MEET OUR EXECUTIVE . . .

A continuing series of short profiles on the IUGS Executive Committee members

Christian C. Weber of France — IUGS Secretary General

At the heart of IUGS and providing the focal point for coordination for all its activities is the Secretariat. Located in Paris on the quiet courtyard off rue Claude Bernard, a few minutes walk from the university district, the Maison de la Géologie provides a home for a number of French geological organizations and an ideal base for IUGS. Visitors to the Union's office will find a small friendly staff headed by Dr. Christian Claude Weber, the Secretary General, a man of wide interests and an extremely busy schedule.

Christian Weber's career in geology is the outcome of his boyhood love of natural science, influenced by his grandfather, a noted herbalist in Alsace and Vosges. There were many field trips collecting plants, insects and rocks. He was especially drawn to the practical applications and economic aspects of science. His graduation from school during the big oil rush of the mid-1950s heightened this interest, and geology was a logical choice for a career.

Dr. Weber obtained his Doctorate de 3^{ième} cycle (roughly equivalent to the North American M.Sc.) in the late 1950s from the University of Paris with a research project on tectonics in the Jura Mountains. His supervisor, Professor Louis Glangeaud, urged him to explore the field of geophysics, and, in 1959, he won a Fulbright scholarship which took him to the California Institute of Technology, U.S.A. This year of study with such colleagues and teachers as Clarence Allen, Leon Silver, Frank Press, Hugo Benioff and Charles Richter earned him an M.Sc. degree. It also marked a turning point as geophysics became for him the most exciting direction in the earth sciences.

In 1960 he returned to France to do his military service and to marry Hélène, a charming young French lady. His first post - as an assistant at the University of Paris - provided little opportunity to work in geophysics, as there were no joint labs to undertake integrated studies. His break came in 1963 when he accepted a position of geologist in the geophysics lab of Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM). In odd moments during the next nine years with BRGM Dr. Weber wrote his doctoral thesis on the basement of the Paris Basin. Using magnetic, seismic and gravimetric patterns, he suggested that this well-known structure is related to a pre-Hercynian rift marking the true origin of the Basin. This subject still fascinates him; indeed, he will give a paper on it at the forthcoming SEG conference in Houston, Texas, U.S.A.

During his years with the BRGM's geophysics department, Dr. Weber was involved in many national and international projects, including electromagnetic surveys in India and airborne geophysical surveys in Benin, the Ivory Coast and Mozambique. There he collected, analyzed and interpreted data, and checked these against the field geology.

In 1972 there was another turning point in his career. The then Director of the BRGM, Claude Guillemin, invited him to assist in planning the scientific programs for the Geological Survey Division of BRGM. In 1974 Dr. Weber became Deputy Director of BRGM, a move which brought him more into the administrative field and he remained in this position until 1980.

Through hard work and careful scheduling, he still manages to maintain his research and scientific interests. One of his recent fields of study has been seismotectonics. He directed the major project that led some 150 scientists and archivists to compile a map of France showing the relationship between earthquake epicentres and geological structures. Published at the time of the 1980 International Geological Congress in Paris, this project provided a central data base for designing the French nuclear power plant structures. Dr. Weber's 1981 paper in *EPISODES* (v.1981/1, pp. 16-18) describes another seismotectonic project on the Mediterranean.

Dr. Weber is now working on a cooperative program between the U.S.S.R. and France, using "pattern recognition" - geomorphology, faulting, gravity, magnetism, geology, etc. - in the Western Alps to identify earthquake-prone areas. With the aid of sophisticated Russian algorithms on Western computers, the project's objective is to allow more quantitative calculations of seismic risk than is permitted by the seismotectonic map of France. Another current project involves data processing of satellite imagery and, in connection with this work, Dr. Weber recently gave the opening address to the Symposium on Remote Sensing and Mineral Exploration which closed IGCP Project 143.

But where does IUGS come into Dr. Weber's life? Having been associated with IUGG activities for some time and as Chairman of the IAGA Working Group on Magnetic Anomalies, and a member of the International Gravity Bureau, Dr. Weber was no stranger to the workings of international scientific organizations. Nevertheless, his rise to prominence in IUGS was meteoric, having first made contact with this Union at the 1979 IUGG Congress in Canberra, Australia. One year later he was elected the new Secretary General of IUGS.

This position has fostered closer contact with many new groups and, of course, has brought many new responsibilities. He hopes to keep IUGS both active and at the leading edge of science as well as advancing the cause of science in developing countries, following, as he says, the trend started by Dr. W.W. Hutchison, his predecessor as Secretary General.

Despite his responsibilities with IUGS, Dr. Weber retains his scientific involvement with BRGM programs and looks forward to returning someday to full-time research. Naturally, there are also other preoccupations outside his professional career, particularly his own family of three children and his interests as a French citizen. If there is an underlying motive to his work, he says it is his desire to launch new programs, to get them running and to move on to new fields. No doubt there will be many new challenges ahead for Christian Weber!

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EDITED BY: L.V. HILLS, E.V. SANGSTER, L.B. SUNEBY

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