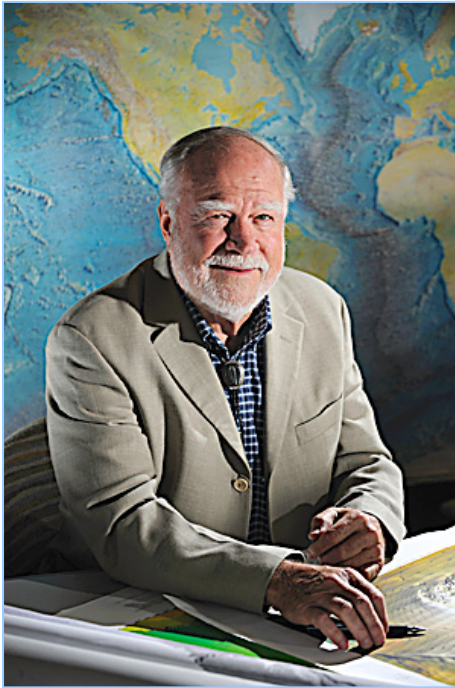




Special Announcement – July 9, 2008

James Robert Woolsey



We are very sad to announce the sudden passing of James Robert Woolsey--a beloved leader and friend of the Society. It was through his efforts that the International Marine Minerals Society was first incorporated 1989 in the State of Mississippi, where its first Executive Board was formalized and the first Society newsletter was produced and distributed worldwide. His contributions and support of the Society remained steadfast and substantial ever since this beginning. As of last week Bob had finalized the organization of a special underwater technology session for the upcoming Underwater Mining Institute this Fall in Mississippi. We would like to share with you an early draft of his obituary, below. Bob was a good professional and personal friend to many of us in the Society, and he will be missed very much.

Oxford, Mississippi - **James Robert Woolsey**, 72, director of the Mississippi Minerals Resources Institute at the University of Mississippi, died Wednesday (July 9) in an auto accident in Batesville.

A renowned geologist and expert in undersea mineral resources, Woolsey led efforts to establish a gas hydrate monitoring station on the floor of the Gulf of Mexico. The Savannah, Ga., native had served as MMRI director since 1982 and also was director of the university's Center for Marine Resources and Environmental Technology, and Seabed Technology Research Center.

"Bob Woolsey was an exceptional researcher and administrator, and his vision helped focus MMRI's mission and attract support from governments and private industry," UM Chancellor Robert Khayat said. "He brought together the best minds in the world to explore Mississippi's mineral resources, and his work to develop those resources responsibly will benefit the people of this state for generations."

Woolsey's research has included projects to develop better underwater drills, search for mineral resources on the ocean floor and develop oil and gas reserves. His primary work over the past decade has involved studies of gas hydrates, formed when hydrocarbon gases blend with seawater and freeze beneath the sea floor, with the goal to develop them as a major energy source.

"Dr. Woolsey was a bright and enthusiastic researcher," U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran said. "His tireless work on behalf of Mississippi Minerals Resources Institute and the Department of Interior brought notoriety to the University of Mississippi. He will be missed by the scientific community and the Ole Miss family, but his legacy and work will be enduring reminders of his contributions to our state and nation."

Woolsey helped organize an international consortium of scientists and engineers to study hydrates in the Gulf of Mexico and hosted a conference on the work at Ole Miss. More recently, he helped guide efforts to produce biodiesel from cooking oil and other plant sources to power MMRI's equipment and vehicles.

"He had an extraordinary ability in bringing people together to address important problems," said Alice Clark, UM vice chancellor for research and sponsored programs. "It was obvious to all who knew him that he loved his work and the people he worked with. He was a delightful man who will be deeply missed."

In an era when most geologists have become specialists, Woolsey's broad range of expertise allowed him to work on a diverse range of projects, said Terry Panhorst, UM assistant professor of geology and geological engineering who worked with Woolsey since 1996.

"He was an old-style geologist, the kind that is hard to find these days," Panhorst said. "His experiences took him around the world, and because of his broad range of expertise, he could talk with anybody."

He was an ASW Patrol Plane Commander and test pilot for the U.S. Navy Reserve, where he worked primarily in anti-submarine warfare. A 1959 graduate of Mississippi State University, Woolsey studied ocean science and engineering at the U.S. Navy Postgraduate School and earned his doctorate in geology in 1977 from the University of Georgia. There, he met and roomed with fellow graduate student Jesse Hunt, and they maintained a friendship for more than 40 years as their careers took parallel paths.

Hunt, a geologist in the Resource Studies Unit of the U.S. Department of the Interior's Minerals Management Service in New Orleans, was the contract inspector for the sea floor observatory Woolsey helped develop to study hydrate deposits about 100 miles south of the Mississippi coast.

"He was an incredible person," Hunt said. "There wasn't anything he couldn't do. I've never met anyone more knowledgeable and flexible than Bob. If there was a specialty

welding job that nobody else could handle, Bob would put on the welding gloves and do it himself."

Before joining the UM faculty as an assistant professor of geology and geological engineering in 1980, he worked as a contractor for private industry and the United Nations, specializing in marine mineral resources and related environmental engineering projects. His work focused on alluvial tin, gold and diamond dredge mining in Southeast Asia and South America, and on industrial minerals in the Mediterranean Sea and South Pacific Ocean and in Africa.

Woolsey often entertained friends and colleagues with stories of work in the jungles of Africa and South America. Friends marveled at his ability to converse with people from all walks of life, said Panhorst, who accompanied Woolsey on a research trip to Belize in 2005. "He was as comfortable sitting on the front porch of a house in Belize chatting with people as he was in a meeting here on campus or in Washington, D.C.," Panhorst said.

Woolsey was an Eagle Scout, a Mason and a member of Oxford-University United Methodist Church.

Survivors include his wife, Maxine Woolsey of Oxford; two daughters, Deirdre Ellis of Sterling, Va., and Emily Woolsey of Oxford; five sons, Nathan Woolsey of Milton, Fla., Ben Woolsey of Kailua, Hawaii, Stephen Woolsey of Pittsburgh, and Max Woolsey and Joe Woolsey, both Oxford; and four grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, James Robert and Virginia Woolsey, and a brother, David Woolsey.

Visitation is set for noon-2 p.m. Monday (July 14) in Wesley Hall at Oxford-University United Methodist Church. A memorial service follows at 2 p.m. at the church, with the Rev. Warren Black and the Rev. Claire Dobbs officiating. Contributions may be made to the J.R. Woolsey Geology and Geological Engineering Memorial Scholarship, c/o University of Mississippi Foundation, P.O. Box 249, University, MS 38677.

