

# Memorial to Raymond Elliott Peck

## 1904–1984

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Raymond Elliott Peck was born May 3, 1904, in Hamilton, Missouri, to Olive Newton Peck and Frank S. Peck. He was educated in Missouri and became an educator *par excellence* as teacher, researcher, and administrator throughout a professional career that spanned 44 years at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

After graduation from high school in Cameron, Missouri, in 1922, Raymond attended Missouri Wesleyan College for two years before transferring to Park College, Parkville, Missouri, where he received the baccalaureate degree in 1926 with a major in psychology. However, an introductory course in geology, taught by professor Merlin C. Findlay the second semester of Raymond's senior year, so fascinated him that he turned down a fellowship to do graduate work in psychology at the University of Chicago in order to study geology at the University of Missouri. He earned a master's degree in geology in 1929, and after two years as assistant geologist in the Missouri State Highway Department, he returned to the University of Missouri as instructor in geology and earned his Ph.D. in 1932. The instructorship was followed by promotion to assistant professor in 1936, associate professor in 1946, professor in 1948, and professor emeritus in 1971.

During World War II, Peck was on active duty in the U.S. Army Air Forces, during part of which time he was a faculty member of the American Army University at Shrivenham, England. He retired as a lieutenant colonel from the Air Force Reserve in 1964.

Dr. Peck's academic administrative appointments included chairman, Department of Geology, 1950–1959; Acting Dean, Graduate School, 1959–1960; Associate Dean, Graduate School, and Dean for Research (4-campus system), 1963–1965; Vice-President for Research and Graduate Studies, 1965–1969; and Special Assistant to the Chancellor, University of Missouri–St. Louis, 1969–1970. During the administrative period he was consultant to Texas Technological College on graduate programs and research. As Dean and Vice-President for Research he effectively led, 1963–1966, in the efforts to establish the Space Science Research Center (now the Dalton Research Center) on the University of Missouri Campus for the purpose of “making Missouri pre-eminent in selected areas of space technology”; and the Sinclair Comparative Medicine Research Farm for the Study of Chronic Disease and Aging which provides for interdisciplinary and intercampus cooperative research in aging.

In nonacademic roles, Dr. Peck was assistant geologist, Missouri State Highway Department, 1929–1930; contract geologist, Shell Oil Company, summers, 1957–1958; geologist (W.A.E.), U.S. Geological Survey, 1951–1979; member of Missouri Governor's Science Advisory Committee, 1962–1970; member of Editorial Board, *Micropaleontology*.

1955–1969; program chairman, Geological Society of America Annual Meetings, 1958 and 1966; and co-editor (SEPM) *Journal of Paleontology*, 1970–1974. In the last position, according to co-editor Dr. Raymond Ethington, “Dr. Peck’s experience in paleontology and his range of contacts in industry, academia, and public service were of immeasurable help in the evaluation of manuscripts, selection of reviewers, and final decisions on publications.”

As a teacher, Dr. Peck was admired and respected by his students and colleagues alike for his devotion to precision, detail, unselfishness, fairness, and knowledge of and enthusiasm for the many facets of geology. In commenting on his student relationship with Dr. Peck, Dr. William Craig said, “I always felt we were colleagues and not professor and student.” Another student, now a successful petroleum geologist, rated Dr. Peck as a nine or ten on a scale of one to ten as a teacher and commented, “He was tough, but thorough and fair, as well as being a fine gentleman.” A peer graduate student described Peck as “quintessentially a gentleman, a scientist, and a warm human being.” Peck’s physical ability to cover ground in the field and his ability to help students to see and solve field problems were legendary among students. These qualities, along with his administrative talents, contributed tremendously to the growth in prominence of the University of Missouri Geology Field Camp in the Wind River Mountains in Wyoming during his directorship from 1946 through 1960.

Dr. Peck’s graduate research introduced him to Charophyta, the study of which led to a concurrent interest in Mesozoic nonmarine Ostracoda. Continued research gained for him international recognition as an expert on both these fossil groups and microcrinoids. His publications on microfossils are noteworthy for the clarity in detail of the illustrations of specimens, a result of the exceptional artistic ability of his wife to retouch the photographs. Dr. Peck’s intense interest in and devotion to research are well described by former student and co-worker on the Charophyta who said, “Dr. Peck had a continued desire to become a more complete scholar in relation to those things on which he had already become an authority.” Peck’s attention to research and teaching did not stop with his retirement in 1970. Thereafter, he devoted much time to furthering his knowledge of Mesozoic microfauna and flora and to preparing his extensive collections for use by future teachers, researchers, and students.

Dr. Peck served vigorously on many college and university committees to which he was appointed by administrators or elected by colleagues. One meritorious contribution was his leadership and unflagging effort toward establishing an exemplary retirement and medical benefit program for faculty and staff of the University of Missouri.

Raymond participated in many professional societies. He was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America (Councillor, 1963–1966), a Fellow of the Paleontological Society of America, a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, a member of the Society of Economic Geologists, a member of the Society of Economic Paleontologists and Mineralogists (secretary-treasurer, 1958–1959), a member of the Association of Missouri Geologists (president, 1956–1957), and a member of the Société Géologique de France.

The honor of respect and gratitude from his students is exemplified by the Peck Prize Fellowship which was established by a former student to be given each year to a graduating senior for graduate work in geology. Additional honors include election to the Society of Sigma Xi; being awarded a Fulbright Research Scholarship to the University of Paris, France, 1950–1951; and receiving the Distinguished Faculty Award from the Alumni Association, University of Missouri, 1961. He was in *Who’s Who in America* since 1949 and *American Men and Women in Science* since 1968.

Dr. Peck is survived by his devoted wife and companion, Vaona Hedrick Peck. This selfless man, teacher, scholar, researcher, and administrator is greatly missed by his many students, friends, and fellow scientists. His many contributions to geology and geologists will be a lasting monument to his memory.

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