



Personal report

## Rob Van der Voo—an appreciation

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In August 2000, a workshop was held in sunny Ann Arbor, MI, to celebrate the 60th birthday of Professor Rob Van der Voo. The purpose of the meeting was to celebrate Rob's many contributions to the fields of paleomagnetism and tectonics as he reached this significant 'life' milestone. Rob is one of the world's leading authorities in geosciences, and over the past 35 years, he has made outstanding contributions to Pre-Mesozoic paleomagnetism and plate tectonics, rock magnetism and electron microscopy, magnetostratigraphy, lithospheric structure, tectonics of orogenic belts, and geodynamics related to mantle tomography and paleogeography. A brief outline of his very far-reaching and impressive career activities serves to show how important his contributions have been for advancement of geosciences.

Rob received his PhD in 1969 from the University of Utrecht (the Netherlands) and his early work focussed on the Mediterranean region where he played a major role in some of the classical findings of paleomagnetism there. Following his arrival in North America in 1970, Rob's research was directed towards establishing the apparent polar wander path (APWP) for North America as the necessary first step in unraveling pre-Mesozoic plate tectonics.

In the late 1970s, his research saw a 'return' to Europe where he made many investigations of rocks

from the Armorican Massif in France as the paleogeographic history of Armorica was an essential component in understanding the evolution of the Atlantic-bordering continents. At that time, he also became involved in studies of displaced terranes of northwest North America in work that provided the first APWP for the Alexander terrane of southeast Alaska.

Early in the 1980s, Rob became interested in the origin of secondary magnetizations that plagued many studies of Palaeozoic rocks in North America. These studies established how carbonate rocks become remagnetized, and electron microscope studies provided a method for identifying remagnetized and non-remagnetized carbonates.

Later in the 1980s, Rob turned his attention to studies of the Avalon terrane and adjacent regions of Newfoundland. These studies led to important conclusions regarding the accretionary history of these terranes. Further studies led to new models for the Ordovician evolution of the Iapetus Ocean and the accretion of terranes to northeast Laurentia. During this same period, Rob carried out many investigations in China that provided paleogeographic constraints on the evolution of the Asian continent—a critical piece in global paleoreconstructions, but, until that time, only weakly incorporated in modern reconstruction analyses.

Over the last few years, Rob has moved on and forward, yet again, to examine the existence of the Neoproterozoic supercontinent of Rodinia, its breakup, and the subsequent formation of Gondwana. His latest achievements include investigations into geodynamics related to mantle tomography and paleo-geo-

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graphy, and currently, amongst many other activities, he is exploring the existence of long-term non-dipole fields in the palaeomagnetic record.

Rob's first scientific paper was published in 1966 on the Geology of the Sierra de Tendenera region in the Spanish Pyrenees, and 35 years later (2001) his publication list shows over 225 published papers. This astonishing publication record is filled with classical studies on a wide range of topics covering everything from theoretical to experimental to field-based research. He is, perhaps, best known for the way in which he puts together 'the big picture', both for workers in his own field and for those wanting an overview of 'what's going on' in the subject. These reviews show his careful attention to detail, attempting to provide readers with an unbiased synthesis of various problems in the evolution of the continents. This approach resulted in his outstanding global synthesis of paleomagnetic data in terms of crustal evolution in his book "Paleomagnetism of the Atlantic, Tethys and Iapetus Oceans" (published in 1993).

Rob's scientific achievements have not gone without recognition by his peers, and a selection of some of his honors and awards includes: the University of Michigan Henry Russel Award (1976); election to Royal Academy of Sciences, the Netherlands (1979); Fellow of the American Geophysical Union (1982); University of Michigan Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award (1990) and several Excellence in Education Awards; Geological Society of America G.P. Woollard Award (1992); Arthur F. Thurnau Professorship, University of Michigan (1994–1997); Fellow of Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters (1995); A.V. Cox Lecturer, American Geophysical Union Spring Meeting (1997); University of

Michigan, LS&A Distinguished Faculty Lecturer (1998), and most recently the Benjamin Franklin Medal in Earth Science, Franklin Institute (2001).

Especially considering his prolific scientific work, Rob's altruistic contributions to the geoscientific community throughout his career are also remarkable. Apart from all the students fortunate to have been educated and trained by Rob, his professional services to the American Geophysical Union (including, President, Geomagnetism and Paleomagnetism Section, Council Member; Editor Geophysical Research Letters; Assoc. Editor Reviews of Geophysics; Editor Tectonics; Committee on Education and Human Resources; several award and medal committees) and the Geological Society of America (including Councillor; Executive Committee Member; Assoc. Editor Geological Society of America Bulletin; Geology; several award and medal committees) are impressive. Rob has just completed a 10-year stint as editor of Earth and Planetary Science Letters, and remains an Associate Editor of Tectonophysics and the Journal of Geodynamics, and also serves on the Editorial Board of Terra Nova. He has just become vice-President of the Geological Society of America.

It is not without a certain sense of pride and humility that we assembled this special volume of Tectonophysics to honor Rob. Pride in the sense that, as colleagues, we have been fortunate enough to work with and be positively influenced by Rob's scientific acumen; humility in the sense that, when looking at his life's achievements thus far, we fear that he may not yet have achieved his most significant contributions to geoscience and our community. We salute you, Rob, and anxiously await more scientific inspiration!