



Photo: John Case

Valerie and Foresta Wood on project Snow Cornice, July 1951.



Maurice King in the Institute's Norseman aircraft, Baffin Island, 1950.

OBITUARY

Foresta Hodgson Wood, Valerie Wood, Maurice King

The loss of the Institute's Norseman aircraft, piloted by Maurice King and carrying Mrs. Walter A. Wood and Valerie Wood, was mentioned in a brief notice in the last number of *Arctic*. The aircraft was taking part in the Institute's research project "Snow Cornice", when it disappeared on 27 July 1951 on a flight from the research station, in the St. Elias Mountains in the Alaska-Yukon boundary region, to the base camp at Yakutat, Alaska. Mrs. Wood's husband, Walter A. Wood, is the Director of the Institute's New York Office and leader of project Snow Cornice. In spite of an intensive search by the United States Air Force, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and other official and private groups, in which Mrs. Wood's husband and son and Mr. King's son participated, no trace of the aircraft has been found and the occupants are presumed dead.

The Arctic Institute extends its deepest sympathy to their relatives. The Institute also wishes to express its most grateful thanks to all those who took part in the search for the Norseman. The following notices are written by Dr. A. L. Washburn, Director of the Washington Office.

Foresta Hodgson Wood

Foresta Hodgson Wood, the daughter of Mrs. Balm Mann Hodgson and Caspar Wistar Hodgson, was born in San Francisco, California on 10 November 1904.

Foresta attended Horace Mann School, Scarborough School, and Stanford University. She also studied sculpture at Fontainebleau in France.

Travel and a deep guiding appreciation of the beauty of nature early became part of Foresta's life. As a child she spent some time in the Phillipine Islands, travelled in China, Korea, and Japan, and also accompanied her parents on two trips around the world. Later she spent many childhood summers on her parents ranch in the California Sierra Nevada, where she made extensive pack trips into the mountains and gained practical experience in outdoor living. Perhaps more than anything else these early pack trips were responsible for her love of the out-of-doors, and especially of mountains and wilderness.

In 1928 she met Walter A. Wood, then associated with the American Geographical Society, and two years later married him in Paris. In 1929 she made some notable climbs in the Swiss Alps, and was a member of an expedition to the mountains of Kashmir and Little Tibet that included her future husband, whom she assisted in a stereo-photogrammetric survey of the Sind-Liddar watershed.

Thus at the time of her marriage Foresta had already begun a series of exploratory travels that few men or women have equalled—travels which were undertaken not primarily in the spirit of adventure, although they often constituted adventure in the real sense of the word, but travels undertaken in partnership with her husband and in which she contributed her full share to their work. Not only did she become an indispensable member of the team in organizing and implementing field activities, but throughout she encouraged and supported her husband's endeavours.

In 1931 she was in Panama and Guatemala, assisting her husband in astronomical and survey work, and in 1932 she joined him in an ascent of Neva Toluca in Mexico. Her son was born during this year and her daughter in the following year. In the

summer of 1933, while her husband was absent on an expedition to east Greenland, she shipped as a crew member on a Finnish square-rigged grain ship.

Two years later Foresta and Walter organized and led the Wood Yukon Expedition of the American Geographical Society, on which Foresta carried out a large part of the logistical and photographic work. This expedition initiated an extensive research program in the Alaska-Yukon region, which was to be Foresta's major expeditionary contribution and accomplishment during the next sixteen years. The following summer she participated in the Second Wood Yukon Expedition, in the course of which she accompanied her husband on the first ascents of several 8,000- to 10,000-foot peaks. In 1937 the Woods temporarily left their work in the Yukon and were members of the American Museum of Natural History Expedition to the Grand Canyon, on which Foresta was again responsible for the logistical and photographic work. She also made first ascents of Shiva's Temple and Wotan's Throne. In 1937 Foresta and Walter returned to the Yukon for the third time and, in connection with the survey work of the expedition, climbed to 14,000 feet on Mount Wood, named many years before for the late Zachary Taylor Wood, Assistant Commissioner of the Royal Northwest (now Royal Canadian) Mounted Police. As a member of the Fourth Wood Yukon Expedition in 1941, she continued to carry out extensive and independent photogrammetrical surveying as well as ground and air photography, and took part in the successful climb of Mount Wood, though she herself was forced to turn back at 14,500 feet because of frozen feet. All this work was carried out in spite of the fact that she was now the mother of two children aged nine and ten.

During the War, when her husband was a civilian consultant on mountain warfare and later an Army and Air Force officer engaged in arctic problems, she contributed much to the work he was doing. During his service as Assistant Military Attaché in Ottawa, she was one of the Canadian Capital's most charming and popular hostesses and made many warm friends. Only after the War, when her husband joined the staff of the Arctic Institute as Director of its New York Office, did it again become possible for her to work with him in the field.

In 1947 she accompanied him on the first post-war venture, a two months' reconnaissance of the glaciers of the northeastern St. Elias Mountains. Then in the following year she participated in initiating the Arctic Institute's research project Snow Cornice in the same region, which involved establishing a semi-permanent glaciological research station on the upper part of the Seward Glacier among North America's highest mountains. On this and subsequent Snow Cornice expeditions (see *Arctic*, Vol. 1, pp. 107-12; Vol. 2, pp. 118-9; Vol. 4, pp. 67-9) she assumed full responsibility for logistics and carried out much of the ground photography and surveying. Her work with Snow Cornice was continued in 1949 and again in 1951. The fatal accident occurred as she and her daughter Valerie were leaving the Seward Glacier research station to return to the United States.

Thus Foresta died, as she had lived, amid the adventure and beauty of some of the world's most glorious mountain scenery that she loved so well.

Foresta's accomplishments during the Wood Yukon expeditions and her three seasons with Snow Cornice are without peer for a woman. Much of the success of the work that was carried out is directly due to her logistical and photographic contributions. Only those who have seen the expeditionary motion picture records, for which she was solely responsible, can fully appreciate her attainments as a photographer—attainments that put her in the forefront of American mountain and expeditionary photographers.

On meeting Foresta in the drawing room it was immediately obvious that she was a most gracious hostess. To the casual acquaintance it probably seemed unthinkable that such a frail-appearing person, who seemed so much at home in the social and diplomatic life of New York and Ottawa, could also be one of the world's

leading mountaineers and expeditionary workers. And yet she was not only all these things, but to an even greater degree a loving mother and wife and an indispensable helpmate to her husband.

To know Foresta was to know the real meaning of a full life and to recognize strength of character and a deep spiritual devotion to God and to fellow men.

Valerie Wood

Valerie Wood was born in Zurich, Switzerland on 14 March 1933. She attended schools in Morristown, Minneapolis, Ottawa, and New York, and graduated from Brearley School in New York in 1951.

Like her mother she grew to have a fondness and appreciation of nature and of the out-of-doors through pack trips, which she made to Jasper Park with her parents in 1946 and 1947. During the latter year she also accompanied them to the Donjek Ranges of the St. Elias Mountains in the Yukon.

Valerie participated in the Institute's research project Snow Cornice in 1949 and 1951, and in both years she was thoroughly at home and played a full part in the activities of the expedition.

Valerie was a worthy daughter of her mother and in all respects remarkably like her mother in personality, attractiveness, and meaningful friendship. The many handwritten inscriptions in her Brearley School class book stand witness to her popularity.

Valerie lived a full and happy life in spite of its brevity, and to those who knew her there may be comfort in the possibility that she may have been spared some unforeseen suffering. As it is, her memory will remain an unmarred symbol of youthful dreams, happiness, and boundless friendship and love—a symbol of everything that we hold most precious in humanity.

James Maurice King

James Maurice King was born on 17 December 1900. He learned to fly in Portland, Oregon, in the late twenties and, after a tour of barn-storming, decided to go to Alaska in the early thirties.

In Alaska Maury came into his own. During the two decades that followed he became one of the best-known and most accomplished of the Alaskan bush pilots in the tradition of such pioneers as Eielson, Crosson, Gillam, and Monson, to name a few of those who have contributed so much to the development of aviation in Alaska, and who, like Maury, have now passed on. In fact Maury represented a race that is tending to vanish and to be replaced by airline pilots, few of whom have the knowledge of the woods and experience of arctic travelling that Maury had, or can boast his practical ability under adverse conditions.

Most of Maury's early flying was done in northwestern Alaska. For a time he flew with Archie Ferguson out of Kotzebue, and became familiar with every landmark in the Colville area, Seward Peninsula, and country north to Point Barrow, under both summer and winter conditions. Subsequent experience with Wien Airways and Alaska Airlines, among others, gave him equal familiarity with other parts of Alaska. In 1941 he flew Bradford Washburn over Mount Hayes and the Alaska Range, on two extended photographic flights.

In 1948 Maury became associated with Walter and Foresta Wood in the Institute's project Snow Cornice. With a specially equipped ski-wheel Norseman aircraft, he piloted the expedition personnel and equipment between the base at Yakutat and the upper part of the Seward Glacier among the lofty St. Elias Mountains. As a result the establishment and supply of the glaciological research

station became a routine operation, except for one episode, which illustrates why the bush pilots enjoy the reputation they do and why Maury was one of their leaders.

In a landing on the Seward Glacier in 1948, snow conditions were such that, with the early experimental ski-wheel landing gear, the Norseman nosed over onto its back, fortunately without serious injury to the occupants. However, an overturned aircraft, broken wing struts, and a seriously bent propellor were a major problem as no other aircraft was readily available for rescue operations and it would have been extremely hazardous to walk out to the Alaskan coast. By an ingenious arrangement of ropes and the digging of a pit under the bent propellor, Maury managed to right the aircraft without further damage. He repaired the broken struts by bracing with two-by-four lumber, and straightened the metal propellor with jacks stressed against two-by-fours lashed to the propellor. Such was his skill that the straightened propellor was only one-sixteenth of an inch out of true. Five days after the accident Maury piloted the Norseman safely back to Yakutat for permanent repairs, having saved the expedition and salvaged an aircraft that would normally have been a total loss.

The following summer Maury was again pilot for Snow Cornice, this time with a much improved ski-wheel combination based on the previous year's experience. After two summer seasons it was very desirable to carry out winter investigations on the Seward Glacier, and early in 1950 Maury successfully flew Walter and Peter Wood up to the research station for a series of observations.

During the summer of 1950 Walter Wood loaned the Norseman to P. D. Baird, Director of the Institute's Montreal Office, for the Baffin Island Expedition. Maury was again pilot, and flew the Norseman from Alaska across southern Canada to Montreal, and then to the east coast of Baffin Island. In spite of his unfamiliarity with the country he piloted the expedition safely and cheerfully, often through difficult flying conditions involving both winter- and summer-type operations. It can truthfully be said that he was in no small measure responsible for the success of the expedition.

In 1951 Maury again carried out the flying for the fourth season of project Snow Cornice. When the fatal crash occurred he was piloting the Norseman from the Seward Glacier research station to Yakutat. What happened is not known since no trace of the aircraft has been found, but it is possible that it ran into a mountain. All those who knew Maury and his ability are confident that whatever the circumstances were he did everything that could have been done to meet the situation.

During his life Maury logged some 13,000 hours flying time, of which nearly half was on skis. Approximately 800 of these hours were spent flying for the Institute on Snow Cornice and the Baffin Expedition. Although primarily known as a bush pilot he held both multi-engine and instrument ratings and was a fully qualified airlines captain. However, Maury's fame in Alaska was also based on his reputation as a person as well as on his skill as a pilot. In supplying isolated arctic or interior posts he always remembered the extra errand that he was asked to do, frequently doing more than his share in returning with a present of fresh meat or green vegetables. He carried out many mercy flights under hazardous conditions, and his indomitable spirit is shown by the fact that when taken sick at a remote arctic post he piloted his aircraft out despite a ruptured appendix. That his eldest son Dick, who participated in the search for the Norseman, has become an outstanding Alaskan pilot counted as one of his great joys.

Maury was a decisive and extremely competent pilot, a man who worked hard, but who knew how to relax and enjoy himself, a modest person, and a loyal friend. To those who know and love the North and who appreciate the role that aircraft have played, Maury will always be particularly remembered as one of the leaders of that vanishing race to which Alaska owes so much—the bush pilot.

A. L. WASHBURN