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In Memorium: Thomas S. Hopkins—Nobody Cared More! May 9, 1930 - March 10, 2016

George F. Crozier

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IN MEMORIUM

THOMAS S. HOPKINS—NOBODY CARED MORE!

MAY 9, 1930–MARCH 10, 2016

DR. GEORGE F. CROZIER

In the late 1970s the Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL) was experiencing very serious difficulties as the consortium was beginning to take shape. The early years were almost totally dependent on the remnants of the University of Alabama's Marine Science Institute and the minuscule

appropriation of \$100K allotted annually! Tom Hopkins brought Minerals Management Service funding, graduate students, and tons of equipment to the embryonic laboratory that had almost nothing. He noted that the Marine Science Institute offered a blank slate—and a football team.

But Tom's impact on the DISL really began an incredible 53 yr ago when he recruited me to the Scripps Institute of Oceanography (SIO) in San Diego, CA. His concern for me as a student has been mirrored in hundreds, even thousands, of students throughout his career as Professor, Department Chairman (University of West Florida), Senior Marine Scientist (DISL), and, finally, Professor Emeritus at the University of Alabama.

Tom came from a U.S. Marine Corps family, eventually becoming the youngest drill instructor in the history of the Corps. He served his country valiantly during the Korean War and attacked his undergraduate career with the same vigor. His commitment to each and every cause was characterized by a ferocious desire to win. His friends were great friends and his enemies great enemies.

After finishing his Ph.D. at SIO Tom left to help build New College in Florida but was quickly recruited to build the Department of Biology at the brand-new University of West Florida as Chair. But his zest for research in the Gulf of Mexico outweighed his waning enthusiasm for administration and he accepted my offer to bring his new GRUNTS (Gulf Research Underwater Naturalist

Team) to the Sea Lab. DISL had little to offer him beyond the freedom to develop his methodologies in benthic research and invertebrate taxonomy.

The students and technicians accompanying Tom became the backbone and muscle for the old radar station. All went on to careers in consulting, technical support, government service (mostly in Florida), and a later student has become the Director of the DISL.

Tom's interests turned slightly north in the 1980s, and his group carried out the first quantitative examination of the benthic communities of Mobile Bay. This was also a landmark effort in estuarine science, and we are still using the data to better understand biological processes in Mobile Bay. These efforts underpin much of our background knowledge of Coastal Zone Management principles, the National Estuary Program, and the State Natural Heritage Program.

Dr. George Crozier presents Dr. Tom Hopkins with a plaque commemorating his 25 yr of service. The plaque quotes John Steinbeck's The Log from the Sea of Cortez "It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again."

As a recruit entering the U.S. Marine Corps, Tom was so nervous that he shouted his name to the drill instructor as “Thomas Hopkins, Sir!,” and this moniker was perpetuated for the rest of his life as Tom “S” Hopkins. This was clearly the last time that Tom was ever afraid of anything. I happen to know that his middle initial really was

“S,” and what it stands for I’ll never tell. That will have to be part of his legacy that is mine alone. At different times Tom was our mentor, tyrant, colleague, confidante, friend, Rasputin, broker, and, always, our champion! He is neither gone nor forgotten and will always be a part of the Sea Lab.