

# Geologist was BGSU's 'Queen of Pleistocene'

**BOWLING GREEN** — Jane Louise Forsyth, 84, a distinguished researcher on the era when glaciers covered northwest Ohio and the first female geology professor at Bowling Green State University, died Tuesday at the Alterra Sterling House assisted-living facility here.

"She became a geologist when women didn't do that kind of thing," said Clif Boutelle, a retired university director of public relations and a personal friend. "She was a pioneer for women."

In a 1966 interview with *The Blade*, Ms. Forsyth recalled how her first attempts at obtaining a geology teaching position were rebuffed because men were preferred.

Yet her love and curiosity for the natural world remained strong, and she was not deterred.

"I've always been curious about the history of the landscape — how it has changed during many thousands of years," she told *The Blade* in 1966. "Besides, I like the outdoors and enjoy going on field trips."

Much of Ms. Forsyth's life work was in Pleistocene geology, a period that lasted roughly from 1.8 million years ago to 12,000 years before the present and included the Ice Age. Her research focused on the time when continental glaciers covered much of northwest Ohio more than 10,000 years ago.

For her devotion and expertise in her field of study, Ms. Forsyth was known among col-

leagues as "The Queen of the Pleistocene," recalled Richard Hoare, a retired BGSU geology professor who shared an office with her.

Yet Ms. Forsyth wore many hats during her long career of scientific inquiry. She was recognized as a scientist, geologist, geobotanist, naturalist, educator, and conservationist.

Dr. Forsyth joined Bowling Green's faculty in 1965, after holding a position as a geologist with the Ohio Geographical Society. At the university she taught introductory and advanced courses in geology, and also several classes in ecology before her retirement in 1992.

Ms. Forsyth wrote two books, several textbook chapters, and was the author of numerous articles dealing with geology that appeared in scientific as well as mainstream publications.

Twice she was vice president of the geological division of the Ohio Academy of Science, and from 1963 to 1973 she was editor of the *Ohio Journal of Science*. She was also a longtime board member of the Nature Conservancy in Ohio.

In 1973 she received a university distinguished teaching award, and in 1975 she was appointed to the Ohio Natural Areas Council. The following year she received the Ohioana Library Citation Award for research and publications in Ohio geology. She was honored by the Ohio Conservation and Outdoor Education Association in 1983.

She was a member of various professional societies, including the Geological Society of

America and the National Association of Geology Teachers. She served as a Pleistocene geologist with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources from 1955 to 1965, and was a past member and chairman of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Natural Areas Council.

Prior to arriving at BGSU Ms. Forsyth was an instructor at Ohio State University, Miami University in Oxford, Adams State College in Colorado, and a graduate assistant at the University of California, Berkeley, as well as the University of Cincinnati.

Ms. Forsyth was born on Nov. 9, 1921, in Hanover, N.H. She graduated from Hanover High School, received her bachelor's degree in geology from Smith College in 1943, and later a master's degree in geology from the University of Cincinnati. Ms. Forsyth received a doctorate from Ohio State University in 1956.

Ms. Forsyth stayed active in her retirement, and continued to give an occasional public lecture. Until about three years ago, she took trips to Canada to observe polar bears, said Robert Spitler, her friend and attorney.

Ms. Forsyth never married, and lived by herself until about two years ago, when she moved into the assisted-living facility, Mr. Spitler said.

There are no survivors.

A remembrance ceremony for Ms. Forsyth will be held at Simpson Garden Park in Bowling Green at a later date. The Dunn Funeral Home is handling arrangements.