

# In Memoriam

John Dove Isaacs  
28 May 1913—6 June 1980



John Isaacs, a most distinguished colleague, died 6 June 1980 at the age of 67.

As Director of the Marine Life Research Group at Scripps Institution from 1957 to 1975, he was an active participant in CalCOFI. His published contributions to these studies are a matter of record and need no listing here.

His work and reputation extend far beyond the range of our shared activities. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

His contributions to the CalCOFI program, his presentations, and his many comments upon the other

papers at our meetings have been vigorous and perceptive. His insight into all of the fields represented here has been inspiring.

I remember John Isaacs in many ways and for many things, but I believe there is one event that represents his breadth and vision, and indeed, himself, well enough to stand as an introduction to those who did not know him. This is the concept that led him, with Elton Sette, to convene our Symposium on the changing Pacific, held more than 20 years ago, which dealt with the remarkable oceanic events of 1957-58. It was the beginning of much of the work done nowadays in the World Ocean and in climatology.

I would like to quote a little from the introduction to the Symposium.

“By the fall of 1957, the coral ring of Canton Island, in the memory of man ever bleak and dry, was lush with the seedlings of countless tropical trees and vines.

“Two remarkable and unprecedented events gave rise to this transformation, for during 1957 great rafts of sea-borne seeds and heavy rains had visited her barren shores.

“Elsewhere about the Pacific it also was common knowledge that the year had been one of extraordinary climatic events. Hawaii had its first recorded typhoon; the seabird-killing *El Niño* visited the Peruvian Coast; the ice went out of Point Barrow at the earliest time in history; and on the Pacific’s Western rim, the tropical rainy season lingered six weeks beyond its appointed term.” *CalCOFI Reports, Vol. VII, 1960.*

The results of that Symposium have been to make us take longer, broader, and better looks at our problems. Many major programs that are active today have sprung from the concepts engendered at that meeting.

I have cited this work not as John’s greatest accomplishment, which it may not be, but more as a typical product of his mind and energy.

None of us should try to model himself closely upon any particular person. In any case John Isaacs’ wide-ranging paths would be among those hardest to follow. But his imagination, perception, and tremendous breadth and depth of interest, will surely remain in our memory as examples of what constitutes a great scientist and a great man.

Joseph L. Reid