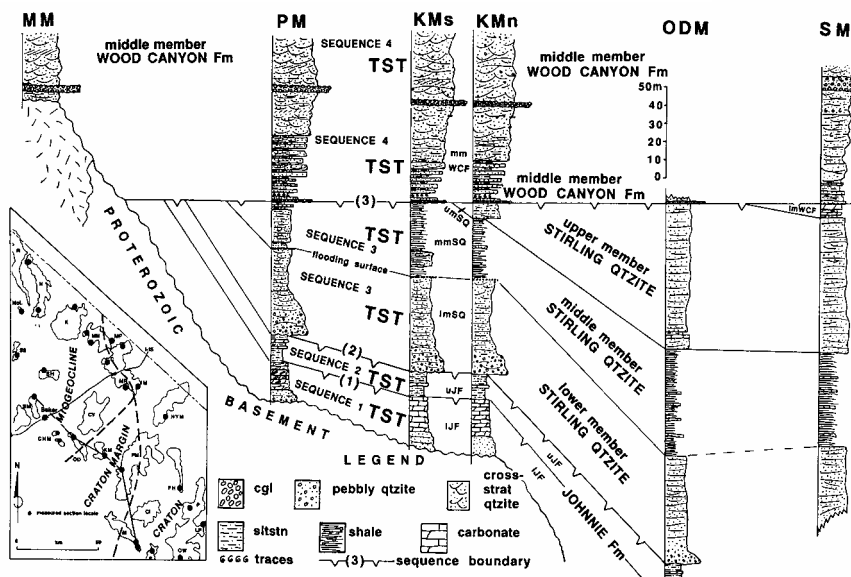


# Pacific Sedimentologist



Sequence stratigraphic panel, hung on disconformity 3, from Soda Mountains (SM) southward to Marble Mountains (MM), showing importance and uniqueness of craton-margin setting. PM = Providence Mountains, KMs = Kelso Mountains (south), KMn = Kelso Mountains (north), ODM = Old Dad Mountains (from Bahde, J., Barretta, C., Cederstrand, L., Flaughner, M., Heller, R., Irwin, M., Swartz, C., Traub, S., Cooper, J., and Fedo, C., in Girty, G. H., Hanson, R. E., and Cooper, J. D., eds., *Geology of the Western Cordillera: Perspectives From Undergraduate Research: Pacific Section SEPM*, book 82, p. 1-19).

volume 80, issue 1

February, 2008

## Students, Friends, and Colleagues Remember "Coop," John D. Cooper



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I'm sad to inform you of the passing of Professor Emeritus John Cooper. "Coop" was a legendary figure among geology students at Cal State Fullerton and a giant in the field of Sedimentary Geology. He died from a massive heart attack while taking his morning walk on Monday, Sept 3. He touched many lives and will be sorely missed.

Dr. Cooper's research concerned stratigraphic analysis of Neoproterozoic and lower Paleozoic rocks in the southern Great Basin and Eastern Mojave Desert provinces. He was an expert in the use of sequence stratigraphy to investigate paleo sea-level, regional stratigraphic correlations, and continental margin evolution, and had

supervised the theses of almost 60 students at Cal State Fullerton. John had served for several decades as a driving force in SEPM, the Society of Sedimentary Geology, serving as Treasurer and Managing Editor for the Pacific Section at the time of his death. In recent years, Dr. Cooper had led efforts to create a curatorial facility for the Orange County Archeology and Paleontology collection...

David Bowman, Chair, Department of Geological Sciences, CSU Fullerton

## Students, Friends, and Colleagues Remember “Coop,” John D. Cooper (cont.)

...In the area of service to the geologic community, few stand out more than John Cooper. During my tenure as Vice President of Pacific Section SEPM....it became readily apparent that John Cooper is the lifeblood of the Pacific Section. His service to the community does not stop here, however, as he has organized countless field trips, volumes, special symposia and national and regional GSA, AAPG, and SEPM meetings over the years. His commitment to education is outstanding. Since his retirement, he has continued the duties of Treasurer/Managing Editor of PS-SEPM, while also taking on many new duties, such as the curation of all fossils collected on construction sites in Orange County through the County Repository. John is a model citizen in the community of geologists. As he has also made tremendous contributions to our understanding of the Proterozoic-Cambrian of the Great Basin...

*Frank Corsetti, 2002, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Southern California*



**Field checking a senior thesis. Ross Lawson (seated), Ivan DeLeon, Susie (Titus) Smith, Rich Conejo, John, and Dolores van der Kolk.**  
*(photo by Chris Lopez; courtesy of Dolores van der Kolk)*

...Coop is the reason why I am a sedimentologist and I model my career goals from his own career...We will all miss him dearly.

*Dolores van der Kolk, former student, CSU Fullerton*

**John, wearing his signature University of Michigan cap, with students on a sedimentology-stratigraphy field trip at Torrey Pines State Beach** *(photo by Ivan DeLeon; courtesy of Dolores van der Kolk).*



# Students, Friends, and Colleagues Remember “Coop,” John D. Cooper (cont.)

## JOHN D. COOPER - June 12, 1939 - September 3, 2007

Dr. John D. Cooper, Professor Emeritus at California State University, Fullerton, and a driving force in the operation of the Pacific Section, SEPM, died of a heart attack on September 3, 2007 while on a morning hike near his home in Chino Hills, California. His pleasant personality, enthusiasm, creative ideas, and contributions to the field of Sedimentary Geology will be greatly missed.

John was born on June 12, 1939 in Wichita, Kansas. His childhood was spent in Blacksburg, Virginia where his father taught geology at Virginia Tech. He learned outdoor skills and a love of the outdoors both from his father and from being in the Boy Scouts, where he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. He earned his bachelor's degree in Geology from the University of Michigan in 1961, and then moved on to the University of Texas where he finished his master's degree and, in 1970, his Ph.D. in Geology.

His first job in geology was in southern California with Shell Oil Company. On completion of his Ph.D. in 1970, John started his remarkable teaching career at California State University, Fullerton. He advanced quickly through the ranks of Assistant Professor and Associate Professor to Professor and served on many of the committees of the Department of Geological Sciences to help them develop a highly regarded department. He retired in 2002 after 32 years of distinguished service. Student comments on his teaching note his great passion for geology, his ability to relate to and to motivate students, the high standards that he set for his students and their desire to achieve those standards, and his ability to outlast his students in the rigors of daily field work. Dr. Chris Fedo, one of John's former students, writes, "Many professors are excellent instructors, OR excellent research scholars, OR strong supporters of a university, but in John, Cal State Fullerton got the entire package - perfectly balanced, just the way a master should be. This sense of understanding the perfect blend extended to his family life too, and serves to reinforce his many qualities. When I think of John's stellar record, it becomes clear that John represented a brilliant light source, emanating in all directions, by which the rest of us cast our own shadows. In his absence now, that light will continue to radiate in the form of the accomplishments of all his students, one of whom I am proud to be." He supervised the senior theses of over 60 students and many of these students co-authored publications on their theses and presented the results at regional and national meetings. In recognition of his outstanding teaching career, John received a Distinguished Faculty Award from the College of Natural Science and Mathematics of California State University, Fullerton in 2000, and the Distinguished Educator Award from the Pacific Section, AAPG, also in 2000.

John's research centered on stratigraphic analysis of Neoproterozoic and lower Paleozoic siliciclastic and carbonate rocks in the southern Great Basin and eastern Mojave Desert. He used his expertise in sequence stratigraphy to study paleo sea-level changes, regional stratigraphic correlations, and continental margin evolution. He also studied Ordovician paleokarst in the southern Great Basin. He has published numerous papers and has given many talks on these topics in eight countries on four different continents. According to Dr. Stan Finney, one of his collaborators, "The one thing you have to consider when you invite John to collaborate with you is that John works much harder than anyone else, which in turn drives you harder just to keep up and not look bad." He was also the principal author of a popular textbook on Historical Geology that is in its second edition. To commemorate his research efforts he was promoted to Fellow of the Geological Society of America in 1997, and in the same year he received the Outstanding Research Award of the College of Natural Science and Mathematics of California State University, Fullerton. After having received numerous research grants from various institutions, John was appointed to serve on the Geology Advisory Board of the Petroleum Research Fund of the American Chemical Society for several years.

Not only did John disseminate his knowledge of southern Great Basin stratigraphy through publications and talks, he also became an excellent field trip leader for professional societies. In 1982 he served as Field Trip Chair and Co-Leader of two field trips for the Cordilleran Section, GSA meeting. He was a Field Trip Co-Leader for GSA meetings again in 1991 and 1998. The 7<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on the Ordovician System was held in Las Vegas in 1995 and John served as Publications Chair and as a Field Trip Leader for that meeting. Once more in 1996, for the national AAPG/SEPM meeting, he served as Vice-Chair for SEPM and as a Field Trip Co-Leader. He also served as Technical Program Chair for the joint Pacific Sections, AAPG/SEPM meeting in 2003.

## Students, Friends, and Colleagues Remember “Coop,” John D. Cooper (cont.)

His active work on the Executive Board of the Pacific Section, SEPM, began in 1980, when he was elected Secretary of the Society. After a short break, he became Vice President in 1987. In 1993, he was elected President Elect, and this was followed by a year as President in 1994. In 1995, he took over the jobs of Publications Manager and Managing Editor. To cap it all off, in 2000 he was elected Treasurer. He continued to serve as Publications Manager, Managing Editor, and Treasurer for the next seven years up until his untimely death. That made a total of 16 years that he served in either an elected or appointed officer position. No other member has given so much of his time to the Pacific Section, SEPM. He was truly the backbone of the society. During his 12 years as Publications Manager and Managing Editor he shepherded 27 research volumes and field trip guidebooks through the publication process – more than two per year. Because of his outstanding service to the society, he was awarded Honorary Membership in 1998, and then in 2003 he became the second recipient of the Pacific Section, SEPM’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

Although his teaching and SEPM duties were quite sufficient to keep an ordinary person more than fully occupied, John undertook additional projects dealing with museum curation of fossils and artifacts. He began managing the Orange County Archaeological-Paleontological Curation Project in 1999. This collection contains up to a million fossils and artifacts from whale spinal columns to tiny rodent teeth, mostly from the Miocene. His work with the Curation Project produced a comprehensive policy and procedural manual, a database and inventory catalog, and a project website. John also served as President of the Board of Directors of the Shoshone Museum and helped establish the Olinda Historic Museum and Park. Recently, he was appointed Geologic Evaluator for the establishment of the National Park Service’s Irvine Ranch National Natural Landmark. He worked countless hours on getting this natural landmark established and produced a thick volume on the geology of the area. In recognition of some of the above services, John was presented the Volunteer of the Year Award from the Orange County Division of Harbors, Beaches, and Parks.

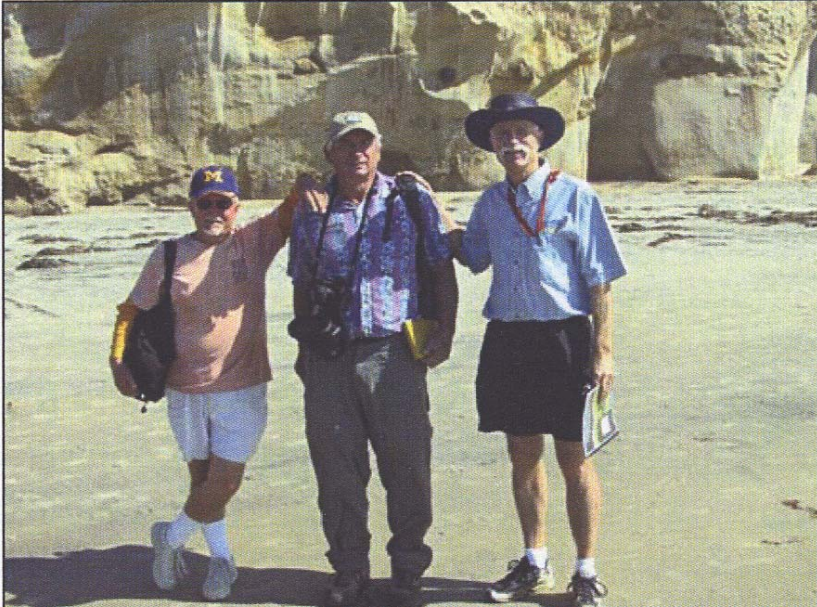
John’s shoes will be hard to fill and there will be a large void in the lives of all those that knew him. Two field trips will be held in 2008 in memory of John Cooper – one in the Spring in the southern Great Basin by the Cordilleran Section, GSA and one in the Fall in Orange County by the Pacific Section, SEPM. Those wishing to honor John’s memory may contribute to the John D. Cooper Field Camp Award of the Geological Sciences Department at California State University, Fullerton by way of the Department website at <http://www.fullerton.edu/supportCSUF/geologyrocks/>.

*A. Eugene Fritsche, Department of Geological Sciences, CSU Northridge*



**John (center) with CSUF students, Dan Loera, Ross Lawson, Rich Conejo, and Ivan DeLeon from left to right** (photo by Ivan DeLeon; courtesy of Dolores van der Kolk).

## Students, Friends, and Colleagues Remember “Coop,” John D. Cooper (cont.)



**John, Tom Anderson, and Pat Abbott, from left to right.**

*(photo from John Cooper's collection)*

...we have lost not only a great geologist and teacher but also a good friend. He and I had lots of good memories together. In fact, wasn't it on Labor Day weekend when the Michigan football team got upset by Appalachian State? That might explain the timing of John's heart attack!....

*Tom Anderson, Department of Geology, Sonoma State University*

I was shocked and saddened to hear of John Cooper's death so suddenly last week. I always pictured him as a model of health...always out-hiking and outrunning all the rest of us younger folks, and always beating his CSUF field mapping classes to the top of the peak even though they were a third his age....He was always such a breath of life for the profession, from his outstanding teaching to his unselfish service for SEPM and many other organizations. I recall him spending hours manning the PS-SEPM booth at meeting after meeting, usually with no help or additional staff--all at the expense of his own time and money. And....so many other activities he pursued for no remuneration, from volunteer activities to the Shoshone Museum to keeping track of the huge uncurated fossil collections of Orange County uncovered by bulldozers. He will be sorely missed...

*Don Prothero, Department of Geology, Occidental College*

I was shocked and greatly saddened by the sudden death of John Cooper. We first became friends as graduate students working in adjoining field areas for the same supervisor at UT Austin over 40 years ago. John always stood out from the rest of the grad student population for his friendly and helpful qualities that later made him such a valuable teacher and mentor to students. The deaths of friends and colleagues are always hard to take, but John's is one of the hardest...

*Pat Abbott, Department of Geological Sciences, San Diego State University*



*(photo by Ivan DeLeon; courtesy of Dolores van der Kolk)*

## Students, Friends, and Colleagues Remember “Coop,” John D. Cooper (cont.)

It has taken me a couple of weeks to actually sit down and try to find some meaningful words that would be worthy, in some way, to comment on the career of a man, John D. Cooper, whose dedication to his students was without parallel, and who, long after his death, will continue to inspire more generations of young minds. I still find it difficult to imagine that my professor, mentor, good friend, yes hero, is not with us any longer. That I cannot pick up the phone to inquire about how things are going in “retirement,” or seek help in my career as a professor, or chat about Saturday’s results from the college gridiron leaves a profound sadness that simply will not exit me.

Having had the distinct privilege of being patiently guided by Coop as a student of his for the past 20 years, I certainly feel like I got to know him, and he me, very well. I cannot help but think that a grandiose celebration, no matter how well meaning, would be something he might not fully appreciate and would remark as to what all the fuss was about. But deep down he would know, because he understood how many cherished him. Around the time of Coop’s retirement, we held two different conference sessions in his honor and I know he was deeply moved by this recognition, yet he remained personally modest about his career as an academician. Perhaps that is the trait he has impressed upon me and all his other students: sincere humbleness. He was never Dr. Cooper, but always a more meaningful, Coop. I would like to use the rest of my space here to share with you some of my incredible memories of working with John, knowing full well that as unique as they are to me, that variations of all of them will resonate with all of John’s students.

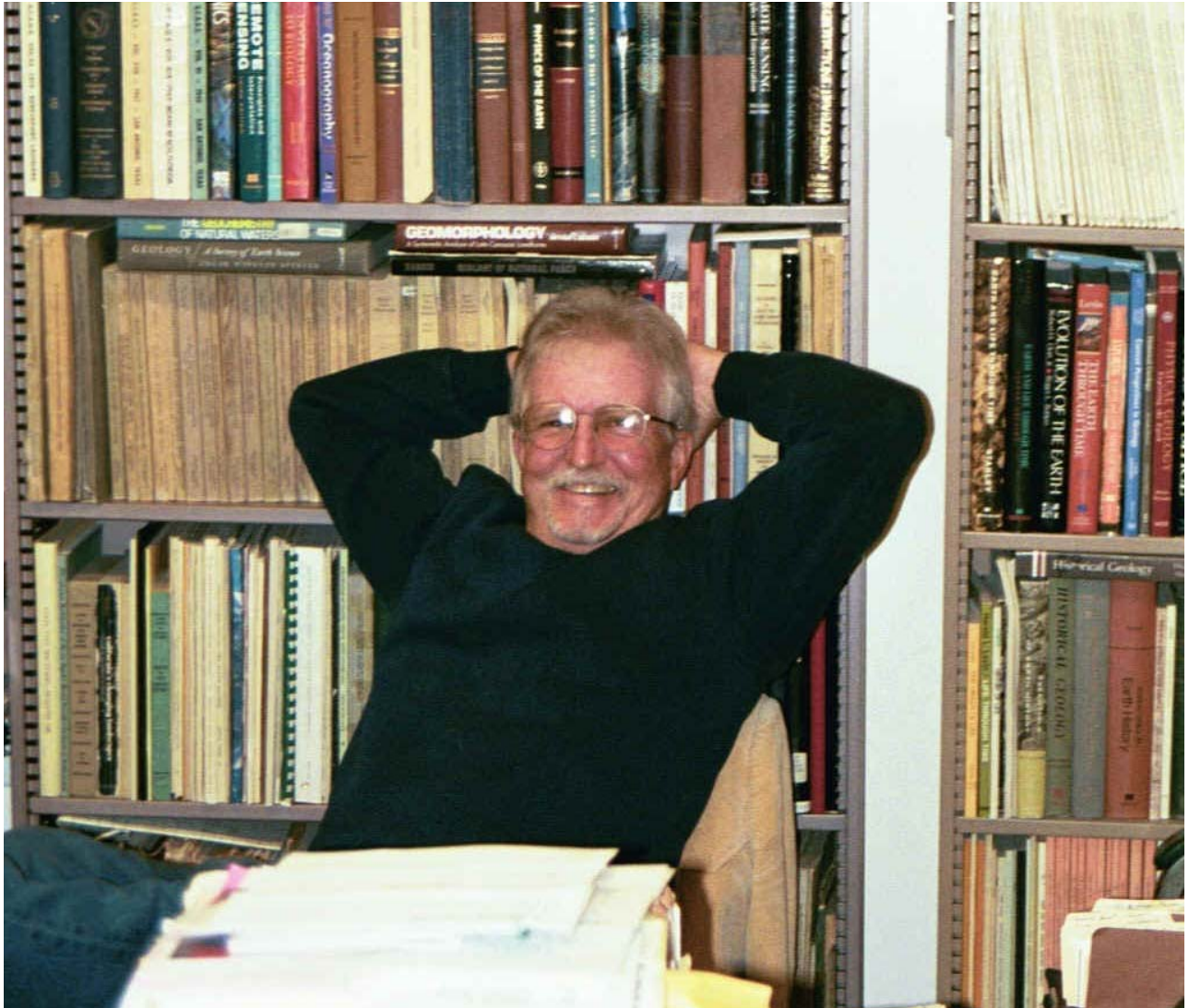
This would not be the first time I have been called upon to write something on behalf of Coop, and so first I would like to cover some of the more formal things I have said in the past as he was considered for various esteemed nominations, such as Cal State Fullerton’s *Distinguished Faculty* and *Outstanding University Professor*. Of course, I was always delighted to espouse on the many attributes of my friend, and looking over these letters since his death has brought back a flood of memories with bouts of uncontrollable laughter counterbalanced by an ocean of tears. In 2000, as he was being considered for *Distinguished Faculty*, I was reflecting on his role as a faculty member in shaping my life and had the following to say: “John of course has played an important mentoring role in my life, but as you might expect, his impact has touched many far beyond the walls of academe. The one thing that I have finally come to recognize, after working closely with John for some fifteen years now, is that being a professor comes naturally to him. To be sure, I cannot think of anyone who works harder at excelling in a profession, but that effort is entirely complementary to his natural gift of being a university professor; even with little effort, John would leave many in his shadow.” As I reread those words sitting here, I continue to stand in awe about their truth, and how sincere of a mentor he was to so many young minds.

...There are countless stories that I could relate about our time working together. Everyone who has had the pleasure of working with John in the field will undoubtedly have their own versions to hold on to. I am incredibly fortunate to have been able to work with Coop on an individual basis and the many follies are really only known to him and me, so they are very special indeed. As our relationship matured from professor-student to colleague-colleague (although I will always think of Coop as my mentor and he always treated me as a full colleague), we had the chance to enjoy each other’s company and quirks more like friends than anything else. I know John well enough to believe he would like nothing more than to spin a yarn, even at a time as solemn as this. His laugh is something I dearly miss already.

*Chris Fedo, Department of Geology, George Washington University, and former student, CSU Fullerton*

**John D. Cooper**  
**Emeritus Professor of Geology**

**June 12, 1939 - September 3, 2007**



*(photo courtesy of Gene Fritsche)*

## Pacific Section – SEPM (Society for Sedimentary Geology)

The Pacific Section SEPM has grown to become an international society, attracting students and working professionals from the United States, mainly from California and other Pacific states including Hawaii and Alaska, and from Canada, Europe, Asia, and South America. Please support the Pacific Section, SEPM with a new or renewed membership. Recruit new members by distributing copies of this membership form to all who share an interest in sedimentary geology.

### Why Join the Pacific Section SEPM?

- The Pacific Section SEPM is one of the premier geological societies of western North America.
- Members benefit from discounts on superbly done field-trip guidebooks and special publications that address sedimentologic and stratigraphic aspects of the Pacific region of the United States.
- Membership dues help defray costs of field trips and publications, and help maintain the California Well Data Repository in Bakersfield, California, which archives logs, cores, cuttings, and microfossils from boreholes in California.
- **Society Newsletter, *Pacific Sedimentologist***, highlights Society field trips, publications, conferences and other news for the calendar year. It is distributed both as e-mail and surface mail versions.

**KEEP A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOUR RECORDS.**



### Membership Form, 2008

Renew       New Member

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Regular Memberships <small>(check ✓ one)</small>	1-year professional	\$ 7.50	
	3-year professional	\$20.00	
	1-year student	\$ 5.00	
Lifetime Memberships <small>(check ✓ age group)</small>	20-40 years old	\$150.00	
	40-60 years old	\$100.00	
	60 years old and older	\$ 50.00	

Mailing labels on newsletters will indicate the year when an individual membership expires.

Honorary and Lifetime members are permanent members of the Society and are exempt from further dues payments.

Make check payable to “Pacific Section, SEPM,” and send to:

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# *Pacific Sedimentologist*

Newsletter of the Pacific Section, SEPM  
(Society for Sedimentary Geology)



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