



## IN MEMORIAL

### FERGUS J. WOOD (1917–2000)

Readers of the *Journal of Coastal Research* will be saddened to learn of the passing of Fergus Wood, the world-famous expert on tides and tidal dynamics. He liked to describe himself as an “astro-geophysicist”, following in the footsteps of the Swedish tidal specialist, Otto Pettersson of Gothenburg, who paved the way in linking the lunar tide cycles with the Sun and planetary periodicities some ninety years ago. The phenomenally and protracted low sea level all through spring and summer of the year 2000, associated with an unusual alignment of the major planets on the far side of the Sun, were exactly as Fergus had predicted.

Fergus died on Friday, May 19, 2000 at Scripps Green Clinic in Torrey Pines, California. He was 83 years old. For the past 20 years, Wood had been retired near San Diego in Southern California after a long and distinguished career in public service. His seminal work in the field of “tidal dynamics” led him to be sought after by news organizations, film production companies, and authors for years into his retirement. He was quoted in such publications as *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, *Newsweek* and also appeared on a number of television news programs in conjunction with potential coastal damage as a result of unusual high tides which he predicted. Shortly before his death, he had continued to work on articles and had been expecting the imminent publication of a new two-volume edition of his book *Tidal Dynamics* (soon to appear as a special issue of JCR by the Coastal Education and Research Foundation).

Prior to retirement, Wood had served as scientist and research associate in the Office of the Director of the National Ocean Survey, NOAA, in Washington, D.C., where he was the recipient of four Special Achievement Awards. He also served earlier with the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey and as Program Director for Foreign Science Information with the National Science Foundation. In the early 1960's he was an aeronautical and space research scientist and assistant to the director of the Office of Space Flight Programs at NASA headquarters, helping to plan the Jupiter “fly-bys” which were accomplished some 20 years later.

As a writer and editor he published numerous articles and books, most notably *Tidal Dynamics* and *The Strategic Role of Perigean Spring Tides in Nautical History and North American Coastal Flooding, 1635–1976*, published by the U.S. De-

partment of Commerce, NOAA, in 1978. He was Editor-in-Chief and Technical Coordinator of a four-volume publication series on the Great Alaskan Earthquake of 1964 for the National Academy of Sciences. He served as the Science Editor and member of the Editorial Board for *The Encyclopedia Americana* in New York and was a contributor to Collier's Encyclopedia, Grolier Encyclopedia, Britannica Junior Encyclopedia, the World Almanac and the Book of Facts.

From *The Weather Book* by Jack Williams, published in 1992 by *USA Today*, “When he looks back on it, Wood says his entire scientific career seemed to lead to his study of tides and storms. With a background in astronomy, meteorology and oceanographic research, ‘I joined knowledge of gravitational forces of the moon and sun with aspects of meteorology—how winds form over and react with the sea surface—and oceanography, including tides and ocean currents.’”

A World War II veteran, Wood served as 2nd Air Force Supervisor of Weather Training and as General Staff Weather Officer for the 8th Air Force. After the war he became Project Director on a specially instrumented U.S. Navy battleship, searching for hurricane-force winds in the North Atlantic.

He was born on May 13, 1917 in London, Ontario. In 1924, he came to Eugene, Oregon with his parents, Prof. Louis Aubrey and Dora Elson Wood, becoming a naturalized American citizen in 1932. He studied at the University of Oregon, the University of California at Berkeley (AB, 1938), and did post-graduate work at the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan and the California Institute of Technology. He taught at Pasadena City College, John Muir College, the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University.

He was wed in 1946 to Doris M. Hack of Eugene, Oregon, who died in 1998 after 52 years of marriage. He is survived by daughters Kathryn Wood Madden of New York, a psychoanalyst in private practice and the Academic Dean of the Blanton-Peale Institute and Bonnie Wood Ward, a registered nurse and travel immunology specialist in La Jolla, California; son-in-law Ronald Madden, a trial consultant in New York; and two granddaughters, Christina Ward Boykin and Heather Ward.

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