

# Francis Parker Shepard Biography



Francis Parker Shepard was born in Brookline, Massachusetts on May 10, 1897, to Thomas Hill and Edna (Parker) Shepard. Shepard's father was President of Shepard Steamship Line and Shepard-Morse Lumber companies. While growing up, Shepard and sister Katherine spent many hours on the family yacht sailing the New England coast. Francis Shepard married Elizabeth

Buchner, a classmate of his sister, on June 12, 1920. They had two sons, Thomas Hill II, and Anthony Lee (Tim). Elizabeth Shepard died on September 7, 1984. Shepard married Irene Orosis in 1985, and he passed away on April 25, 1985.

Shepard received his bachelor's degree in geology in 1919 from Harvard University and completed his doctoral dissertation entitled "Structure and Stratigraphy of Rocky Mountain Trench from Gateway to Golden" at the University of Chicago earning his degree in 1922. His interest in geology was influenced by Reginald A. Daly of Harvard and Rollin T. Chamberlain and Rollin D. Salisbury of University of Chicago.

Shepard began his career at the University of Illinois as a geology instructor in 1922 and served as professor of geology from 1939-1946. The focus of Shepard's work at the University of Illinois was structural geology. He applied modern sedimentation study techniques to the environmental conditions under which the ancient marine strata covering most of the continents were laid down. He discovered a whole new world during his summer vacations yachting off the New England coast. He began sea-floor studies and developed an interest in marine geology. Shepard said, "...in spite of being at the University of Illinois, a long way from the ocean, I became the first geologist who took up marine geology as his main scientific interest." Shepard furthered his knowledge of marine geology by accompanying cruises of U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey ships. His interest in the canyons of the seafloor developed from examination of charts, but his knowledge was soon supplemented by his own field work. Drawn by his interests in submarine geology and ocean canyons, he took a sabbatical leave from the University of Illinois from 1933 to 1934 to study submarine canyons in southern California. He was affiliated with Scripps Institution of Oceanography in 1937, and he spent his summers at Scripps until 1942 while still on the faculty of the University of Illinois.

Shepard worked for the University of California Division of War Research from 1942-1945 as principal geologist. Through his years at Scripps, Shepard's interests were largely coastal, shoreline, and continental shelf and slope rather than the deep ocean geology. In 1945 he became professor of submarine geology at Scripps Institution. He retired from teaching in 1966 and served as professor emeritus until his death on April 25, 1985.

Shepard's contributions to marine geology include his work as a teacher. While at the University of Illinois he advised two of the leading marine geologists from the United States, Kenneth O. Emery and Robert S. Dietz. Shepard's graduate students at Scripps Institution of Oceanography included Douglas Inman and Joseph Curray. Shepard was a prolific writer who wrote several hundred scientific papers and published the first books in the field of submarine geology. Some of his best known works have become standard texts in the field, *Submarine Geology* (Harper and Row, 1948), *The Earth Beneath the Sea* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), *Our Changing Coastlines* (McGraw-Hill, 1971).

For more than fifty years Shepard was active in many geological organizations. The American Petroleum Institute, representing most of the oil industry, decided to fund a general research program to be conducted by a suitable public organization. Shepard, always searching for research funding with which to support his growing studies and his students, made a strong bid for and received the contract for API 51. API 51 was an interdisciplinary geological study of the

coastal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, investigating the factors and conditions affecting the deposition of sedimentary formations. Shepard directed API 51 from 1951 to 1957. He was president of the International Association of Sedimentologists from 1958-1963. He was a fellow of the Geological Society of America and the Geological Society of London and a member of American Association of Petroleum Geologists, Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, Seismological Society of America, American Geophysical Union, American Association for the Advancement of Science, and Sigma Xi. He was an honorary member of the Natural History Society of Lausanne, Switzerland, and the Netherlands Geological Society.

Shepard received numerous awards and medals for his outstanding contributions to science. He received the Geological Society of London Wollaston Medal (1966), and was honored by his colleagues with the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists Francis P. Shepard Medal for Excellence in Marine Geology, established in 1966. In 1968, Shepard was selected as San Diego's Man of Distinction and in the same year received an honorary doctorate of Science from Beloit University (1968). He also received an honorary doctorate from the University of Southern California (1978). He was the first recipient of the International Association of Sedimentologists Sorby Medal (1978), and he received the Marine Technology Society Award for Ocean Engineering (1983).

Additional biographical information can be found in the following publications:

Curry, Joseph R., Inman, Douglas L. and Edward L. Winterer, "Francis Parker Shepard 1897-1985 Professor of Submarine Geology," University of California In Memoriam, 1986, pp. 278-280.

Curry, Joseph R. "Rock Stars. Francis Parker Shepard, 1897 – 1985," GSA Today, December 2001, pp. 20-21.

Dietz, Robert S. and Kenneth O. Emery, "Portrait Of A Scientist," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratories Collected Reprints, 1971, v. 2, 7p.

Emery, Kenneth O., Dietz, Robert S., Kuhn, Gerald G. and Joseph R. Curry, "Francis Parker Shepard (1897-1985)," American Association Of Petroleum Geologists Bulletin, 1986, v. 70, no. 3, pp. 331-333.

Ludwick, John C., "In memoriam; Francis Parker Shepard," Marine Geology, 1985, v. 69, no. 1-2, pp. v-vii.

Osborne, Robert H., "From Shoreline To Abyss; Contributions In Marine Geology In Honor Of Francis Parker Shepard," Special Publication -Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists, 1991, v. 46, pp. 1-7.