

David H. Wallace Award Bestowed on Walter Canzonier

Walter J. Canzonier was honored at NSA's 102nd Annual Meeting with the David C. Wallace Award for promoting "understanding, knowledge, and cooperation among industry members, the academic community, and government". An NSA member since 1958, Walt has been a tireless advocate for stronger ties among these three entities since he was a graduate student.



Walt was born in New Brunswick, NJ and grew up in an Italian-Irish-Scottish family, a genetic and cultural hybridization that probably explains some of his eccentricities and his rather quirky sense of humor. While working on recreational fishing boats as a teenager, he developed an appreciation for the intersection of commerce and marine life. After graduation from St. Peter's College in Jersey City in 1957, Walt came to Rutgers University as a graduate student to work with Hal Haskin, just as the MSX epizootic was beginning to kill oysters in Delaware Bay. He not only developed into a highly talented scientist, but also quickly formed strong ties to local oyster growers and was instrumental in conveying to them scientists finding about this new disease. His competency as an electrician, plumber, and carpenter was invaluable as the "New Jersey Oyster Research Laboratory" (Later the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory) added facilities in the ensuing years.

In the mid-1960s, Walt shifted his research focus from oyster diseases to the human diseases caused by the eating of contaminated shellfish, demonstrating in a pivotal experiment, that hard clams do not readily eliminate viruses when depurated. Shellfish sanitation has been one of Walt's passions ever since. He has been a tireless and very vocal advocate for the shellfish industry at Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Commission meetings; pressing the regulators for rational application of rules and pushing the states to meet their water-quality monitoring obligations and the processors to fulfill their obligations as well. In 1971, frustrated because Rutgers would not let him use Italian as one of the two foreign languages needed to demonstrate proficiency for a Ph.D. program, Walt decided to broaden his horizons by moving to Italy, where he worked for a decade in marine laboratories near Venice, eventually becoming director of the Coastal Resources Applied Research Laboratory in Chioggia. There he produced several papers – two in Italian – on mussel depuration and co-authored the first description of *Perkinsus sp.* in Europe. During this period, he was also a consultant for UNESCO, helping to design marine laboratories in Europe and the Middle East.

After 10 years in Italy, he returned to New Jersey and Rutgers,

where he helped design the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory and worked to define the relationship between phytoplankton dynamics and oyster meat quality. In 1987, he left Rutgers employment, believing that the University was no longer rewarding the type of applied research that he believed important for the shellfish industry. A disastrous MSX epizootic had just occurred and he and local oyster growers formed a non-profit association to test the feasibility of remote setting of oyster larvae from MSX-resistant oysters. He designed and built a setting tank in an old shucking house, organized local watermen to participate in the project, and throughout kept meticulous records of costs and returns so that this method could be compared with traditional methods.

Walt has continued to be a bridge between researchers and the shellfish industry members by designing systems that help the industry - for removing sediment and shell material from shucking house effluent; for counting clam seed, and for continuous algal culture, to name a few. He is a fixture at Shellfish Council meetings and has participated on countless committees. He was a major force in developing the New Jersey Aquaculture plan and the Delaware Bay Oyster Revitalization Task Force report. Few days go by when an industry member doesn't stop by to ask him a question. He explains policies and helps them write letters. He's always happy to take visitors through the laboratory or to organize an event that promotes shellfish consumption.

Walt can be credited with saving the New Jersey clam depuration industry several times when the entire industry was in jeopardy of being shut down due to regulatory and engineering problems. On many occasions he stepped in to find solutions, including designing entire systems, preserving a multi-million dollar industry, and dozens of jobs. When Delaware Bay oyster harvesters were facing closures and harvest restrictions associated with summer *Vibrio* illnesses, Walt devised a novel spray-misting swamp-cooler enabling harvesters to stay on the water longer while still protecting public health.

Walt was founding member of the New Jersey Aquaculture Association and served as its president from 1991 to 2000, and served on the Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center Board of Directors and Executive Committee for many years. His vitae lists membership in numerous shellfish-related technical committees in the U.S. and abroad, but he never seeks out honors or praise. He will tell you about a discovery or technique, but leave you to find out on your own that it was his discovery or his design. Walt is also a great historian and serves as the institutional memory for several groups, bringing the perspective of fifty years of commitment and devotion to science and industry. To quote fellow graduate student and former Wallace Award winner, Herb Hidu, "Walt defines the Wallace Award".

Susan Ford
John Kraeuter
Robert Rheault