

Obituary: Dr. John J. McDermott (1927–2017)

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John J. McDermott was born in Newark, New Jersey on 31 May 1927 and passed away in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on 4 October 2017. John served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, during which he was a Torpedoman's Mate Third Class on the destroyers USS *Pritchett* and *Bradford*. After the war, John attended Seton Hall College in New Jersey, where he was a member of the basketball team and graduated with a BS in Biology in 1949. John then went on to complete his MS (1951) and PhD (1954) degrees in Biology from Rutgers University, both under the direction of the parasitologist Leslie Stauber (Trager 1972). For his MS thesis, John studied trematodes of the eastern mudsnail, providing detailed morphological descriptions that are still in use today. For his PhD work, John shifted to research on a coccidian parasite of chickens but he never lost sight of the sea. After completion of his doctoral work, John held a position as an Assistant Research Specialist in Oyster Investigations at the Rutgers University Oyster Research Laboratory in Bivalve, New Jersey (now the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory). There he expanded his knowledge of marine organisms in the Delaware Bay and surrounding estuarine waters.

In 1958, John joined the faculty of the Biology Department at Franklin and Marshall College, quickly secured tenure, and served as chair from 1962 to 1973. During his time at Franklin and Marshall College, John inspired many students interested in invertebrate zoology. His

research focused largely on species from the east coast of the United States, including studies at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (where he served as a Visiting Professor of Marine Science, teaching a summer Marine Invertebrates course from 1968–1974), University of Miami Marine Lab, and the Duke Marine Lab. However, John also completed research in Bermuda, Denmark, South Africa, and Wales (supported through a Fulbright Scholar Award and National Science Foundation grants). He greatly enjoyed this travel and having the opportunity to interact with colleagues from around the world.

In the vein of classic zoologists with wide interests and knowledge, John had a love for all things invertebrate, and an infectious enthusiasm for expanding our understanding of the biology and ecology of a wide range of marine taxa (Fig. 1). His important contributions across multiple groups (mostly crustaceans, nemerteans, and trematodes but also including mollusks) are impressive and explain why he was sought out by many researchers for information and advice. John was a Charter Member of The Crustacean Society and had been a patron of the society for many years. In addition, he was an Honorary Member of the Atlantic Estuarine Research Society and was awarded the society's "Venerable Clam" award. John was also active in the Society of Integrative and Comparative Biology (Division of Invertebrate Zoology) and the American Littoral Society.

His research on crustaceans included providing the first report, in collaboration

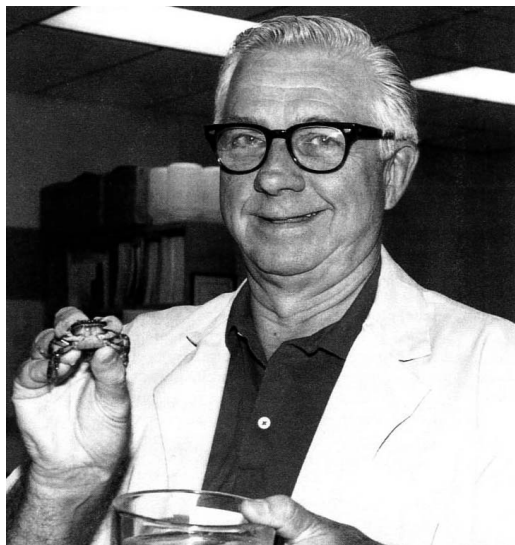


Fig. 1. Dr. John J. McDermott, ca. 1995 holding a specimen of *Hemigrapsus sanguineus*. Photo courtesy of Franklin and Marshall Magazine (Winter 1995 issue).

with noted carcinologist Austin B. Williams, of the introduced Asian shore crab *Hemigrapsus sanguineus* (De Haan, 1835) on the east coast of the United States (Williams & McDermott 1990). This paper was based on specimens found by one of his observant students during a field trip in New Jersey. Subsequently, John documented the rapid spread of the crab (McDermott 1991, 1998a, 2000), its reproduction (McDermott 1998b), feeding (McDermott 1999), and symbionts (McDermott 2007, 2011); thus, providing the foundation for future work on the impacts of this ecologically important invasive species.

Outside of crustacean research, John was an expert on the feeding biology of nemertean worms, this work included studies detailing the natural history of a new carcinonemertid worm from pinnotherid crabs (McDermott & Gibson 1993). His impact as a nemertean researcher was acknowledged in a volume dedicated to his work (Okazaki & Turbeville 2006), whose Preface reads “This volume is dedicated to

Professor John J. McDermott whose nearly 50 years of research in different areas of marine biology, which have included ground-breaking studies of nemertean feeding behavior and ecology, inspired many others to pursue the mysteries of nemertology.” Humble in his achievements, John wrote to me at the time and indicated that he thought his “colleagues went a little overboard with the “ground-breaking” aspect.”

I was fortunate to come into John’s lab during the time he was intensively studying *H. sanguineus*. Perhaps most memorable and inspiring were our field trips to the Jersey shore during Marine Biology class, where John seemed to leave no stone unturned in his efforts to study the crab and its competitors. At this point in time John was approaching retirement but you would not have known it from his stamina in the field and his zeal in marking up our papers! At the end of the course I was thankful that he suggested working in his lab on the poorly known polychaete worm symbiont of hermit crabs, *Dipolydora commensalis* (Andrews, 1991). We went on to publish this research (Williams & McDermott 1997) and after his retirement in 1996 continued to collaborate, eventually reviewing all known hermit crab symbionts worldwide (Williams & McDermott 2004, McDermott et al. 2010), based largely on his knowledge of the literature and extensive personal observations.

During retirement John remained active in research and publication, continuing to complete studies on crustaceans and nemertean crabs (Fig. 2). At the time of his death, John was working on a new species of entoniscid parasite of pinnotherid crabs and tracking the potential northward expansion of the ghost crab *Ocypode quadrata* (Fabricius, 1787) with the help of colleagues and their field observations, for which he was very thankful. John was always a supportive colleague and friend, providing insightful feedback and serving as a role model in



Fig. 2. John collecting isopods from the surf in New Jersey in 2000. He continued field work well after retirement but wrote “In early 2007 while searching for Asian shore crabs that had invaded the Atlantic east coast in the 1980’s, I had a revelation (nothing spiritual). On my knees among rocks and thick mud on the Jersey shore I had completed my collection of crabs. Ready to leave, I had difficulty standing and thought that I would have to crawl to shore or wait for the incoming tide to float me out! But not so. I said to myself, “John, you can’t jump around on the intertidal rocks anymore.” Thus, fieldwork came to an end and writing and laboratory research continued.”

academic pursuits and life. He exemplified a teacher-scholar who found the proper balance of work and family, being a loving husband to his wife Jeanne and devoted father and grandfather to a family who all shared in his marine experiences. His was a life well-lived.

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Taxa named by John J. McDermott

Carcinonemertes pinnotheridophila McDermott & Gibson, 1993

Laminapinnixa McDermott, 2014

Laminapinnixa miamiensis McDermott, 2014

Taxa named in honor of John J. McDermott

Pseudostegias macdermotti Williams & Boyko, 1999
(synonym of *P. dulcillacuum* Markham, 1982)

Claustrathelges macdermotti Williams & Boyko, 2016