

Obituary

Raymond Donovan Wood (1902-1964)

Raymond Donovan Wood, a practising attorney in Mount Kisco, N.Y. for 32 years, and recently retired to Salt Lake City, Utah, died suddenly 30 November, 1964.

Raymond Wood was born on 17 January, 1902 in Iowa, and came to New York in 1925. A graduate of the University of Nebraska, he received his M.A. at Northwestern University in Chicago, and became Juris Doctor from New York University following which he completed two years of post graduate work at Columbia University. He was an Associate Member of the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, and a Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America. His principal hobby and recreation was photography, especially of wildflowers. For many years he spent whatever time he could spare from his law practice photographing rare wild flowers in the mountains of the northeastern States. It was natural, therefore, that later in search of new material he turned to the Arctic, and that for the planning of future field seasons he should come to the National Museum of Canada to acquaint himself with arctic plants and to seek the advice of its botanical staff in planning his itineraries. Between 1956 and 1962, Raymond Wood personally financed extended field trips to the American Arctic, from West Greenland to Alaska for the purpose of making colour photographs of arctic flowers. On all his expeditions Raymond Wood was accompanied by his wife Mildred whom he always acknowledged as the botanist of the "team", whereas he did "only" the photography and, at the end of the season, the processing of the hundreds of rolls of colour and black and white film that invariably resulted from his summer's activity. Meticulous and painstaking about all they did, the Woods always collected voucher specimens of the wild flowers they photographed. These specimens they presented to the National Herbarium of Canada at Ottawa together with one of the two or three original transparencies made of each plant object.

During four summers in the Canadian Arctic, one in West Greenland, and two in Alaska, Raymond and Mildred Wood photographed 354 different species of arctic flowering plants and ferns, many of them never photographed before. One carefully labelled set of 775 colour transparencies all in 2¼" x 2¼" format, carefully mounted, labelled, and indexed are now in the National Herbarium of Canada at Ottawa. A set of 340 colour transparencies of Alaskan wild flowers they presented to the Arctic Research Laboratory, Barrow, Alaska in return for logistic support during two field seasons in Alaska. Due to their high technical skill and meticulous planning, these unique collections of plant portraits and plant habitats will long remain invaluable reference "tools" for present and future botanists engaged in the study of arctic plants.

Following their retirement to Salt Lake City, Utah, the Woods had planned to photograph Rocky Mountain alpine flowers in Canada and in the United States.

Although the main objective of their arctic trips was to make photographs, Raymond and Mildred Wood always took a keen personal interest in the Eskimo and white residents of the North, making lasting friends and contacts wherever they went. Their many friends not only in Mount Kisco, Salt Lake City and Ottawa, but also in many northern towns and villages from Greenland to Alaska will miss their welcome visits and lament the premature passing of their friend.

A. E. PORSILD