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Edward J. Chesney 1950-2021

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OBITUARY



EDWARD J. CHESNEY, JR.
1950-2021

The marine science community mourns the loss and celebrates the life and career of Edward “Ed” J. Chesney, Jr., Professor Emeritus at Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium. Ed passed away on 9 August 2021 after a fight with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

Ed was born on 3 September 1950 and grew up in a large family in Wyandotte, Michigan. The first in his family to attend college, Ed enrolled at Marietta College (Biology) for his freshman and sophomore years and then transferred to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (Fisheries & Aquatic Sciences). Ed was first exposed to marine research through a University of Michigan field practicum at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, where he gained a variety of experiences and became fascinated by the sea. After graduating with his bachelor’s degree in 1973, Ed returned to Woods Hole as a research assistant supporting ecological research off the coast of Spain where he studied secondary productivity associated with off-bottom mussel aquaculture. Ed would fondly reminisce about being a “Midwestern boy” who was suddenly exposed to exotic cuisine and cultures in Spain and fancy dinners in Paris. After two years, Ed’s supervisor told him he would need to earn a doctorate if he wished to pursue a career in marine science. Soon thereafter, Ed enrolled at the University of Rhode Island, School of Oceanography where he was mentored by H. Perry Jeffries and Kenneth R. Tenore. He completed his dissertation research at Skidaway Institute of Oceanography in Savannah, GA. Ed graduated in 1984 with a Ph.D. in Biological Oceanography after defending his dissertation on the population dynamics, secondary production, and energetics of the polychaete, *Capitella capitata*. Following graduate school, Ed accepted an opportunity as a post-doctoral researcher with Ed Houde at the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, MD where he honed skills culturing Striped Bass and studying their early life history.

In 1987, Ed joined the faculty at the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) in Cocodrie, LA, where he led a fisheries and aquaculture research program until his retirement in 2018. Ed quickly fell in love with the Gulf of Mexico (GOM) and would memorize the latest fisheries landings statistics so he could readily reinforce Louisiana’s reputation as “Sportsman’s Paradise” and the heart of the “Fertile Fisheries Crescent.” Ed spent much of his free time fishing Terrebonne Bay and Louisiana’s offshore waters, where he developed a knack for finding and catching many of the diverse fishes of the region, but especially enjoyed fishing for Florida Pompano around oil and gas platforms. Ed also enjoyed fly fishing for Chinook Salmon in Michigan, and successfully captured large fish with flies he tied himself.

Ed’s lab specialized in spawning and culturing of species that are critically important and exceedingly difficult to culture, like the Bay Anchovy, Gulf Menhaden, Red Snapper, Cobia, Florida Pompano, Red Drum, and Spotted Seatrout to name a few. His research was broadly focused on the ecology of fishes, but he is best known for his work on fisheries, aquaculture, toxicology, hypoxia, and the ecology of oil and gas platforms. Ed published over 60 papers that provided critical insights for the management of fisheries and aquaculture in the GOM. His expertise and talent were especially valuable in the aftermath of the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill where Ed’s lab was one of the few in the world that could produce larvae for sensitive species and perform experiments in support

of the Natural Resources Damage Assessment. Ed was a dedicated researcher who acquired a depth of understanding about every aspect of his work matched by few. That said, he did not get lost in his research, but always maintained a keen sense of the big picture and applied significance of his findings. Ed also recognized the value fishers brought to fisheries science and would never venture offshore for research cruises without first speaking to his friends who were charter or commercial captains to get their read on the offshore conditions.

Ed was an enthusiastic teacher who excelled in providing immersive experiences for his summer courses and undergraduate internships. Ed enjoyed teaching small classes where he could engage each of his students directly and would infuse his courses with rich demonstrations of his current research and memorable field excursions. While Ed only served as an advisor for a handful of graduate students and post docs, he left a lasting impression on them and placed them in positions to succeed. Being Ed's mentee meant there were plenty of fishing trips, which would turn into fishing lessons and extended advising sessions where you would discuss research and how to establish yourself as a professional. He was also invested in the mental health of his mentees and would frequently remind them to take time off and to focus on their lives outside of research.

In service to his discipline, Ed traveled the world as an invited speaker to present his research. He served on a variety of committees and state and federal advisory panels, and served as Secretary Treasurer of the Louisiana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society from 1994-1995 and 1996-1997. He was quite respected by coastal managers and stakeholders, especially those in the fishing community. Despite his soft-spoken nature and preference in maintaining a low profile, his reputation led to scientists across several disciplines regularly seeking him out for advice. Ed served on many graduate committees and would regularly offer his time and space in his lab where he would teach students how to culture and care for their study organisms.

For his many talents and achievements, Ed remained admirably humble and approachable. Ed was immeasurably influential in his constant facilitation of science throughout his career. Ed was a great person to have known and he will be missed by many. Ed's family requests that in lieu of flowers or gifts, please make a donation to [Team Gleason Foundation](#) or [The ALS Foundation](#) in Ed's memory.

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