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Richard H. Fleming Biography

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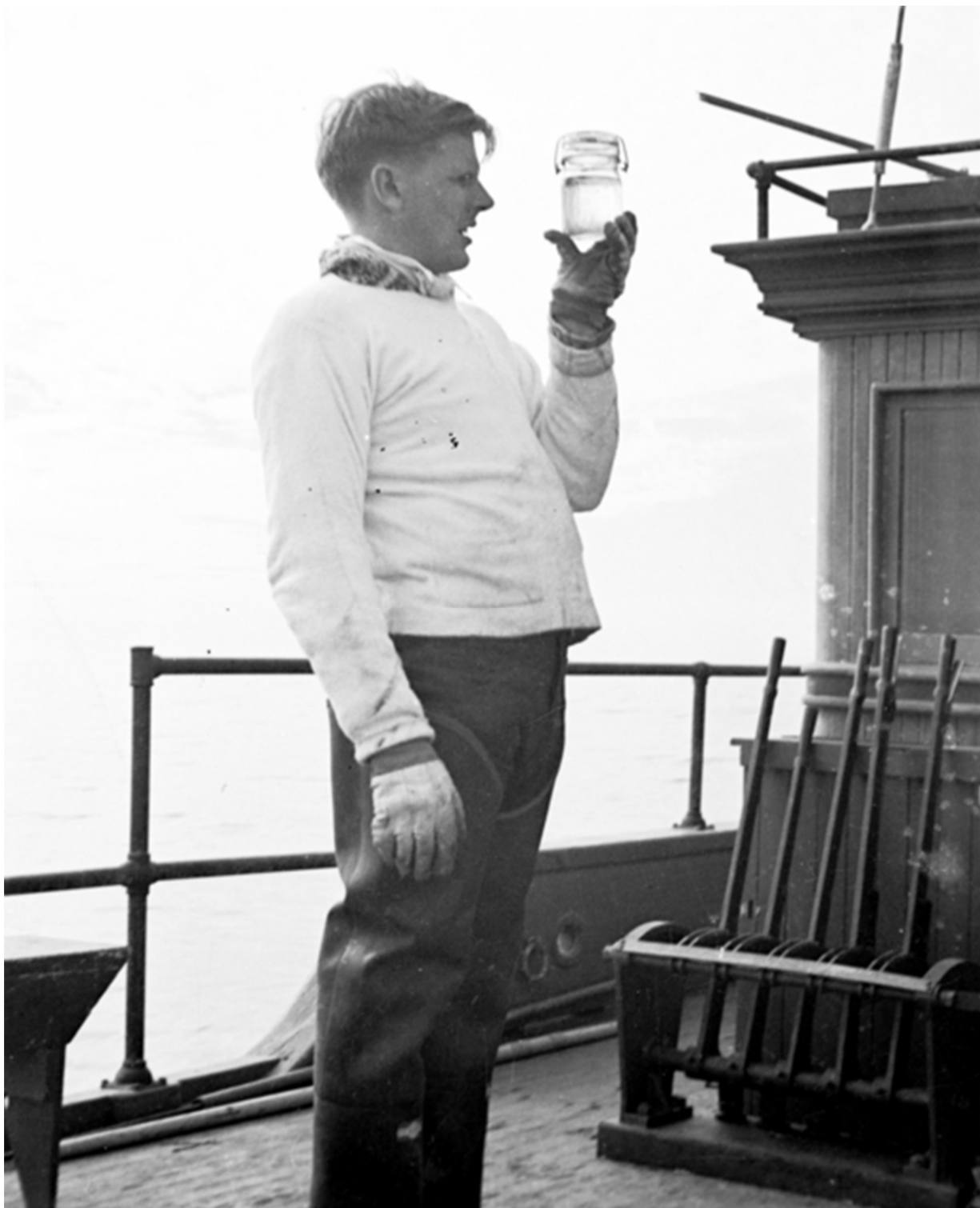
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Richard H. Fleming Biography
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Richard Howell Fleming on the R/V Scripps

Richard H. Fleming (1909-1989) was an oceanographer and chaired the University of Washington Oceanography Department from 1951 to 1967. He was born in Victoria, British Columbia, and attended the University of British Columbia, where he received his B.A. and an M.A. in chemistry. Afterward he pursued studies at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography of the University of California, receiving his Ph.D. in oceanography in 1935. Fleming taught at the Scripps Institution for several years and also worked for the Division of War Research of the University of California from 1941 to 1946, applying the study of oceanography to problems of undersea warfare. He continued his work in the military applications of oceanography as the chief oceanographer for the U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office in Washington, D.C. from 1946 to 1951. Dr. Fleming joined the faculty of the University of Washington in 1951 as the chairman of the Oceanography Department. He directed the expansion of the department's programs, including the development of undergraduate studies in oceanography.

Dr. Fleming also engaged in research during his time as chairman and participated in major projects at sea. The NORPAC (Northern Pacific Survey) project (1955-1956) was the first comprehensive synoptic survey of the Northern Pacific Ocean, charting currents, tides, winds, depths, and temperatures and observing plant and animal life over a two year period. Project Chariot (1959-1962), conducted for the Atomic Energy Commission as part of Operation Plowshare, investigated the possibility of creating a harbor in Alaska by exploding nuclear devices. Dr. Fleming's career coincided with the beginning of the nuclear age, and his work included two studies on the disposal of atomic wastes in the ocean, the first for the National Bureau of Standards and the second for the National Research Council.

Fleming belonged to numerous scientific organizations and worked on many committees. These included an organizing committee of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics and several committees of the National Research Council. He engaged in and supervised research on grant projects sponsored by the Office of Naval Research, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the National Science Foundation.

Fleming served as chairman of the Department of Oceanography until 1967 and continued as a professor of oceanography until 1980, when he retired as professor emeritus. He was particularly interested in the development of education in oceanography and worked with committees to promote the training of secondary school teachers and the publication of textbooks in the field. He was the author, with Harold Sverdrup, of *The Oceans*, one of the standard works on oceanography. Fleming was also a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Istanbul in Turkey from 1964 to 1965.