NECROLOGY

Francis Parker Shepard
1897-1985
Father of Marine Geology

For many decades the Nestor of coastal and shelf sedimentology at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California, Fran Shepard guided countless theses and research projects. His imagination and inspiration led him into a wide field of coastal and ocean-floor studies, so that in a memorial (prepared for the *Bulletin of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists*, v. 70/3, 1986, by a number of his former students) he was described as "the father of marine geology."

Earning degrees at Harvard and Chicago, he taught at the University of Illinois for 20 years, where he early became aware of the importance of eustatic changes in sea level in the Midwest upper Paleozoic, very probably triggered by the Permocarboniferous glaciation in Gondwanaland. (I recall we had quite a correspondence on this subject 40 years ago.) It was after settling in La Jolla that he really got to work on the modern continental shelf, about which extraordinarily little was known. The textbook story about sediment grain-sizes decreasing as one went seawards was certainly wrong. How he loved knocking down old demagogues! He quickly saw through the absurdity of Douglas Johnson's coasts of emergence and submergence, inasmuch as mean sea level is constantly fluctuating. "The first thing you should do is burn your copy of Johnson's textbook" he advised one young geologist. He was a great believer in going and seeing. This was nowhere more apparent than in his exploration of submarine canyons. Our views differed on many things, from the origin of canyons to the wiggles of the Holocene eustatic curve, but Fran was always helpful, courteous and patient.

His professional papers were numerous, but he also reached a broader public through his textbook *Submarine Geology* (1948), and a series of more popular works. Blind in his last years, he was aided by his younger colleague Gerald Kuhn in preparing a volume *Sea Cliffs, Beaches and Coastal Valleys of San Diego* (1985) and lastly, *Importance of Phreatic Volcanism in Producing Abnormal Weather Changes* (1986).

Rhodes W. Fairbridge
New York, New York