



IN MEMORIAM

Susan E. Ford
1942–2017

Susan Elizabeth Ford, age 75, died on December 5, 2017 in Williamsburg, VA. An internationally renowned shellfish pathologist, researcher, and mentor, Susan began her professional career working as a laboratory technician under Harold (Doc) Haskin in 1966 at the Oyster Research Laboratory, now known as the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory. Doc Haskin recognized her skills, encouraged her to complete her undergraduate education, and in 1978 she received a Bachelor of Arts in zoology from Rutgers University. With Doc's encouragement, Susan obtained a doctorate in zoology from Duke University in 1984 and then returned to Rutgers as an adjunct instructor in the Department of Oyster Culture, a predecessor of the Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences. Susan held several positions at Rutgers, ultimately becoming a tenured research professor in the Department of Marine and Coastal Sciences in 1990. During this time, she was also an adjunct associate professor of pathology in the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Susan 'retired' from Rutgers, became professor emerita in 2002, and continued to work, maintaining an office and active research program at the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory (HSRL) until moving to her childhood home town of Williamsburg, VA in 2013. In Williamsburg, she became an adjunct professor in the School of Marine Science at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science/College of William & Mary where she continued to collaborate with many colleagues on manuscripts, reports, student committees, and funded research.

Throughout her career, Susan sought to understand the biology and ecology of shellfish pathogens, always with a goal of improving management of wild and cultivated populations. She authored or coauthored more than 100 publications that have been cited more than 3,000 times. Her expertise was sought by academics, regulators, and industry members around the world as she served on numerous scientific boards, government committees, industry panels, and nongovernmental organizations. She was a longtime US representative to the Working Group on Pathology and Disease of Marine Organisms for the International Council for Exploration of the Seas. She served on the National Academy of Sciences Committee on Nonnative Oysters in Chesapeake Bay, the Delaware Bay Oyster Fishery annual stock assessment, and as a trustee for the New Jersey Nature Conservancy, among many other examples. The US Congress requested testimony from Susan about oyster diseases on at least three occasions, and she was an invited lecturer in France, Italy, China, Mexico, Korea, and throughout the United States. For decades she was broadly engaged in research with, and mentorship of, European colleagues, and many remember her particular passion for France, fostered during the childhood years her family spent in Paris whereas her father worked for the Marshall Plan after World War II.

Although Susan never sought and routinely declined invitations to run for office within the National Shellfisheries Association, she was a valuable asset to the Association throughout her career that began as a recipient of the Thurlow C. Nelson Award for the best student presentation at the annual meeting in 1971. She regularly volunteered to accomplish various tasks necessary for the National Shellfisheries Association (NSA) to fulfill its mission. At the time of her death she was still cochair of the publications committee with John Kraeuter. In this role, she shepherded the *Journal of Shellfish Research* into the digital age, negotiating a favorable relationship with BioOne to provide online access. She was an active member of its Editorial Board for many years. She also served as Editor of the quarterly newsletter. At annual meetings, she frequently organized and moderated sessions, typically on shellfish pathology, and special events at such as the Centennial Roundtable at the 100th Anniversary. Susan often judged student presentations and routinely mentored students and younger scientists. Her contributions to the Association figured into her selection as both the David H. Wallace Award (2004) and an Honored Life Member (2012), but it is the impact of her contributions

to the field of shellfish and shellfisheries through systematic and persistent research, education, outreach, and extension that ultimately resulted in those honors (Kraeuter 2004, Bushek et al. 2016).

Susan's volunteer and leadership roles extended beyond her professional career to the communities in which she lived. In Downe Township, NJ, she served on the town council and she served as a board member of The Nature Conservancy in New Jersey for several years. Soon after moving to New Town, Williamsburg, in her final years she took on reviving the local New Town newsletter, *The Crier*, by bringing her own journalistic standards to that publication, whereas serving as editor and chair of the communications committee. Susan is described by her New Town neighbors as being a faithful friend and neighbor, diligent and disciplined, an enthusiastic leader, humble and unassuming, and a person of broad, rich, and deep experience. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brother, Anthony Thomas Ford (2011), and is survived by her niece, Jennifer Ford and husband Barry Jones, and her grand nieces and nephews Marlena, Aidan, Hope, and Elliott Jones, other loving family and close friends and colleagues the world over.

Susan Ford leaves behind a legacy of professional accomplishments that will serve the field for decades to come. The following is a sampling of comments from past presidents of the NSA, colleagues from around the world, and staff at the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory and Rutgers University indicating her steadfast commitment to excellence, with a pleasant touch of camaraderie, that guided and benefited so many.

When an old shucking house in Bivalve, NJ was the Rutgers University Oyster Research Laboratory, Susan Ford arrived in New Jersey to work with my father, Harold Haskin (aka 'Doc'). From the annual Lab beach parties in the 1960s to the fall tray moves in later years she was a loyal participant in the work and fun. While Susan confessed to not eating oysters on the half shell, she shucked and served them and talked friends into trying oysters for the first time. Fifty years later, she tirelessly cooked piles of pancakes and bacon for the most recent Cape Shore reunion in 2015, celebrating the year my dad would have turned 100. We will miss her.—Betsy Haskin, Oyster Farmer and daughter of Harold Haskin.

More than a colleague it is hard to envision that Susan will no longer be around to provide level-headed advice and humor.—John Kraeuter, former Associate Director of HSRL, NSA Past President

She was a wonderful role model—demanding, yet kind and helpful, a model of decorum, and she had a lovely sense of humor. She will be sorely missed by her NSA family.—Karolyn Hansen, Associate Professor, University of Dayton, NSA Past President

Susan was a regular source of knowledge and counsel and is leaving a great gap. Her selfless and quiet contributions to science, students, and the NSA were timeless. A scholar, a lady, and a nice person!—Sandra E. Shumway, Editor, Journal of Shellfish Research, NSA Past President

I learned so much from Susan; always a beacon of professionalism, deep insight, and good nature. She was such a model human being and scientist. I feel so lucky to have had her in my life.—Danielle Kreeger, Science Director, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, NSA Past President

She was a relentless and magnificent researcher and truly cared about the effective management of the shellfish resources that she and her mentor Hal Haskin held so dear. Her myriad contributions to the field of shellfish research have dramatically advanced our knowledge of shellfish pathology and parasitology and, during the course of her career, she mentored and touched the lives of countless students and colleagues. Susan was a treasured colleague and will be deeply missed.—Rich Lutz, former Director of HSRL, NSA Past President

A truly significant loss to the shellfish research community and industry. A historic role model for women in shellfish science and its application.—Louis R. D'Abramo, Dean emeritus of the Graduate School, Mississippi State University, NSA Past President

She was one of the very first people I met from NSA, at my first meeting in 1980, and I always found her to be a genuine person with a really good heart. She will be missed.—Steve Tettlebach, Professor, Long Island University, NSA Past President

When I first came to the Haskin Lab I had not studied shellfish pathology and had no idea who Susan Ford was. I learned quickly and added her to my doctoral committee. I didn't recognize the impact she had on my success until after I left. We continued to collaborate on many grants and manuscripts. Ultimately, she convinced me to return and leave what I thought was my dream job. While I miss my friends and colleagues from that position, I've not regretted it and I am deeply grateful for her support, guidance and friendship.—Dave Bushek, Director, Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory, NSA Past President

Susan meant a lot to me both as a person and professionally. Thanks to her advice and guidance, I became a totally different and better person and scientist after my postdoctoral time at the Shellfish Lab in Bivalve, NJ. She was smart, hardworking and with a wonderful witty sense of humour, similar to what we have in my area of Spain. She was as always very calm and transmitted peace although I could always feel her brain working in the background.—Antonio Figueras, Research Professor and Director of the Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas. CSIC. Spain.

She was such a good mentor and working with her was one of the most beneficial and fulfilling things in my career.—Marty Chintala, US EPA Branch Chief, Habitat Effects Branch, Atlantic Ecology Division, Narragansett, RI

*Susan and I recently finished a manuscript on work we did some time ago on the life cycle of *H. nelsoni*. It was an honor to be her friend and colleague.—Gene Burreson, Professor Emeritus, Virginia Institute of Marine Science*

I am so sorry to lose such an incredible colleague. We did a bit of travel in France way back when. By then Susan had spent several sabbaticals in France, spoke French fluently and was a knowledgeable travel guide. We had fun visiting small French villages, touring historic sites and tasting samples from the many small shops. Her humor and intelligence was unique and touched so many of us.—Dot Leonard, Ocean Equities LLC

She was a really special woman and scientist. I so admired her work ethic and scientific integrity, and as many have said, she served as an excellent role model, friend and colleague. I will miss her smile, laughter, insightful questions and the delightful conversations.—Kimberly Reece, Chair, Aquatic Health Sciences, Virginia Institute of Marine Science

I was fortunate to be hired as a post doc by [Susan] in 1985. The three years I spent at HSRL provided me the foundation that lasted throughout my career. While there I was able to interact with and learn from many shellfish “Hall of Famers”, including Hal Haskin, Susan Ford, Walt Canzonier, Lowell Fritz, Antonio Figueras, Bruce MacDonald, Rich Lutz, John Kraeuter and Steve Fegley, among others. I am so thankful I had the opportunity to be mentored by her.—Bruce Barber, Executive Director, Gulf Shellfish Institute

[I’m] so very sad, but have rich memories of oyster history chats and the passing back and forth of ideas and documents. She was so smart and generous, a treasured colleague at Rutgers.—Bonnie McCay, Prof Emerita, Rutgers University

When I arrived at HSRL for my first academic position, Susan was an iconic presence, supportive but objectively discerning. What comes to mind most in remembrance are the gin and tonic after work ‘brainstorming’ sessions with Susan and Doc Haskin and the sharing of the lore. In retrospect, it was a classic life lesson in the history of shellfish research. So marks the end of an era.—Stan Allen, Professor, Virginia Institute of Marine Science

I got to know Susan when she became part of one of our oyster modeling projects many years ago. Working with Susan was a continuing education. She questioned model assumptions, formulations and results in such a way that always made us think and always improved the final result. One of her responses about simulating part of the MSX disease cycle stands out. Susan explained the discrepancy between the simulation and observations by saying ‘the oyster feels better this time of the year’. This comment resulted in development of a different approach to simulating MSX. Susan was a great scientist who improved any project she was involved with. She also passed her knowledge on to future generations of scientists through participation in STEM events for middle school girls. We are all better for having known her.—Eileen Hofmann, Professor, Center for Coastal Physical Oceanography, Old Dominion University

I was fortunate to be able to work with Susan in the last several years that she was living in Williamsburg. We loved having her as a collaborator and part of the lab. The strongest impression Susan made on me, still, was when I was a student at NSA meetings in the later 1990s and she would approach me after a talk and ask me about things I didn’t make clear or convince her of, giving me an opportunity to work through the logic of what I was trying to say. I’ve often told people that being gently challenged in this setting and manner to defend my research, by this leader in the field, was among the most valuable formative experiences I had as a young scientist—so beneficial to my confidence and self-assurance. She continued to help me sharpen my work in different contexts all the way through the more recent years and her time with us at VIMS. I’ll always appreciate Susan’s openness and engagement and generosity.—Ryan B. Carnegie, Research Professor, Department of Aquatic Health Sciences, Virginia Institute of Marine Science

So very sorry to lose her. We are all mourning her death but do want to celebrate her lovely and productive life.—Roxanna Smolowitz, DVM and Assistant Professor, Roger Williams University

Susan [was] part of the first scientific council of the IUEM set up in 1998. Her advice and recommendations for the development of the Institute [was] particularly appreciated.—Paul Treguer, Professeur émérite, University of Western Brittany, Pouzané-Brest, France

Susan was welcomed to IUEM [European Institute for Marine Studies] as a visiting professor at LEMAR in 2000 and 2003, and since then she worked regularly at LEMAR on mollusc diseases, especially oysters and clams, bringing us all her expertise in immunology, pathology and modeling of environment-host-pathogen interactions. In November 2016, Susan E. Ford had the pleasure of giving us a lecture on oyster pathologies. Since my postdoctoral position with Susan Ford in 1994, many IUEM students, researchers and research professors have also been welcomed at Haskin Shellfish Laboratory (Rutgers University). Collaborative projects on Environmental-Host-Pathogen interactions in the marine environment conducted with Susan involved many collaborators on both sides of the Atlantic (Rutgers, North Carolina, Stony Brook and Louisiana Universities, Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and CNRS, IFREMER, Brest and Caen Universities). We all remember a rigorous and enthusiastic scientist in exploring the biology and ecology of molluscs.—Christine Paillard, CNRS Research Director, Laboratory of Environmental Marine Sciences (LEMAR), European Institute for Marine Studies (IUEM) University of Western Brittany, Pouzané-Brest, France

Susan worked with me at LEMAR [during my sabbatical in Brittany, France in 2007]—we published two papers from this time—and she showed me many of the beautiful sights in Brittany, a place that she truly loved. I have my best memories of Susan from those six months spent in France. She was instrumental in my deciding to go there for the sabbatical as she knew the area and the lab so well.—V. Monica Bricelj, Rutgers University

*It can truly be said that she was an icon in the field of shellfish disease studies, and she was much admired. Unfortunately, I never met her although we corresponded from time to time, and she was always helpful and friendly. I am currently writing a paper on bonamiosis, but despite the subject not being on *Haplosporidium nelsoni*, I still need to cite seven of her papers, being so relevant to the way in which we perceive shellfish diseases.—Mike Hine, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd (NIWA), New Zealand*

A huge loss especially for those of us on whom Susan had a decisive effect on the course of their lives. Since learning of her illness, I have not stopped thinking about her and her impact on my professional life and, consequently, my personal life.—Bassem Allam, Professor, Stony Brook University, NY

I have much admiration for her as an amazing researcher and a great person. She has been one of my research references through my career, indeed, not only through the information she generated but mainly through her experimental designs and approaches. She has been and will be one of the most inspiring and influential authors in research on bivalve diseases. I have always much appreciated her comments as extremely valuable and encouraging. Talking (particularly listening) to her was one of the most valuable events in scientific meetings every time I had that chance; in fact, that was one of the main incentives to attend NSA meetings from so far. Her bonhomie is also a reference for me. I am grateful to her.—Antonio Villalba, Centro de Investigaciones Mariñas, Consellería do Mar, Xunta de Galicia, Spain

Susan was always such a calm and intelligent voice, especially when oyster issues were being particularly contentious. She was a top-flight scientist, modest too. Lucky we all were to have known her.—Fredrika Moser, Director, Maryland Sea Grant

Susan was a gifted scholar and tireless advocate for the field, but what I will remember most is her kindness and collegiality. She will be sorely missed, and I’m grateful for the time she spent working with BioOne and with me personally.—Lauren Kane, COO, BioOne

Susan Ford was one of the women, not even a generation ahead of me, that gave their all for the pursuit of a successful scientific career when ‘all’ didn’t necessarily include having relationships or a family. Susan and others just ahead of me made the presence of women in our field the norm rather than the exception. I and my family are grateful for that.—Kathryn Ashton-Alcox, Senior Laboratory Researcher, HSRL, Rutgers University

I have been lucky enough to have a few truly inspirational, hard-working, good humoured, intensely supportive, and challenging mentors. Susan was one of the most important. Her qualities and heart were unique. Professionally, she opened doors and pushed her mentees through them. Her loyalty and support was unstinting and she led by remarkable example. I have many happy memories of field work, lab work, sharing meals with friends and colleagues and perhaps most fondly, Susan turning the brightest of red when telling jokes. She will be missed deeply but remembered always.—Tim Littlewood, former HSRL Postdoc, present Head of Life Sciences, Natural History Museum, London UK.

Susan made numerous contributions to science but also nurtured and mentored many young scientists with her patience, humor, and solid scientific guidance.—Lowell Fritz, former HSRL Researcher

HSRL benefited greatly by her work during the 1980s and 1990s, in particular. She helped build the platform of great shellfish research conducted at HSRL that continues to this day.—Mike Kennish, Research Professor, Rutgers

I received a note from Susan my first day at the Haskin lab. She had just moved to Williamsburg, but she wanted to let me know that it was great to “meet” and looked forward to working together. My initial reaction stands today. If the legendary Susan Ford is reaching out, to me, I must have made it as a scientist. I feel fortunate that Susan never really retired. I have never worked with anybody so rigorous and at the same time so pragmatic. She wasn't shy about challenging you, but with a gift for doing so gently and constructively. I can only hope some of those traits have rubbed off on me.—Tal Ben-Horin, former HSRL Postdoc, Dept. of Fisheries University of Rhode Island

There are so many things I appreciate about Susan, but my best memories are of dinners (specifically potato leek soup) and long discussions at Susan's. She was so welcoming and I will be forever grateful to her.—Paola Lopez-Duarte, former HSRL Postdoc, Asst Res Professor, Rutgers

She was a wonderful colleague. We published a paper together some years ago with two undergrads as co-authors, and it was great working with her.—Jim Miller, Professor of Marine Science, Rutgers

Although not unexpected, it was still a severe shock to me and my friends and former colleagues from the Cape Shore days. Our bonds with that place and each other have lasted 40 years—it's difficult to say goodbye to one of our own.—Mitchell Tarnowski, Shellfish Monitoring and Assessment Manager, MD DNR

I keep thinking of one harsh fall day in Cape May Harbor, struggling to get work done in an uncooperative low tide, everyone complaining of the cold and the difficulty we were having, but I looked at Susan and she was silently working away with her hand cut open, tying oyster bags closed and hooking them back onto racks. Susan was always ready to get her hands dirty, always patient and calm. Working with her was an amazing experience, she made you want to do better and work harder just by her example. I will always be grateful that Susan gave me a shot and set me on a path to where I am today.—Emily Scarpa McGurk, Senior Pathology Lab Technician, HSRL, Rutgers University

Susan was one of those faculty members that was always a positive influence. She worked hard. She did good work. She was creative. She was a good mentor for students and post-docs and she was a willing and earnest collaborator. Perhaps most importantly, she saw the need for long-term time series. Few exist and the datasets she has left will be eternally valuable. She will be sorely missed.—Eric Powell, former HSRL Director, Professor, University of Southern Mississippi

Susan is part of so many memories of warm summer days sampling on the Bay, discussions at Bivalve, cold and exhausting but invigorating moments during the fall tray move, and stimulating academic times in Nelson Hall. Lynne and I are saddened to hear that she has left us. I wonder if there are laughing gulls to cheer her if she is in whatever place great shellfish biologists go.—George Noyes, Rutgers Classmate

She was a piece of sanity and blue sky, irreplaceable.—Judy Grassle, Professor Emerita, Rutgers University

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