George L. 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 honours, 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 infrared radiation to detect aircraft at night. In 1938 he was posted to the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnbourgh 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. 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. After the war, George with his family moved to Canada, joining the UBC Physics Department in 1947, where he hoped to continue his research in low-temperature physics, interrupted by the war. "We don't do that here - that's for Toronto", said Gordon Shrum, then head of UBC Physics, as he steered George towards oceanography. The family moved to Vancouver and George to new research interests.

He directed the Institute of Oceanography at UBC for many years and was a major player in the development of ocean sciences in western Canada. Many who took his courses, went to sea with him or studied under his direction will remember him as a kind, no-nonsense, supremely organized and dedicated scientist, with a taste for exotic exploration. Following a year learning the rudiments of this new discipline at Scripps, he returned to UBC and joined the newly created Institute of Oceanography, launching a systematic study of BC's coastal fjords and building up the academic infrastructure which would eventually mature into a first rate interdisciplinary institution. Pickard's books on *Descriptive Physical Oceanography* and (with Steve Pond) on *Introductory Dynamic Oceanography* introduced a whole generation of students to the physics of the oceans. The latest edition of *Descriptive Physical Oceanography*, updated by William Emery and Lynne Talley, will be published this year.

Through his publications and his role as Director of the Institute of Oceanography, George had a major impact on understanding of the biology of British Columbia inlets and fjords. His 1961 and 1963 single-author publications on oceanographic features of British Columbia inlets and the appearance in 1963 of the first edition of *Descriptive Physical Oceanography*, which might be called "the beginner's guide to physical oceanography", gave biologists a lucid account of what kind of processes could be governing biological production in the sea and provided a base upon

which biological programs were developed and data interpreted. The establishment and continued success and interactions of the multidisciplinary faculty in the Institute of Oceanography were, in major part, a result of his leadership. The IOUBC coffee room in one of the old World War II huts on West Mall was the site of numerous discussions among students, faculty and staff that led to development of multidisciplinary projects. George's detailed surveys of the waters of BC fjords provide an essential base line for assessing the progress of climate change.

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 costal 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'Oceanographie ORSTOM Noumea and New Zealand Oceanographic Institute. During this time George and Lilian visited over 128 islands in three oceans.

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 Geo-physics, 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 honoured 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 honour 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.

Published in the Alumni Newsletter
The University of British Columbia
Number 10, 2007
Page 16-17