DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
PATRICK L. PARKER

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Patrick L. Parker, professor emeritus, marine science, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

IN MEMORIAM
PATRICK L. PARKER

Noted marine chemist Patrick L. Parker died at the age of seventy-eight on April 6, 2011, in a hospital in Searcy near his family home outside Bald Knob, Arkansas. Patrick Parker received his B.A. in Chemistry in 1955 from the University of Arkansas. It was at the University of Arkansas, where he met and married Avalyn Virginia Moseley; they were married for over fifty-four years. While still working on his Ph.D. in 1959, he took a position as a research scientist assistant at the Institute of Marine Science at Port Aransas and established a research program in marine chemistry. After receiving his Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Arkansas in 1960, he remained at the institute for another year, before moving to a staff position in Washington D.C. at the Carnegie Institution. He returned to the Institute of Marine Science in 1963 as a research scientist associate and served as acting director from 1963 to 1966. Patrick Parker became an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry at The University of Texas at Austin in 1965, and he served as a full professor in the Departments of Chemistry and Marine Science from 1976 to 1994 and a professor emeritus from 1994 until his death. He directed the Port Aransas Marine Laboratory for two years (1973-75) and was the associate director of the University of Texas Marine Science Institute (UTMSI) from 1979 to 1982.

Professor Parker was an active member of several scientific societies. He served as president of the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography (1979-80) and as chair of the South Texas Section of the American Chemical Society (1978-79). He was also program manager at the National Science Foundation (1973), a member of the Department of Energy’s Health and Environmental Research Advisory Committee (1984-86), a member of the Governor’s Advisory Panel on Oil and Chemical Spill Response (1984), and the president of the board of trustees of the Port Aransas Independent School District for ten years (1966-76).

Patrick Parker developed an internationally respected research program on stable isotope and organic geochemistry. His work with stable isotopes was innovative and revolutionary. Through the use of stable isotopes, he and his colleagues were able to decipher food-web structures in the Gulf of Mexico and particularly in the sea-grass communities of the coastal bay systems. The use of stable isotopes in marine research, pioneered by Dr. Parker, continues in many of the ongoing studies at laboratories throughout the world. The Geochemical Society honored his significant contributions to the understanding of the origin and fate of organic materials in 1996 with the Alfred E. Treibs Award. One of Dr. Parker’s accomplished students, John Hedges, received the same award four years later for his research on global cycling of organic materials.

Professor Parker was a strong supporter of UTMSI for over thirty years. His accomplishments there ranged from the establishment of the Marine Education Services program to the conception of the graduate degree program. He served as the first graduate adviser and chair of the Graduate Studies Committee of the Department of Marine Science and had a leadership role in designing and overseeing construction of the R/V Longhorn, the first and largest research vessel at the institute.
Professor Parker was a true visionary with a profound enthusiasm for science and developed ingenious approaches for tackling difficult research problems. His graduate students benefited greatly from his insights. He was an unpretentious mentor, not only to his numerous graduate students, but also to his many colleagues whom he supported as co-authors, with isotope data, with thoughtful discussions, or with encouraging words on their research, teaching, or personal lives. Patrick Parker was gentle man who was deeply respected and greatly admired by many in the marine science community.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Peter Thomas (chair), G. Joan Holt, E. William Behrens, and retired staff member Kathleen Quade.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Natural Sciences on July 3, 2012, and posted under “Memorials” at http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.