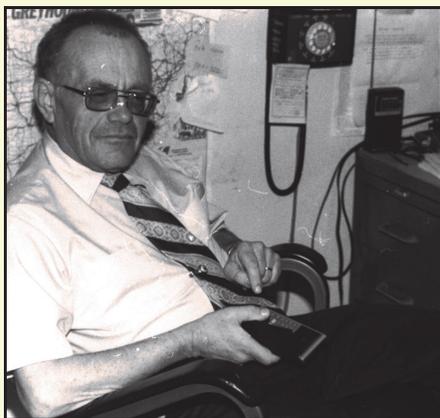


IN MEMORIAM
John W. Hurst, Jr.
1927 - 2015



For 53 years, John W. Hurst, Jr. was a fixture at the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and known throughout the world for his contributions to the field of harmful algae and public health. John was born and raised in Bozeman, Montana and after graduating from Montana State University in 1949, he began his life-long career at the Maine Department of Sea and Shore Fisheries (now Department of Marine Resources - DMR) where he developed the monitoring system for PSP. Over the course of his career he was called many things, “Grandfather of Red Tide”, “the Czar”, and the “Red Tide Guru” among them. But to most who knew him, he was John - a very giving mentor and friend.

John started the Maine Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) monitoring program in 1958 following a serious outbreak of toxicity in neighboring Canada. Over the ensuing 52 years, John continued to develop and perfect that program, and guarded and protected the State of Maine shellfisheries in the face of a highly unpredictable public health issue. It is a testament to his knowledge and perseverance that his program has been held up to the rest of world as the ‘gold standard’ of monitoring programs. One cannot think about shellfish safety or red tide anywhere in the world without hearing the name John Hurst. John understood the importance of long-term data sets before it was a ‘term’ and made his data available to many scientific collaborators over the years -



indeed, many of the models being developed today are based on what John knew to be true 40 years ago! Perhaps of even more consequence was his very special ability to engage young kids and fuel their curiosity and enthusiasm.

His office was filled with testaments to his accomplishments. He and his several teams were recognized with the Commissioner’s Special Citation from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Governor’s Award for Special Teamwork, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Maine legislature, and Governor Angus King. In 2001, John was awarded the Wallace Award from the National Shellfisheries Association, and in 2002 he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to research and monitoring of marine biotoxins at the Xth International Conference on Harmful Algae. The International Society for the Study of Harmful Algae (ISSHA) designated John as a Trailblazer (see <http://www.issaha.org/Welcome-to-ISSHA/HAB-Trail-Blazers/John-Hurst>). All of these recognitions were richly deserved, but John was most proud of the fact that no cases of PSP were ever reported in the State of Maine from commercially harvested shellfish while he was on the job. He listened to the industry and they listened to him and together they built a stellar monitoring program which was emulated globally. John was a constant source of data and experience and shared his knowledge freely with scientists and managers from all corners of the globe for over five decades.

On a more personal note, John was my introduction to the world of toxic algae in 1982 and we remained friends and colleagues for the decades that followed. He was encouraging early on when I suggested that the toxins might well be affecting the shellfish, always interested in research questions, and always willing to provide support where he could and lively discussions and wisdom on a daily basis to any who asked (and to some who didn’t!). He and his young son Dan (who predeceased him) named their basset hound after me and I always smiled when I saw John walking the legs off that dog on their daily jaunt to town. After I left the DMR, John and I remained colleagues and friends and I always knew where to turn when I needed some common sense advice and information. He’s missed.

John is survived by his wife Nancy, sons John and Peter, daughter Lucy, their spouses, three grandchildren, and a global cadre of people who are better for knowing him and for his contributions.

Sandra E. Shumway

