



## Obituary to Professor Ernie Peters



Ernest Peters  
January 27, 1926–May 27, 2009

Ernie Peters was born in Steinbach, Manitoba and was the second son to immigrant parents from the Soviet Union. After schooling in Alberta and service with the Royal Canadian Air Force, he entered the University of British Columbia in July 1945 and received his B.A.Sc. in Metallurgical Engineering in 1949. He then married and took a job as a quality control metallurgist with the Geneva Steel Company in Utah.

In September, 1950, Ernie returned to U.B.C. for graduate studies, and finished a M.A.Sc. thesis on "The Leaching of Uranium from Pitchblende Ores", under the supervision of Professor Frank Forward and Dr. Jack Halpern. He then took employment with the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd. (now Cominco Ltd.) in Trail, B.C. as a Research Engineer, where he worked on problems in lead smelting and zinc fuming. He again returned to U.B.C. in 1953, with a Cominco Fellowship and finished a Ph.D. thesis in 1956, on "The Homogeneous Activation of Molecular Hydrogen

by Cupric Species in Aqueous Solutions", under the supervision of Dr. Jack Halpern. Following his Ph.D., he worked with Union Carbide Co. in Niagara Falls, on chromium hydrometallurgy until 1958 when he was appointed Assistant Professor in the Department of Mining and Metallurgy at U.B.C. Thereafter, he dedicated his research to hydrometallurgy with Professor Frank Forward as mentor. Concurrent with his U.B.C. appointment, he was made a consultant with Cominco, Ltd., a relationship that continued until retirement.

During his 34 years at U.B.C., Ernie taught almost all the various courses in Extractive Metallurgy at different times (including thermodynamics, pyrometallurgy, and metallurgical economics), and gradually developed courses in the growing field of hydrometallurgy. He supervised 14 Ph.D. candidates and 22 M.A.Sc./M.Sc. candidates. With faculty and industrial co-lecturers, he developed short courses for industry that were presented in Utah (late 1960's), Colorado (1971), South Africa (1976), Australia (1987), various Canadian and U.S. centers (1985–91), and to a number of Canadian sponsor companies (1988–92). He spent sabbaticals at the Max Planck Institute, Goettingen (1965), at the University of California, Berkeley (1971 and 1983), and in Australia at CSIRO Minerals, Monash University and University of New South Wales (1976).

As Ernie approached retirement, he sought to ensure the continuation of hydrometallurgy at UBC by establishing the first Industrial Research Chair in Hydrometallurgy with sponsorship from 9 Canadian Companies (Hatch Associates, INCO, Falconbridge, Sherritt-Gordon, Teck Corporation, Cominco Limited, Placer Dome Inc., Praxair, Cytec). This Chair has continued at UBC and over the years has funded new faculty staff including David Dreisinger, David Dixon, Berend Wassink and Edouard Asselin.

The Ernest Peters International Symposium on Hydrometallurgy Theory and Practice was held in Vancouver in 1992 to commemorate Ernie's retirement and his many achievements including several awards and medals presented by the AIME and CIM. Over 200 colleagues from around the world attended and more than 60 papers were presented and published in a Special Issue of the Journal of Hydrometallurgy (Vols. 29 and 30). The proceeds from the Symposium were used to establish the Ernest Peters Award, an annual Award given to the outstanding graduating student in hydrometallurgy at UBC.

Ernie was a dedicated Christian most of his life and was active in Churches and as a Board member of several Missionary societies. He enjoyed skiing, wind surfing, fly fishing, and flying model aircraft. He is survived by his wife and two daughters and will be sorely missed by his many students, colleagues and friends in the hydrometallurgy community who respected his knowledge and reputation.

David Dreisinger