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. . . if you are interested in marine science or any other science, you run along as fast as you can go. Other things are just an interference, they just take up your time. (Gordon Pennington Gunter)

Gordon Pennington Gunter was born in the Red River country of north Louisiana, Natchitoches Parish, in the town of Goldonna, on August 18, 1909, or "about 44 years after the death throes of the Confederacy", as Gunter described his birth year. Gunter also recorded that his father, John Osbon Gunter, had been born in Creston, Louisiana, in 1876, or "about the year the last of the Yankee soldiers left." Gordon Gunter's grandfather, Miles Osbon Gunter, served as a cavalryman under Fighting Joe Wheeler. Gunter recalled his mother saying his great-grandmother died during the War because, "She was old and tired and sick and did not have enough to eat." Dr. Gunter attributed her death to the result of Sherman's March to the Sea. Gunter remained somewhat cool toward the memory of William Tecumseh Sherman and usually spoke pejoratively about the General. Gunter described seeing an old Confederate Veteran hurrying along on New Orleans' Royal Street in 1931. The old veteran was dressed in the old butternut uniform of the Confederacy, and Gunter hurried along to overtake him, just to touch him. Gunter could not overtake the old man in the crowd and that was the last Confederate soldier he was ever to see. It was inevitable that with these sensitivities Dr. Gunter should find himself involved with The Sons of Confederate Veterans and The Order of the Stars and Bars, organizations devoted to the preservation of respect and honor for those men who had served as Confederate Soldiers. Dr. Gunter served that organization long and faithfully and rose to become Commandant of the organization at the state level. In keeping with his ecumenical view, it should be pointed out that Dr. Gunter was also a member of The Sons of the American Revolution.

Gordon Gunter had gone off to Louisiana State Normal College with the idea that he might become an attorney, like his father, or perhaps become a French scholar. He abandoned both those ambitions immediately after being exposed to his first biology course, which interestingly enough was mandatory, rather than elective. That course seemed to have been a turning point in Gunter's life as he proceeded to earn a B.A. in zoology, securing that degree in 1929. With that degree in hand he went to the University of Texas with the intention of becoming a bacteriologist and earned the M.A. degree in 1931. Upon completion of the master's degree, Gunter worked on shrimp and oysters in Louisiana, Florida and Texas, and on fishes in California, during the Debris Dam Fisheries Survey for the U. S. Engineers Office. Dr. Gunter was always nattily dressed and he did not go about during business hours without a jacket and necktie. Years earlier Gunter had been admonished by his mentor, Professor Williamson of Louisiana State Normal College, for going about the campus improperly dressed, that is to say *sans* necktie. He seemed never to have forgotten the instruction in dress and at some level it might have embarrassed him. It could be pointed out that the omission of the necktie could have been due to youthful exuberance and just sheer excitement associated with being at school, because Gunter also recalled that his father had bought him a fine red gelding to go back and forth to school on, and in the excitement at his first day of matriculation, young Gunter clanked about in the college halls throughout most of the first day, oblivious to the fact that he was still wearing his roweled riding spurs.

In 1932 Gunter married his first wife, Carlotta "Lottie" Gertrude La Cour. They produced a daughter, Charlotte Anne Gunter Wood Evans of Galveston, Texas, and two sons, Miles Gordon Gunter and Forrest Patrick Gunter of Austin, Texas. Dr. Gunter took measureless pride in these children. For many years the single bit of decoration in Gunter's office was a big photograph of his son, Gordon, in his Marine dress whites. The younger Gordon Gunter barely survived injuries sustained in a fiery helicopter

crash in the Philippines, en route to Marine duties in Vietnam. He is today a successful attorney in Austin, Texas.

Gunter had returned to the University of Texas in 1939 as an instructor in physiology and had a concurrent appointment as a marine biologist to the Texas Game, Fish and Oyster Commission. During this time he was lured into the study of physiology and zoology by Professor Elmer Julius Lund, and Gunter completed his doctoral work in those disciplines in 1945. After a great deal of work by Dr. Lund, the University of Texas founded the Institute of Marine Science at Port Aransas in 1945. Gunter, after receiving his Ph.D., conducted research there, becoming acting director of the Institute from 1949 to 1954, then director until he left in 1955 to come to Mississippi. Lund had also established *Publications of the Institute of Marine Science* in 1945 and Gunter served as editor of that journal from 1950 to 1955.

In 1955, Dr. Gunter accepted the appointment as Director of the then eight-year-old Gulf Coast Research Laboratory in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. That same year he married the former Miss Frances Hudgins of Kosciusko, Mississippi. They produced two sons, Edmund Osbon Gunter, born in 1960, and Harry Allen Gunter, born in 1964. Dr. Gunter doted on these sons and almost always referred to them as his "little boys", I suppose in contradistinction to his older children who would have been pretty well grown up at the time. In his memoirs, Dr. Gunter has referred to his older children as his "brood of little Texans". Dr. Gunter was indulgent of his "little boys'" vitality and encouraged them in some practices that I suppose must have been unsettling to Mrs. Gunter, who usually went along with the program cheerfully enough. One activity that seemed to amuse Dr. Gunter very much involved asking red-haired Harry, the younger boy, to "Climb the walls, Harry; show our visitor how you do it!" At which point Harry would dash across the room, propel himself against the wall and take two or three steps up the vertical wall. This effort would take him along pretty well toward the ceiling, at which point he would somersault and land on the floor with a resounding thump, sometimes on his feet, sometimes not.

Mrs. Frances Gunter is now retired after a distinguished career as an elementary school teacher; Harry is a medical investigator and lives in Purvis, Mississippi, with his family. Edmund has for several years now worked with technical aspects of production with educational television in Mississippi and seems to have retained some of his father's interest in things natural.

Gordon Gunter, during the course of his directorship at the Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, took the place from a part-time summer school teaching facility to a full-time year-round research facility, and much of the significant early research in the northern Gulf of Mexico took place here under his direct supervision. Dr. Gunter started out with one full-time scientist and two part-time support personnel. At the time of his retirement, GCRL programs were conducted by about 100 senior marine scientists, technical staff, and support personnel. Dr. Gunter was a 50-year member of the American Fisheries Society, a charter member and president of the World Mariculture Society, later named the World Aquaculture Society, and a member and president of the Mississippi Academy of Sciences. His lifetime body of work is represented by over 330 scientific papers and articles, both scholarly and popular. His earlier works regarding the relationships of salinity and temperature of the northern Gulf to marine life have been required university readings to an entire generation of marine biology students (see Selected Bibliography). He was singlehandedly responsible for establishing and developing GCRL's library, which may well be the premier marine library on the Gulf Coast and today bears his name. In the early 1960s, Dr. Gunter developed the concept of *Gulf Research Reports* as a mechanism ". . . devoted primarily to publication of the data of the Marine Sciences, chiefly of the Gulf of Mexico and adjacent waters."

As early as 1968, Dr. Gunter was working with a handpicked staff of physiologists to formulate an artificial diet for raising shrimp. Even though no particularly high level of technology existed for culturing shrimp at that time, it is apparent that Gunter understood the inevitability of such development, which was, of course a burgeoning industry by the mid-1980s. Gunter always believed that one of the major needs in the north central Gulf of Mexico was a large, long-term effort to discover the full effects of the Mississippi River on the biology of the fisheries resources in the area. "We have learned much but there are still too many things unknown about the River's influence," he said. "This work alone is enough to keep a multi-disciplinary team of workers busy for 20-25 years, and that would be quite an accomplishment." Gunter frequently conjectured as to what the "real natural history" of the Mississippi River would be if the Army Corps of Engineers would stop tinkering with it. Most competent hydrologists concur that without control efforts, the natural tendency would be for the Atchafalaya to "capture" the flow of the Mississippi River. In other words the Mississippi River, instead of flowing past New Orleans, would turn westward and enter the Gulf of Mexico near Morgan City, Louisiana. On one occasion he spent many days at his desk, clucking and scribbling and calling

and harassing various libraries for historical river flow data of the Mississippi River proper as contrasted to flows down the Atchafalaya River. He concluded that the tendency was for the Atchafalaya to grow and the Mississippi to diminish in such a manner that by the year 2038 these two rivers would be of equivalent size.

Gunter's career as a marine biologist and leader in marine research and education spanned more than 60 years. After stepping down as Director of GCRL, he continued his association with the Laboratory as professor of zoology and director emeritus until his retirement from active service to the State of Mississippi in 1979 at the age of 70. "He was one of the pioneers," retired GCRL Director Thomas D. McIlwain, said. McIlwain, now a National Marine Fisheries Service administrator, was a leader in nominating Gunter's name for a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research vessel in recognition of the marine scientist's fisheries work in the Gulf of Mexico. The NOAA ship *Relentless* was moved to the Gulf of Mexico and commissioned as the *Gordon Gunter* on August 28, 1998, with Dr. Gunter in attendance at the ceremonies.

About 1977, I was invited to accompany Dr. Gunter on a trip to Texas and we found ourselves in Goldonna, Louisiana, where he wanted to show me his boyhood home. We spent part of that afternoon wandering about in the old Goldonna Cemetery, where Dr. Gunter would point out where his parents were buried and the markers of cousins, uncles and other kin. On December 19, 1998, Gordon Pennington Gunter joined them, and I will miss him. No more will I have a traveling companion whose standard traveling accouterment consisted of a handgun, an Authorized King James Version of the Bible, and a quart of bourbon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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