

Paul Galtsoff Industry Award *Don Webster, University of Maryland*

The Paul Galtsoff Industry Award is given to individuals who have made substantial contributions at regional, national, or global levels, notably linking science with industry needs, and substantial outreach efforts. Don Webster exemplifies what industry extension is meant to be. Don began working in Maryland in 1974 after graduating from the University of Rhode Island, which he attended after service in the US Army in Vietnam. He initially provided educational programs to watermen to organize their recordkeeping for income tax purposes. Don joined the World Aquaculture Society in 1980 and was a charter member of the U.S. Aquaculture Society. Over the last 45+ years, Don has worked his way up through the ranks of University of Maryland Extension to the highest rank of Principle Agent/Regional Specialist which is the equivalent rank of full Professor. He received his graduate degree in Agriculture and Extension Education in 2002 from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.



Don moved his programs heavily into aquaculture and has worked with numerous species and production systems. These include finfish in both pond and recirculating systems. He has worked tirelessly to help advance the aquaculture industry in Maryland and the rest of the United States, especially with shellfish. A great deal of his work has been applied to policy, regulations, and legislation because these so greatly affect development of the industry and its potential profitability. He has provided consultations for other states as well as being principally involved with Maryland and its long history of conflict between shellfish growers and commercial harvesters.

Since 2005, he has been a member of the Maryland Aquaculture Coordinating Council that advises the Governor and Legislature on the broad range of aquaculture issues and has been elected Chair several times. He was a member of the Maryland Oyster Advisory



Commission for seven years and participated in developing several pieces of legislation. He aided in completely rewriting the century old Maryland shellfish leasing law, bringing years of analysis to the new version, which passed unanimously in the legislature and consulted in developing the new program that began in 2010, and currently has over 7000 acres in active production. In 2022, Don was awarded the U.S. Aquaculture Society Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognizes colleagues who have made contributions and broad impacts throughout their careers in aquaculture. He helped write at least five books and has given more extension talks and scientific presentations than we can count. He has been a chapter author in all editions of the *Recirculating Aquaculture Systems Handbook*, and wrote the “Education” chapter for *Shellfish Aquaculture and the Environment*. He aided in the development and teaching of RAS for the production of softshell crabs and has a long history of involvement with bivalve culture. During his career he has participated in contracts and grants totaling nearly \$2 million.

Always with a keen eye on the industry, Don was instrumental in helping bring remote setting technology to Maryland. He serves as the Maryland representative to the Technical Advisory Council of the USDA Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center, which funds multistate research and extension development projects. Always on the lookout for new technology that will help make shellfish culture more efficient and more profitable, Don played a key role in Maryland’s partnership with the Clark School of Engineering to pioneer robotics in shellfish aquaculture. “By working with people in the industry, we were able to determine where the biggest problems were and develop ways to address them using research and extension”, he said.

Reggie Harrell, Director of the Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center, said “Mr. Webster has been the driving force behind the advancement of the shellfish aquaculture industry in the Chesapeake Bay region. He had done more to educate the public, watermen, scientists, and politicians about the value aquaculture brings not only to Maryland and Virginia but to the nation as a whole. His affable, disarming nature affords him the ability to move protagonists and antagonists who stand ‘toe-to-toe’ defending their views about aquaculture to a point where common ground is established and meaningful, thoughtful advances and conversations take place.”

Don’s dedication to helping and doing what is best for the industry is evident by his programming and willingness to talk to anyone about oyster culture. Don is regularly called on by policymakers in Maryland, other states, and sometimes internationally, for advice on shellfish aquaculture topics. He always gives advice from the perspective of the grower and finds ways to communicate grower needs to those making the decision, weathers it be governors, congressional members, or other US Cabinet members.

People often ask Don when he is going to retire. His response is “When Maryland aquaculture grows more oysters than the Virginia Aquaculture Industry.” We don’t want Don to retire anytime soon, so Bill Walton..... get busy down there in Virginia.

Matt Parker