

## **In Memoriam Arthur Stewart Merrill 1916–2009**

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**IN MEMORIAM**  
**Arthur Stewart Merrill**  
**1916–2009**

Arthur S. Merrill, former President of the National Shellfisheries Association (NSA) and former editor of its *Proceedings*, made many contributions to shellfisheries biology, to the growth and operations of the NSA, and to the U.S. government agencies that oversaw research on shellfisheries.

Arthur was born in Savannah, GA, on April 16, 1916, and as many a 19th century biography might begin, into a family of modest circumstances. He was later to mention that it was one of prejudiced fundamentalist Christians. From boyhood he worked in the building trades, and at the age of 18 was coerced into marrying Ruth Oma Harris who was 26. When World War II came, he enlisted in the Army as a Private in 1942. By the time he was discharged in 1945, Arthur was a Heavy Bomber Pilot (B-24 Liberator) and a First Lieutenant. In one of his early letters to William J. Clench, Curator of Mollusks at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, who was always willing to aid avid shell collectors, Arthur mentioned that while he was a pilot instructor at Tyndall Field living at nearby Port Saint Joe, FL, he became interested in collecting and exchanging shells and was being encouraged in this pursuit by a Lieutenant Speith, who taught navigation to the flyers and was later an assistant director of the School for Altitude Physiology.<sup>1</sup>

When writing to Clench in March 1949, Arthur mentioned that he and his wife had adopted a baby boy, because his wife could not have children. They were living in Summerville, SC, where he was a foreman with the Charleston Construction Company. He lamented that the job looked like it had a future, but business was slow and there was not much chance for advancement. He erroneously thought he was entitled to only 1 y of college benefits under the GI Bill and that he was too old to apply. Nevertheless, he was determined to try and wrote to Dr. Smith at the University of Miami, who explained that he could not enter for lack of a high school diploma, but suggested that he try the University of Tampa, where he passed the tests that gave him a diploma.<sup>2</sup> Arthur wrote to Clench: “I have been very bust just trying to get started on a new road. I’m kina (*sic*) worried about passing the tests as its 17 years since my high school days, and things were a little hazy at times.”

Taking advantage of the GI Bill, by which the U.S. government paid for higher education of veterans, and with his diploma in hand, Arthur was able to present his credentials to Dr. Smith for admission to the University of Miami where, at Smith’s suggestion, he majored in zoology and minored in geology. Arthur excelled in his work.

In 1950, Arthur received the Beta Beta Beta award, a freshman college honor for high achievement in biology, and, in 1952, he received a Phi Beta Sigma senior college honor for high achievement in biology. This was despite being briefly recalled for military service. Among Arthur’s life-long friends was Gilbert L. Voss (1918–1989), who began his studies on biology 1 y later in 1951, and was to spend most of his active life at the university’s Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science as professor of biological oceanography.

Arthur made friends with another student who also graduated in 1952, Colonel John Kenneth Howard (1891–1965), who had served in both World Wars, and was, at the suggestion of the director, Walton Smith, using the GI Bill to secure an AB in biology at age 61. Howard was a wealthy Harvard graduate, class of 1915, a Boston lawyer, and a trustee, who was a big game hunter and avid sports fisherman. Howard had been on the board of the New England Museum of Natural History, where he was responsible for choosing a young, already well-known mountain climber, Bradford Washburn, as its director, who transformed what was the Boston Society of Natural History into the Museum of Science. Howard was also vice chairman of the Overseers Committee of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, where the head of a huge African elephant (which he had shot) is still on display. He later funded

studies on billfishes (Istiophoridae) at the Rosenstiel School, and wrote scholarly papers on them. During winters, Colonel Howard lived on Boston's North Shore at the exclusive Myopia Hunt Club, where he was to entertain Arthur with good drinks and fine cigars, but that would come later.

On May 23, 1952, Arthur wrote to Clench that he had been accepted at Harvard University to pursue graduate work the following September. There is no evidence from the correspondence that he had requested any help from Clench. It was not until 1961 that he received his MA from Harvard. Sometime during his early years at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, he fell in love with Emily Smalukas, who was then the wife of J. Lockwood Chamberlin, a fellow graduate student. Arthur and Emily married in 1954, and they had 2 daughters, Priscilla and Jennifer. Arthur and Woody, as Chamberlin was known, would later be co-authors. Clench was cool toward Arthur after this, because he did not believe in divorce even though both his sons were later to do the same. Ruth Merrill had become friends of Clench and Ruth D. Turner, who was then pursuing her PhD, and they continued to correspond for many years. The first Mrs. Merrill confided that Arthur promptly sent her any funds they had agreed upon.

From January 1954 to September 1957, Arthur was president of the TriBeta Construction Company in North Merrick, NY, a small town in Nassau County on Long Island. The significance of the company name was known only to a few who knew of his academic honors. Obviously this was part of his plan to continue his higher education when he could afford to pay for it.

From 1958 to 1964, Arthur was a research biologist with the Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, Biological Laboratory, at Woods Hole, MA. Although he received his MA from Harvard University in 1961, in 1962 he was granted a year's leave to take further training in the field of molluscan research, and was able to study under the guidance of Clench and Ruth Turner, who was by then an expert on the Teredinidae, or shipworms.

In May 1964, Arthur was appointed assistant laboratory director of the Biological Laboratory of the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries at Oxford, MD. From April 1968 to April 1971, Arthur was promoted to director of the National Marine Fisheries Service at Oxford, MD, during which time he was honored as "Boss of the Year" by the Tidewater Chapter of the National Secretaries Association (International), probably because he believed promotion should be based on merit alone. He had now acquired his third wife, Esther Carlson.

By the time Arthur was promoted to director, he had already co-authored papers with the great oyster expert Paul S. Galtsoff (1887–1979) and the pioneer marine geologist Kenneth Orris Emery (1914–1988). Emery and Merrill were the principal authors of two widely cited and pioneering papers published in 1965 on the Quaternary marine environments on the Atlantic continental shelf.

In 1970, Arthur earned his PhD from the University of Delaware for his taxonomic revision of the Architectonicidae (a family of marine gastropods) of the western Atlantic. Kenneth Boss, Arthur Clarke, and Robert Robertson served as the outside reviewers for his thesis.

From 1969 to 1970, Arthur was a vice president of the American Malacological Union and served as its president from 1971 to 1972. As a life member of the NSA, he served as editor of its *Proceedings*, with the assistance of John Ropes.<sup>3</sup> Arthur strongly thought that anonymous reviews were improper, because sometimes the reviewer would use anonymity as a shield for making *ad hominem* attacks on the authors, or otherwise denigrating their research. He believed that reviewers should offer constructive criticism in a candid but honest way, and that standing behind your words would ensure that the review would be fair to the author.

By 1969 Arthur had 11 countries, up from one, and 78 active libraries on the mailing list of the *Proceedings*. Carriker (2004: 134) mentioned that at the 1978 NSA meeting, "Merrill was given a unanimous vote of thanks by the members and the Executive Committee was authorized to present him with a 'fitting and proper gift.'" This was a plaque that honors him with the words, "for outstanding leadership and service as editor of the 'Proceedings' National Shellfisheries Association 1968."

From April 1971 to April 1976, he was appointed director of resource assessment investigations, National Marine Fisheries Service, Middle Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Center, Highlands, NJ. In this capacity, he had to supervise the numerous coastal laboratories that were created under the Saltonstall-Kennedy Act of 1954, often flying between them on his own airplane, having obtained a pilot's license. From 1976 until his retirement in 1980, Arthur was a senior scientist, and by then had acquired a fourth wife, Harriet.

Upon retirement, Arthur moved to Richmond, ME, where he engaged in several businesses in addition to buying rundown properties with government grants and turning them into salable real estate. He was able to work with Professor Kenneth J. Boss at the Museum of Comparative Zoology whom he had known when the latter was a graduate student. It was Arthur who had advised Boss to leave a good-paying government job to become professor of biology and curator of mollusks at Harvard College. Together, they wrote on the Architectonicidae, which had been Arthur's early interest. Throughout the years, Arthur was able to add to Harvard's collection some 7,330 lots of mollusks from Maine to Florida, collected on various government expeditions.

Arthur sold his interests in Maine, divorced Harriet, and moved to Florida. When he last visited those of us who were his Harvard friends, he was accompanied by his fifth wife, Joyce, who predeceased him. At the time of his death, he was living with a companion, Selma, in Florida.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Herman Speith (1905–1988) began his studies at Indiana Central College, graduating in 1926. He went on to Indiana University, where he worked under Alfred Kinsey on the evolution and taxonomy of mayflies and was awarded a PhD in 1931. From 1932 to 1953, he taught at the College of the City of New York. While in New York, he became friends with Theodosius Dobzhansky at Columbia University and Ernst Mayr at the American Museum of Natural History, both of whom encouraged him to study the mating habits of *Drosophila*. From 1956 to 1964, he was the first chancellor of the University of California, Riverside. He retired in 1973 and returned to his research on the biology of *Drosophila*.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. F. G. Walton Smith (1909–1989), a native of Bristol, England, received his doctoral degree from the University of London and was a biologist in the Bahamas before joining the faculty of the University of Miami in 1940, where he founded the laboratory that, in 1943, became the renowned Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science.

<sup>3</sup>John W. Ropes (1927–1988), long with the Fish and Wildlife Service, was transferred to Oxford, MD, in 1964 to work with Merrill. Their research on the surf clam fishery would form the scientific basis for comprehensive management of this species beginning in 1971 (Murawski 1989).

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## TAXA INTRODUCED BY ARTHUR S. MERRILL

- bullisi* Bieler, Merrill, and Boss *Pseudotorina* 1985, *The Nautilus* 99(4): 139, Figs 1–3. Holotype USNM 819925 and paratype 1, USNM 500298; paratypes 2 and 3, Museum of Comparative Zoology MCZ 262982. Type locality of the holotype and paratypes 2 and 3 is *R/V Oregon* station 518, about 90 miles southwest of Pensacola, FL. Paratype 1 is from the Smithsonian University of Iowa Expedition 1918, Barbados station D.3, on a sandy bottom off Pelican Island in 137 to 146 m.  
*inflata* Boss and Merrill 1965, *Pandora (Pandoraella), Johnsonia* 4(44): 205. Replacement name for *Kemmerlia brevis* Verrill and Bush 1898, *non* Sowerby 1829.  
*sindermanni* Merrill and Boss, *Acutitectonica* 1984, *Occasional Papers on Mollusks* 4(65): 339, pl. 46, Figure 1–2. Holotype (only specimen), Museum of Comparative Zoology MCZ 294313, about 105 miles north of Cabo Orange, Brazil in 96 m.

## PROFESSIONAL WORKS OF ARTHUR S. MERRILL

In the Department of Mollusks at the Museum of Comparative Zoology are 2 bound volumes of Merrill's papers through 1980. At Merrill's request, 3 such sets were assembled by Richard E. Petit of North Myrtle Beach, SC, who believes that the other 2 volumes were for his daughters.

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