

obituary

Mr Ernest Gold, CB, DSO, OBE and FRS died on January 30 at the age of 94. He was most famous for his early work on the stratosphere. In 1907 he had become the Schuster Reader in dynamic meteorology at Cambridge, and a year later he published his paper explaining the existence of the stratosphere. That a region sharply delineated by a boundary (the tropopause), where the tendency for the temperature of the air to decrease with height abruptly stops and the temperature becomes constant, seemed paradoxical. Gold's explanation of this effect, taking into account the carbon dioxide and water vapour contained in the atmosphere is still accepted, though it is a measure of the complexity of calculations in weather science that no quantitative solutions for the effect have yet been achieved. In 1910 he left Cambridge for the Met. Office, building up its stature and importance. With the advent of aviation, the need for international weather forecasting became apparent, and it was Gold's achievement to mastermind the setting up of this service, as president of the International Commission for Synoptic Weather Information, a position he held for 28 years.

Clair L. Stong, conductor of the 'Amateur Scientist' column in 'Scientific American' since 1957 died on Tuesday, December 9, of cancer. He was born in Douds, Iowa, and was 73 years old.

Mr. Stong, known to everyone as 'Red', first became known as an aviator. While studying electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota and the Crane Institute, he earned his keep as a stunt pilot: for a while leading his own flying circus and performing at prairie county fairs. He joined the Western Electric Co. in 1926, working in various capacities until retiring in 1962 to devote himself full-time to the *Scientific American*.

In his *Amateur Scientist* column, he opened up the 'black boxes' of modern science. He showed his readers how to build in their kitchens and garages such formidable instruments as atomic particle accelerators and cloud chambers and scintillator counters to go with them, quartz-crystal clocks, lasers, ruling engines, high-altitude rockets and both digital and analogue computers. Experiments specified in his column ranged over the frontiers of science from molecular biology (how to make amino acids) to experimental

psychology (colour vision in pigeons) to oceanography (how to make a hydrophone) to cosmology (eclipses of stars by the mountains of the moon). His readers could rely on his instructions because he had himself built nearly all the instruments, and performed nearly all the experiments he described.

His column on hang gliding in 1973 is credited with helping to make that daring sport a national pastime. An anthology of his pieces published in 1960 has been translated into a dozen languages, and with James E. Hammesfahr he wrote 'Creative Glassblowing' in 1968, a handbook for amateurs now widely consulted by laboratory technicians.

That his experiments were performed by his readers was also evident for many years from high school science fairs across the country; the American Association for the Advancement of Science at its meeting in Boston this February has scheduled a session on the role of Mr. Stong's column in stimulating careers in the sciences.

Mr. Stong will be missed by his wife, his two children, and all his readers. The *Amateur Scientist* column is being discontinued. **Gerard Piel**

announcements

International meetings

March 11, **New Particles and New Quantum Numbers**, a discussion meeting, London (The Executive Secretary, The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1 5AG, UK).

April 8-10, **Natural Gas Processing and Utilisation**, Dublin (Natural Gas Conference, Institution of Chemical Engineers, P.O. Box 770, Upper Merion Street, Dublin 2, Ireland).

April 12-13, **Drug Action at the Molecular Level**, organised by the Biological Council Coordinating Committee for Symposia on Drug Action, London (Miss G. Blunt, Administrative Secretary, c/o Department of Pharmacology, University College, Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT, UK).

April 12-15, **Unsteady flow in many channels**, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (The Organising Secretary, U.F.O.C. Symposium, BHRA Fluid Engineering,

Cranfield, Bedford MK43 0AJ, UK). April 12-16, **Spring Annual Meeting**, Washington D.C. (Meetings, AGU, 1909 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C., 20006).

April 15-17, **Social and Economical Significance of Animal Production Policy of EEC and The World Strategy for Zootechnical Production**, Milan, organised by the Societa' Italiana per il Progresso della Zootecnica, Milan (Professor T. Bonadonna, Milano, Via Comelico 3, Italy).

April 20-23, **Third European Meeting on Cybernetics and Systems Research**, Vienna (Secretariat of the Austrian Society for Cybernetics Studies, Schottengasse 3, A-1010 Wien, Austria).

April 20-24, **Models and Numerical Methods Applied to the Studies of Surfaces and of Adsorbates on Surfaces**, CECAM, Paris (Professor M. Simonetta, Istituto di Chimica Fisica, University of Milan, Milan, Italy).

April 22, **European Solar Houses**,

London (The Secretary, UK-ISES, The Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BS, UK).

April 23-24, **Historical Biogeography, Plate Tectonics and the Changing Environment**, Corvallis, Oregon (A. J. Boucot, Department of Geology, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon 97331).

April 24-30, **Radiation Protection as an Example of Action Against Modern Hazards**, Paris (Mr Gilbert Bresson, General Secretary IRPA Fourth International Congress, B.P.33,92260-Fontenay-aux-roses, France).

April 25-28, **The 22nd Annual Meeting**, Philadelphia (Institute of Environmental Sciences, Betty Peterson, Executive Director, 940 East Northwest Highway, Mount Prospect, Illinois 60056).

April 27-29, **New Materials and Processing in the Textile Industry**, Manchester (Mr J. K. Jackson, Shirley Institute, Manchester M20 8RX, UK).