



## Obituary: William John Haugen Light (1938–2020)

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William John Haugen (Bill) Light (Fig. 1) was born on 05 January 1938 in Waco, McLennan County, Texas USA, and died on 18 January 2020 in Marietta, Georgia, at the age of 82. He was buried in the Georgia National Cemetery, Canton, GA. As an infant, he was adopted by Col. Orin Haugen and his wife Marion Sargent. Colonel Haugen died in February 1945 at the battle for Manila in the Philippines in World War II. Later, upon Marion's remarriage, Bill's surname was changed to Light. Bill's mother Marion passed away in 1969.

Bill's family settled in southern California where he attended La Jolla High School from which he graduated in 1955. From 1954 to 1959, he held various laboratory positions in the Department of Marine Biology, Scripps Institute of Oceanography (SIO), in La Jolla. These early experiences at SIO most certainly influenced his later career with marine invertebrates. These interests were set aside, however, from 1962 to 1964 with military service in the U.S. Army Signal Corps where he earned the Good Conduct Medal and Sharpshooter badges for Rifle and Carbine.

After his military service, Bill moved to the San Francisco Bay area where he enrolled at San Francisco State University (SFSU) in 1965 and graduated in January 1969 with a Bachelor of Arts in Biology. At the same time he supported his education by working as an Aquatic Biologist at the Steinhart Aquarium, California Academy of Science (CAS), San Francisco (1965–1966) and as a Research Assistant in the Department of Invertebrate Zoology, CAS (1968–1969). While at the CAS and still an undergraduate at SFSU he began research on polychaetes and published the description of a new species, *Polydora narica* Light, 1969, an offshore species from California, and a range extension for a species of *Manayunkia* in British Columbia.

In 1969, Bill moved to Simon Fraser University in British Columbia as a Teaching and Research Assistant in Biology as a part of a graduate program. While in BC, Bill met and visited with Cyril Berkeley, who Bill described in a letter to JTC (26 November 1969) as “a gentleman through and through.” Bill left Simon Fraser in October 1970 and diverted to other activities (including working in commercial fishing) for a while before returning to the Bay area where he resumed his graduate work at San Francisco State University.

In 1970, Bill published two papers describing new spionid species having commensal relationships with corals: *Polydora alloporsis* Light 1970a, from a subtidal hydrocoral in California and *P. wobberi* Light, 1970b, from a gorgonian in the Gulf of California. He earned his Master of Arts in Biology at SFSU in 1974.

Following completion of his Master's degree, Bill returned to the CAS as a Research Biologist (1975–1977). During this time, he was an investigator on research grants from NOAA and the National Science Foundation to establish and conduct the “The San Francisco Bay Project,” which was intended to identify and develop a collection of all invertebrate species in San Francisco Bay. The project was also intended to produce faunal guides. Bill set out to inventory the spionid polychaetes and eventually developed a 211-page monograph (Light 1978b) that included keys and illustrations as well as a comprehensive review of the literature for the family. In addition to the standard dichotomous keys, he also used pictorial and tabular keys to ensure that users would be able achieve accurate identifications. The application and format of these alternate keys were described in a separate paper (Light 1976). To support the monograph, he also published an additional paper reporting on new records and changes to nomenclature of the San Francisco Bay spionids (Light 1977).

In April 1977, Bill accepted an appointment as an Associate Curator of Natural Sciences & Aquatic Biologist in the Division of Natural Sciences, The Oakland Museum in Oakland, California. In August 1978, Bill left this position in order to pursue a Ph.D. in Biology at the University of Arizona, where he was first a Graduate Teaching Assistant (1978–79) and then an Associate Curator of Invertebrates in the Department of General Biology. He received his Ph.D. in May 1980. His dissertation dealt with a taxonomic revision of the annelid subfamily Maldaninae (Light 1980) including *Asychis* and related genera (Light 1991). While in Arizona, Bill managed to find time to begin research on invertebrate bioturbation in Recent intertidal environments, and its implications for paleoecology, in Bahia Cholla near Puerto Peñasco in the Gulf of California.



FIGURE 1. Bill Light, circa 1983.

From October 1980 to August 1982, Bill was a post-doctoral fellow at the Laboratory of Limnology and Center for Environmental Toxicology, University of Wisconsin, Madison WI. In this position, he conducted research on freshwater plankton, especially cladocerans of the genus *Daphnia*. He studied heavy metal uptake by the cuticles of cladocerans which resulted in the discovery of a previously unknown storage kidney for micro-contaminants in these organisms. This research resulted in a change in Bill's research interests from invertebrate natural history to toxicology.

In 1982, following his post-doctoral research, he received a joint appointment with the Metropolitan State College and the University of Colorado at Denver, where he taught undergraduate and graduate biomedical courses in several disciplines. In this position, he also compiled and published four volumes on the biomedical complications of alcohol abuse (Light 1985, 1986a–b, 1988). He attended the December 1984 symposium on polychaetes held in Denver that honored Dr. Marian H. Pettibone. Bill left the University of Colorado position in June 1987.

The later details of Bill's professional activities are less clear but he did have several short-term teaching positions and consulting contracts. He continued to reside in Colorado, until about 2000, when he moved to Atlanta, GA, where he eventually established a business as a consultant in scientific and technical writing.

Bill was fascinated by all living organisms. In addition to his work with and interest in polychaetes and other invertebrates, he was an avid birder. During a visit to JAB in Massachusetts in 1992, we visited several coastal sites where he was able to add a few species of ducks and other coastal birds to his life list. In 2017 he

was co-author on a monograph that dealt with 450 species of mushrooms occurring along the Georgia coast and southern Appalachians (Woehrel & Light 2017).

Each of the authors has many anecdotal stories of Bill. JDK contributed the following: I had my first opportunity to meet Bill personally in Tucson, AZ, while he was a graduate student. It was a delightful visit, and we spoke about malidanids at great length. It was summer, and the weather was oppressively hot. We ran an errand late one afternoon. A monsoon storm triggered a lightning bolt that struck and felled a large saguaro cactus within one kilometer of our location! As if the lightning was an omen, an overheated six-pack of Coca Cola began exploding in the rear seat of Bill's VW. Bill deftly threw the offending six-pack out and then completely flattened all six cans with his car almost seamlessly. We were pretty certain that spectators were heartily amused at the sight of a VW attacking a six-pack in a parking lot. We laughed all the way home.

Another JDK memory centers on a sizeable rattlesnake that Bill had collected. The snake was decapitated and laying on his shaded patio for several hours when his cat curiously sniffed its headless end. Bill and his family were shocked when the snake forcibly struck the cat! Bill left rattlesnakes to themselves afterwards.

JTC recalls that he first met Bill about 1968 at the California Academy of Sciences: Bill would enthrall us with descriptions of some of his adventures while in his early 20s. These included having a "gig" at a radio station in Mexico, playing flamenco guitar while anchoring a popular music segment, and of his time in the Norwegian Merchant Marine, relating stories of harrowing adventures at ports, including on the rough docks in Egypt. Later, Bill's zeal for branching out would manifest again in the early 1970s, in his time between attending Simon Fraser University and San Francisco State. He wrote to me of having purchased a 30-foot salmon troller in Bamfield, British Columbia, but some 6 months later re-oriented inland, and described his living off the grid, successfully building a log cabin near Ymir in the BC wilderness and hunting wild animals for winter food.

JAB recalls a time in late 1977 after he had returned from a sabbatical in Australia where he and JDK had completed a study of the spionid fauna of Southeast Australia and asked Bill to review the manuscript. After paging through the draft, Bill said "Jim, you and Jerry have just made my new book on Spionidae of SF Bay obsolete before it is even in print!" We later concluded that it did not alter the basic facts of his work, but Bill did add the Australian reference to his work as "in press" and added a note in proof at the end of the Introduction.

Bill is survived by his former wife, Dr. Ruth Lewart Light, and their two daughters, Dr. Deborah Ilana Light and Ms. Carolyn Andrea Light, all of New York.

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