

Orville Tyler Magoon (1928–2016)

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IN MEMORIAM



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Orville Tyler Magoon (1928–2016)



Orville T. Magoon was considered to be one of the pioneers for coastal management and engineering.

On March 19, in Santa Barbara, California, Orville Tyler Magoon passed away surrounded by his wife, Karen, and children. He was 87. Mr. Magoon was a native of Hawaii who was born July 18, 1928. His life was one dedicated to our planet and its coastal treasures and to the people who surrounded him.

Following his graduation from Punahou School class of 1946, Orville Magoon received his undergraduate degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Hawaii in 1951 and an M.S. degree in Civil Engineering from Stanford University in 1952. After thirty years of experience in the field of coastal planning, design, construction, and rehabilitation of coastal structures, Mr. Magoon retired as Chief of the Coastal Engineering Branch of the Planning Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, South Pacific Division, in July 1983. He continued to be active in coastal zone management and coastal engineering through lectures at universities and symposia and through his writing. Orville balanced his time between coastal engineering and managing Guenoc Winery and Guenoc Ranch in California where he produced award-winning wines, including the Genevieve Chardonnay named for Orville's mother and which was honored in *The Wine Spectator*.

After his retirement from the Army Corps of Engineers in 1983 as a coastal engineer, he continued to dedicate his life to finding solutions to coastal issues, all the time managing the family estate winery, called Guenoc, in Lake and Napa Counties, once owned by Lillie Langtry, British actress and

legend. In 2004 he retired from Guenoc to San Francisco with his wife, Karen. There he continued to work for better understanding of our beaches and coastal structures.

During his years of government service, Orville Magoon served on several committees and panels, including the Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses (PIANC) Committee on Waves, on a number of National Aeronautics and Space Administration panels involved with remote sensing and satellite imagery of coastlines and also the National Academy of Engineering.

Orville served as President of the Coastal Zone Foundation as well as Vice Chair of the Coastal Engineering Research Council for forty years and still had time to serve as President of the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association for ten years. In 1978 a series of Coastal Zone conferences was initiated by Orville, seeking solutions to coastal issues and held biannually, hosting up to 1500 people. He continued to organize international, focused conferences on topics such as coastal structures, Coastlines of the World, Sand Rights, California and the World Ocean, and Ocean Wave Measurement and Analysis, resulting in over sixty volumes of written proceedings.

Orville Magoon received several national and international awards during his career including the Jim Purpura National Coastal Engineering Award from FSBPA and the Murrough P. O'Brien Award from ASBPA. He also received the William Wisely, Arthur M. Wellington Prize, International Coastal Engineering Award, and the Moffat-Nichol Awards from ASCE in recognition of his service to the coastal engineering and coastal zone management. His contributions to the profession were recognized with Distinguished Member of ASCE and Honorary Member of JSCE. Recognizing his devotion to students, Texas A&M University established the Orville T. Magoon Scholarship in 2003, which is given annually to one or more students who exhibit a strong interest in the field of coastal engineering and sustainability.

In recognition of his eminence in his profession, the American Society of Civil Engineers created the Orville T. Magoon Sustainable Coasts Award in 2014, which is given annually. This award is given to a leader who promotes the concept of sustainability in coastal engineering research, design, construction, and management.

He is recognized by his friends and colleagues as a tireless mentor, leader, and friend to everyone. Orville loved gathering mushrooms, loved nature and animals, and cats were drawn to him, as well as anyone who ever met him.

Orville Magoon is survived by his brother Eaton Harry Huha "Bob" Magoon, children Melissa and Marshall (and their spouses Brian and Jena), children Mary and Matthew, grandson Spencer, great-grandson Bradley, and Orville's wife Karen, her children Aaron and Bridget, Aaron's spouse Yvonne, and grandchildren, Uli, Matti, and Mori.

Two memorial celebrations of Orville's life are planned, the first on Sunday, May 1, at 2 pm at the Unitarian Universalist church at 1187 Franklin in San Francisco, and the second on Saturday, June 18, at 1 pm at the Bay Club Santa Clara, 3250 Central Expressway, Santa Clara. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Orville T. Magoon Sustainable Coasts Award in c/o American Society of Civil Engineers, ATTN: Jane Alspach, 1801 Alexander Bell Drive, Reston, VA 20191; please mark the contribution for Permanently Restricted Fund.

Remembering Orville T. Magoon: A World Leader in Coastal Management, Education, and Engineering

This April marks the 70th anniversary of the destructive tsunami that struck Hawaii in 1946, resulting from an earthquake in the Aleutian Islands, Alaska. Orville was 17-years-old, living on the beach near Diamond Head then, and this event fascinated him and started him on a lifetime of interest and study of tsunamis and other forces acting on coasts.

My recollection of first meeting Orville was in the early 1970s at the Corps' Coastal Engineering Center when it was at Delcarlia, NW Washington, D.C., before CERC was moved to Ft. Belvoir, Virginia. I was fresh from graduate school and being commissioned as a Corps of Engineers 2nd Lt. after being drafted. I was just starting my career at CERC as a research coastal geologist in David Duane's Geology Branch. Orville was a coastal engineer with the Corps' San Francisco District and was detailed to CERC as an advisor to the Director. I'm not sure what his specific duties were or how long he was at CERC, but it was clear to me that Orville was well respected for his expertise in coastal engineering and design.

Orville was at CERC only a short while and then returned to San Francisco, eventually moving to the Corps' North Pacific Division office. CERC relocated to new facilities at Ft. Belvoir around 1978, and over the years, I would occasionally see Orville at review meetings of the Coastal Engineering Research Board when we would report status of our projects. In 1983, when the decision was made to move CERC south to Vicksburg, Mississippi, and merge with the Water Ways Experiment Station, I decided not to relocate and instead accepted a position with the U.S. Geological Survey/Office of Marine Geology in Reston, Virginia.

My next connection with Orville was in his organizing, starting in 1984, of the Coastal Zone conferences, bringing together scientists, engineers, managers, and students. These conferences were sponsored by the Coastal Zone Foundation that Orville founded in 1984. My initial involvement was presenting papers and suggesting session topics, but eventually when I became a project leader in the late 80s and director of the Survey's Coastal and Marine Geology Program from 1996 to 2000, I also supported several CZ conferences with grant funds. I found the CZ conferences to be among the best in bringing together coastal professions from around the world.

I always looked forward to attending CZ organizing committee meetings led by Orville. When the business of organizing the conference was done, he would bring out an assortment of his excellent Guenoc wines. The Coastal Zone conferences were

Orville's vision of bringing together the various coastal disciplines from around the world and present the information in ways that were meaningful and useful to coastal managers, and I always thought the conferences were successful in combining talks, field trips, and opportunities to learn and establish partnerships. My research focus was on coastal processes, sand inventory and sediment movement along coastal and nearshore regions, and climate change impacts such as sea level rise and storm effects. Orville had similar interests, and we exchanged papers, review comments, and ideas over the years.

As a trained engineer, Orville had questions on geology and longer-term thinking of how coasts evolve, how coral reefs contribute to carbonate sand beaches, and the upper limits of sea-level rise with continued global warming. Orville was always positive in his outlook and willingness to learn new information. Orville was passionate about the need to preserve coasts and resources (*e.g.*, wetlands, coral reefs) in sustainable ways well before others became aware of the need to do. As the science of global warming and climate change began to mature in the 1990s and 2000s and we understood it was a reality caused by human activities, Orville was enthusiastic about including impacts of climate change in engineering design and management. As one example, this resulted in a paper authored by Orville, myself, and others in 2004 that was presented at the International Coastal Engineering Conference in Portugal on the economic impacts of human activities on U.S. coasts.

This paper was the result of our discussions and sharing ideas the year before, including a memorable visit in 2003 to the Langtry Estate in Middletown, California. My wife Rebecca and I were fortunate to spend several days enjoying the hospitality of Orville and his wife Karen, going to hilltops in his 22 thousand acre vineyard estate, with Orville driving the rutted roads in an old Chevy carryall, him dressed in faded jeans and heavy work boots, to enjoy sunsets and of course a sampling of fine Guenoc wines. And, of course, also getting lessons from Orville on the local geology and microclimates of the region and their importance to growing the best grapes.

Over the next decade, Orville and I remained colleagues and friends. I often visited him and Karen when in San Francisco for AGU conferences or on business trips to the USGS center in Santa Cruz. I was especially pleased and grateful in 2009 to learn from Orville and Billy Edge that I was elected to receive the Coastal Zone Foundation Career Achievement Award at an ASCE conference in St Johns, Newfoundland. In 2010, just as I was retiring from USGS in Woods Hole, MA, I was asked to serve on the organizing committee with Orville, Nabil Ismail, and others for the 1st Coastal Management of Deltas and Low Land Coastlines to be held in Alexandria, Egypt, in March 2010. The conference was a total success, resulting in a published proceedings volume of papers presented. Following the conference, Orville, Karen, Lesley Ewing, and I spent a week travelling south to Cairo, tour sites, and the High Aswan Dam *via* trains, Nile River cruises, and airplanes.

Later, in 2013, I was spending winter months in Kailua, Hawaii, and was able to meet up and enjoy a dinner with Orville and Karen in Honolulu on one of their visits back to Orville's favorite island. Hawaii is where he was born and

started his keen interest and enthusiasm for coasts, sandy beaches, and waves and currents at the triple- point of land-ocean-atmosphere interaction.

Orville Magoon, by all measures, was indeed an authority and world leader in the coastal profession, but as important, he was a wise and generous and decent man, always willing to

share and discuss ideas with others. Orville was a valued friend whom I will remember with many memories from over the past 45 years.

S. Jeffress Williams
North Falmouth, Massachusetts, U.S.A.



S. Jeffress Williams (left) and Orville T. Magoon (right) sitting along the High Aswan Dam (Egypt) in March 2010.