

Judith Munk, 1925-2006

A Friend of Oceanography

By the time she passed away on May 19, Judith Munk was famous in oceanographic circles for having welcomed hundreds of oceanographers and scientific visitors into her extraordinary home in La Jolla, California, which overlooks the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Judith, the wife of renowned Scripps oceanographer Walter Munk, was an artist, sculptress, and architect. She was an advocate and close friend of Scripps Institution of Oceanography, with ties to the institution and the University of California, San Diego that go back more than 50 years.

In 1954, the Munks designed and built their home, called *Seiche* (French for “undulating wave”), near the Scripps campus. The house has an international style, complete with organic elements that embrace the nearby canyons and ocean cliffs. It eventually became a mainstay for Scripps and UC San Diego events and visitors through activities ranging from annual site visits from the Office of Naval Research to welcoming events for UC San Diego newcomers in their backyard amphitheater.

“An evening in Judith Munk’s living room was renowned as the quintessential Scripps experience for students, scientists, and legions of friends from around the world,” said Scripps Director Charles Kennel. “Judith enlivened all she touched. She made all lives better.”

When former Scripps Director Roger Revelle was working to establish UC San Diego, he wooed the first faculty by bringing prospective professors to the Munk residence for drinks. Walter said their home’s close proximity to Scripps gave them a perspective of “living above the store.”

Judith was an active member of Scripps and UC San Diego, where she made numerous contributions to architecture, campus planning, and the renovation and reuse of historical buildings. She played an active role in the design of the old and new laboratories of the Cecil H. and Ida M. Green Institute of Geophysics and Planetary Physics at Scripps, one of which was later named the Judith and Walter Munk Laboratory. Recently, she



had been influential in guiding the design of the Scripps Seaside Forum, a scientific meeting and conference center being developed on the Scripps campus. The central garden area of the Scripps Forum will be named in her honor.

Walter and Judith were married for 52 years and their years together were rich with research, travel, community affairs, and spending time with family, friends, and colleagues.

Judith accompanied Walter on expeditions and scientific visits to remote locations. Their many travels included sabbaticals to the United Kingdom, visits to oceanographers in China, and a cross-country expedition across the Soviet Union. In 1963, Judith accompanied Walter to American Samoa for the Waves Across the Pacific project.

Walter fondly remembers that Judith took a deep interest in his research. “If I described a project I was working on and she couldn’t understand it, then she told me I didn’t understand it myself—and she was right,” said Walter.

In addition to Walter, Judith’s survivors include daughters Edie of La Jolla and Kendall of State College, Pennsylvania.

Provided by Scripps Institution of Oceanography.