

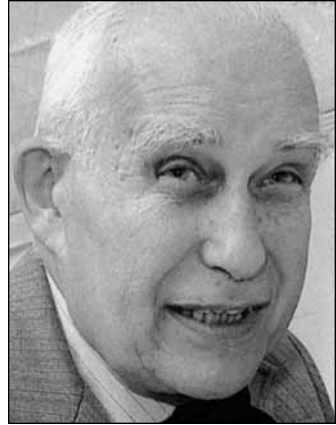
Memorial to Paul Tasch 1910–2001

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Paul Tasch, scientist, scholar, philosopher, and historian, was born November 28, 1910, in New York City and received his primary education there. He died at the age of 90 on July 13, 2001, in Wichita, Kansas. He was a World War II veteran who served in the U.S. Army Signal Corp.

After the war, Paul attended the City College of New York, where he received his B.S. degree (cum laude) in 1948. He went on to earn his M.S. degree from Pennsylvania State University in 1950, and a Ph.D. at the State University of Iowa in 1952. His dissertation, titled “Causes and Paleocological Significance of Dwarfed Fossil Marine Invertebrates,” was based mainly on his field studies of the Dry Shale (Virgilian, Pennsylvanian), conducted while serving as a geological assistant at the Kansas Geological Survey in the fall of 1950.



His first teaching position was as an instructor at the University of Connecticut, until he obtained an assistant professorship the next year in 1953 at North Dakota Agriculture College. In 1954 he was offered an associate professorship at Moorhead State University, and in 1955 he joined the faculty at Wichita State University (then the Municipal University of Wichita) as a full professor. In 1977 he was made an Endowment Association Distinguished Professor of the Natural Sciences at Wichita State University. He retired in 1982 and was granted emeritus status.

Paul explored and probed into new areas—not always with the support and encouragement of his colleagues; nor were his new and novel ideas always accepted. He was an original thinker; an idea man who had an insatiable appetite for knowledge. He published 150 scientific articles and abstracts on a variety of subjects, but most were concerned with some aspect of paleontology. He contributed to the *Treatise on Invertebrate Paleontology* and the *Handbook of Paleontological Techniques* and was an expert on the bivalved crustacean conchostracans (clam shrimps). He channeled his curiosity into three main areas: geomicrobiology of salt bacteria (possible fossil bacteria preserved in Permian salt); continental drift, as evidenced by the distribution of clam shrimp in the southern hemisphere; and history of geology, especially contributions by Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin. His ability to attract outside funding showed that his peers recognized his authority on paleontological subjects.

Paul spent nearly two decades working in Antarctica and the Southern Hemisphere collecting conchostracans and analyzing their distribution to substantiate continental drift. This work resulted in the monograph *Fossil Conchostraca of the Southern Hemisphere: Systematics, Biostratigraphy and Dispersal*.

He had a certain rapport with his students and taught them by example and encouraged them to think of problems and their solutions. He imparted to his students how to make geologic inferences and to be intuitive and daring in scientific thinking. This philosophy was best expressed when he said, “In studying nature, there are no set boundaries to work by. One question leads to another, which leads to another and so on. If you touch the world anywhere, and

study it, there's no way you can stop. The information available is infinite." His widely used textbook, *Paleobiology of the Invertebrates*, published in 1973 (second edition in 1980), was a thorough compendium of basic knowledge in paleontology and imparted the important principles on the subject.

Paul was a Fellow of the Paleontological Society, Geological Society of America, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Geological Society of India, Geological Society of London, and Sigma Xi. He was a member of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, Society for Sedimentary Geology (SEPM), Kansas Academy of Science, Society of Systematic Taxonomy, Society for the Study of Evolution, and History of Science Society. He was widely traveled, served as an officer of several professional organizations, served on numerous university committees, and was active in community affairs and the Unitarian Universalist Church. His was honored with the U.S. Congressional Antarctic Service Medal (1970), a peak in Antarctica's Crary Mountains was named for him (1977), and the Tasch Paleontological Laboratory at WSU was dedicated in his name in 1985. In 1982 former students, friends, and colleagues established an award in his name, to be given each year to an outstanding WSU student in paleontology.

At the dedication of his laboratory in 1985 on his 75th birthday, Paul noted that his colleagues, friends, and students were "...curious as to why I devoted decades to the global study of an apparently insignificant creature, the bivalved crustacean conchostracan." In his raspy voice, he explained "...every object in the world is itself a world and contains an inexhaustible amount of information—a leaf, a star, a living cell, a rock, a grain of sand, or a clam shrimp—each an intriguing world to explore..." And Paul lived by that creed.

Paul is survived by his brother, Fred, of Roseland, Florida. He was preceded in death in 1997 by his devoted and caring wife, Ruth. They had no children. Paul, with his inquisitiveness, imagination, and creativity, is missed by all who knew him.

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