



BIOGRAPHY

THOMAS J. MINELLO, PH.D. AND WIFE SUSAN

Born and raised in northern Ohio and living far from the sea, I read about Jacques Cousteau, watched *Sea Hunt*, and wondered how to get out of Cleveland. As a pre-med student at Cleveland State University (CSU), I was first exposed to ecology in a class where the professor worked on limnetic cladocerans, tracing historical population trends in Lake Erie from benthic cores. It was there that I realized that working on very small relic animals under a microscope was like it sounds...boring. The science of ecology, however, was captivating, if I could just get to the ocean where diverse systems with thousands of colorful and exotic fishes awaited. I was offered a graduate assistantship with Dr. Taisoo Park at Texas A&M University, and since I had no job, and they were willing to pay me \$325 / month, I agreed to work on copepods in the Gulf of Mexico. Certainly not colorful or fish, but they are diverse. I had no idea what Texas was like, except it was hot. Another of my professors at CSU was a graduate of the University of Texas, and he told me that there was only one real university in Texas, and it was not Texas A&M; it turns out that he was wrong.

For 8 years, I worked on the ecology of copepods, and while it may have been a step up from cladoceran parts, there was still something missing. Dr. Park is a great taxonomist, and I truly believe that this under-appreciated calling is vital, but pulling appendages off small animals under the microscope was not for me. After earning my copepod Ph.D. at Texas A&M, Dr. Ed Klima offered me a position at the NMFS Galveston Lab in 1981 working on the ecology of juvenile penaeid shrimp. What a delightful change...studying animals that you could actually see and hold in your hand. Roger Zimmerman and I were hired at the same time, and he worked on shrimp foraging and growth while I worked on factors affecting shrimp mortality. Oh yes, and somewhere in there I married Susan; we now have two grown sons, and they have moved out of the house! My early work on predator-prey interactions and on the ecological relationships between shrimp and their environment was so personally rewarding, apparently successful, and recognized by NMFS as valuable that I got promoted - and was confronted with the Peter principle. In 1993, as the new Branch Chief for Fishery Ecology at the Galveston Lab, I began to learn how to manage stuff. Thank God for Lawrence Rozas and my many other co-authors! Our mission statement for the Fishery Ecology Branch is to "Identify and describe relationships between fishery productivity and the coastal environment", and we have published over 185 papers on the role of salt marshes and other estuarine habitats in supporting shrimp production, environmental factors affecting shrimp growth and mortality, design and construction of functional created salt marshes, potential impacts of altering freshwater inflows into estuaries, effects of Deepwater Horizon oil on shrimp growth, and on the relative efficiency of different sampling gear. Most of our publications are available at http://www.galvestonlab.sefsc.noaa.gov/research/fishery_ecology/feb_pubs/index.html. Over the last 30 years, I also have had the privilege of advising graduate students at Texas A&M as a Visiting Member of the Graduate Faculty and have team-taught several courses in estuarine ecology and marine fisheries management at Texas A&M at Galveston.