

DR. GEORGE LAWSON PICKARD 1913 – 2007

Ann McAfee and Andrew Pickard are sad to inform you of the death of our father, George Pickard, on May 1, 2007. Dad was 93 years old, 3 months short of his 94th birthday. Following Mom's death, in 1994, Dad continued to live in our family home until February this year. Fortunately his final illness was short and he died peacefully.

George was born in Cardiff Wales on July 5, 1913. His father was killed in 1918 while serving with the British Forces in France. After attending Manchester Grammar School, George received a scholarship to Hertford College, Oxford. He graduated with first class honors, receiving his Doctor of Philosophy for studies in low temperature physics in 1937. While at Oxford George met and, in 1938, married Lilian Perry of St. Hilda's College.

With the onset of WW II George worked with Sir R.V. Jones, at the Clarendon Laboratory Oxford, on the first successful use of infra-red radiation to detect aircraft at night. In 1938 he was posted to the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough becoming Senior Scientific Officer and later Squadron Leader. George designed a simple two-spotlight beam altimeter to assist aircraft to fly at low altitudes for night attacks on submarines. He later applied this technique to Lancaster aircraft used for attacks on the Ruhr dams – a mission made famous in the book and movie "The Dam Busters". Testing navigational aids required many flights over water and occupied Europe. In 1942 George qualified for membership in "The Goldfish Club" by surviving after his plane went down in the English Channel. In recognition of George's contributions to the War effort, in 1946, he was decorated as a Member of the British Empire.

Following the war George accepted a faculty position in the Department of Physics at the University of British Columbia. The family moved to Vancouver and George to new research interests.

Water was an important theme in George's life. At Oxford he rowed both sculls and eights. He held the Hertford College senior sculls trophy for four years. He was a founding member of the Thorney Island Sailing Club winning Best Helmsman in 1946. He spent five years on naval vessels and in aircraft flying over, and on two occasions into, water. He later became an avid scuba diver. George received a Big Block from the UBC Men's Athletic Committee for service to men's athletics and the UBC Sailing Club.

From 1958 to 1978, George was Director of the UBC Institute of Oceanography. He retired as Director in 1979, continuing, as an Honorary Professor, to teach. In 1982 George became a Professor Emeritus. George preferred field work to the laboratory. The early part of his oceanographic research focused on water circulation in the fjords of B.C., Chile, and New Zealand. This work contributed to the coastal fishing industry. After a visit to Tahiti in 1961, George developed a second research interest in the previously little studied topic of water circulation in coral reefs and lagoons. From 1976 to 1986, he collaborated with members of the Australian Institute of Marine Science on research on the Great Barrier Reef. George also served as a visiting scientist at Section d'Océanographie ORSTOM Noumea and New Zealand Oceanographic Institute. During this time George and Lilian visited over 128 islands in three oceans.

George's contributions to teaching physical oceanography included numerous articles on fjord and coral reef research. His texts on *Descriptive Physical Oceanography* and *Introductory Dynamical Oceanography* (with Stephen Pond) are still being used by students. The latest edition of *Descriptive Physical Oceanography*, updated by William Emery and Lynne Talley, will be published this year.

George was a member of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada from 1963-1972 and Canadian representative and Chair of the International Tsunami Committee from 1968-1975. He was a member of many committees including the National Research Council, B.C. Research Council, International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics, UNESCO Marine Science Curricula Committee, Vice-President American Society of Limnology & Oceanography, President B.C. Academy of Sciences, and member the Pacific Science Congress.

George was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1959), Honorary Life Member Vancouver Aquarium Association (1961), a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (1965), and Member of the National Geographic Society (1965). In 1976 he was recognized as one the "Pioneers of Physical Oceanography". He was honored with the Tully Medal from the Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (1987). Other distinctions included the Canadian Centennial Medal (1967) and Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal (1977) in recognition of service to Canada. In 1980 Royal Roads Military College awarded George an Honorary Doctor of Military Science.

After acquiring his Private Pilot License in 1968, George spent many hours as "Pilot in Command" flying the skies with Lilian by his side. Following Mum's death Dad established two scholarships in her honor at St. Hilda's College Oxford, and Crofton House Girls School in Vancouver. George and Lilian spent 60 years together as students, husband and wife, and mother and father to Ann and Andrew. We will miss them and hope they are together again.

With sincere thanks and best wishes to all of you who shared George and Lilian's life.