanological map of the Chaîne des Puys cherished by all professionals, student groups and amateur geologists who visit the area. The map and its associated field guide are available in both French and English. They are currently being revised by colleagues and will serve as a memorial to Guy for many years to come.

Guy subsequently worked on numerous other young volcanoes, including Krakatau, Galunggung, Merapi, the ignimbrite province of Cappadocia, Colima, Capelinhos, Vesuvius and the Phlegrean Fields. Guy was one of the pioneers of the study of phreatomagmatic eruptions and their products, his interest having been nurtured by the maars of the Chaîne des Puys. Later he focussed on the textural characteristics of debris avalanches and on the role they play in triggering explosive eruptions. With Claude Robin he studied the avalanches at Colima and with Pierre Vincent he proposed that the 1883 eruption of Krakatau had been triggered by sector collapse. To test the latter hypothesis, he participated in cruises to Krakatau and used side-scan sonar to image hummocky topography on the sea floor. He liked to recall how, in 1981, while camping with Pierre on the beach at Krakatau, a small tsunami generated by an explosion of Anak flooded their tent in the middle of the night. In 1984 he proposed that the thick breccias of the Cantal Massif of south-central France were the products of sector-collapse avalanches, an idea that was subsequently confirmed and is now the foundation for modern studies in the region. Guy also became interested in lava domes and the block-and-ash flows they generate, and collaborated in studies at Merapi and Montagne Pelée.

In the 1980s Guy worked in Indonesia and supervised theses on Merapi and Bromo-Tengger. Our

understanding of the eruption and emplacement of large ignimbrites was increased by Guy's studies in Indonesia and Cappadocia, and in 1994 he was one of the leaders of the IAVCEI Explosive Volcanism field workshop in Cappadocia. In all, Guy left us 190 publications, 52 of them in English.

Guy was a talented and committed teacher and was the mentor and friend of many young geologists. He supervised numerous Ph.D. and master's students, and in later years co-led the annual Clermont master's field excursion to the Roman Province and Aeolian Islands of Italy. Those of us lucky enough to have accompanied Guy on that trip will retain our own fond memories of a man in his element: whether explaining enthusiastically some finer point of the Campanian Ignimbrite, or enjoying a joke over a late-night drink in the camp site at Solfatara. His office was always open to students, who borrowed freely

from his collection of books, journals and reprints. He greatly enjoyed passing on his knowledge and experience to amateur geologists and in giving seminars and leading field trips for the public. The popularisation of volcanology was one of his favourite pastimes and he fought long and hard for the conservation of several sites of major geological importance in the Auvergne.

Guy's wife Yvette passed away in 1994. He leaves a daughter and two granddaughters. We have lost an outstanding volcanologist and a warm and generous man who touched the lives of many colleagues and students. They will miss him greatly.

Alain de Goer de Hervé

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