

Memorial to Arthur A. Meyerhoff

1928–1994

ARTHUR J. BOUCOT

Department of Zoology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon 97331

Arthur A. (Art) Meyerhoff was a “whiz kid” from day one! Born into a geological family (his father, Howard Meyerhoff, was a longtime professor of geology at Smith College and an expert on Caribbean geology), it was predestined that Art would end up in geology. His father provided Art with lots of field experience beginning at a very early age, at varied locales within the United States, and the Caribbean. Art graduated from Yale University, cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa at age 19, and became a brash young graduate student surrounded by far older returning veterans at Harvard, working under the stern gaze of Preston Cloud. He then moved on to Stanford where he wrote a thesis, under Konrad (Konnie) Krauskopf (geology) and Richard Holm (biology), on the paleobotanical applications of leaf venation in beeches, Betulaceae. It was a far cry from his studies in global tectonics, but it provided excellent general background and was useful in evaluating paleontological information needed for helping to solve other questions. He began carrying out his own field work, largely aimed at studying economic geologic problems. He began in Argentina and moved on to various parts of the world, eventually becoming a savvy, experienced geologist with the global structural-stratigraphic, biostratigraphic background that served him well in the many difficult interpretive areas where he ultimately worked.



Art's expertise eventually landed him in the energy area, where he became a specialist capable of reliably estimating energy reserves for oil, gas, and coal. These abilities served him well as an employee of Standard Oil for 10 years, as publications manager for the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and as a private consultant called on by both government and industry in many capacities. He was highly regarded in the industry and was called on by both the Soviet government and by our own intelligence community to carry out energy surveys. Art was, however, far more than a very successful consultant in the energy business.

Art had an incurable interest in basic geology that is hard to underestimate. It was immediately obvious to his fellow graduate students during his year at Harvard in terms of the sharp questioning to which he subjected Assistant Professor Cloud, then engaged in his first year of teaching soft-rock geology at a prestigious institution. Art's ever-widening, global field experience was assisted by his real capabilities for picking up languages as he went, beginning with Spanish learned while accompanying his father in Puerto Rico. He had an excellent working knowledge of the Romance and Germanic languages, as well as Russian. A few years before his death, confined to a hospital bed for some time by the disease that eventually killed him, Art escaped boredom by teaching himself Chinese. This was put to use during his last few years, allowing him to translate papers used in several major projects (including his pet, surge tectonics), and enabling him to begin considering that ever-elusive geological problem: the history and mechanisms responsible for the present condition of the Earth's crust.

Art became best known for his anti-plate-tectonics stance. His views, documented in great depth by means of his vast familiarity with the literature on global geology, a phenomenal

memory for detail, and his firsthand field experience of global geology, shared by few in this century, made him a formidable advocate. His many antagonists, chiefly geophysicists and structural geologists, found him to be a monumental "problem" that refused to go away. His gift for raising embarrassing questions to the simplistic generalizations of his opponents verged on the maddening, as suggested by their commonly almost intemperate responses. His surge tectonic syntheses, partly published, were unfortunately cut off too soon by his early death. One suspects that geophysicists, geochemists, and structural geologists would have had a nightmare trying to cope with the many probing questions raised by his thoughts, added to his persistence in refusing to let anyone get away with inadequate responses.

Since his death in September 1994, Art has been honored by the establishment of an AAPG Foundation grant named after him; the fund will eventually result in a \$1000 grant given annually to one or two graduate students interested in geological work applicable to regional or global tectonics. Art is also remembered by a South Dakota School of Mines Foundation Ivanhoe-Meyerhoff Scholarship. These student awards made in his honor would have greatly pleased Art, concerned as he was with the teaching of geology and graduate education. Art spent more time lecturing to students both as a visiting lecturer and as a professor than many realized. He was a visiting professor in the Department of Geology, Oklahoma State University at Stillwater, during 1975–1977, and in the Department of Geology, University of Calgary, during 1978. He also delivered guest lectures at many institutions during the past 25 years. He received his share of recognition from various scientific organizations, belonged to a large number of geological societies in the United States and overseas, and had a significant professional impact during his 10-year stint at the AAPG as publications manager, a post that included responsibility for the AAPG *Bulletin*, among other things.

During my own acquaintance with Art, beginning in Preston Cloud's 1947 biostratigraphy course at Harvard and continuing through our final telephone conversations during the summer of 1994, I always found him wholly excited about the scientific questions that concerned us both. He was enthusiastic and eager to consider varied conclusions bearing on the questions. Admittedly, he did enjoy playing the role of iconoclast, but it was always in an entirely reasonable, well-informed, civilized manner enlivened by his innate enthusiasm for science. My final letter from him in August 1994 found him completely composed, accepting the inevitable with grace. He very responsibly had placed his professional affairs in excellent order, and arranged for the completion of manuscripts that were nearly finished. He was a real professional, whose death is a loss for all of us.

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