

Gulf of Mexico Science

Volume 33
Number 1 *Number 1*

Article 10

2016

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DOI: 10.18785/goms.3301.10

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Recommended Citation

Crozier, G. F. 2016. In Memorium: Remembering Will Schroeder, May 17, 1941 - February 27, 2015. Gulf of Mexico Science 33 (1). Retrieved from <https://aquila.usm.edu/goms/vol33/iss1/10>

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IN MEMORIUM
REMEMBERING WILL SCHROEDER
MAY 17, 1941–FEBRUARY 27, 2015

DR. GEORGE F. CROZIER

I first met Will Schroeder in 1964 at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography when I was assisting Jimmy Stewart with his legendary scientific diving course. Will was a student at San Diego State at the time, and I remember his enthusiasm for diving but I didn't see him again until I visited Texas A&M University in 1970 and found him a newly minted Ph.D. working as the Assistant Dive Officer and looking for a job. Back in the day, the University of Alabama's Marine Science Institute was flying by the seat of its pants but had taken up residence at the Marine Environmental Sciences Consortium's Dauphin Island Sea Lab (DISL).



Will Schroeder, George Crozier and John Dindo at Will's retirement party.

The university operated a World War II vintage minesweeper of questionable seaworthiness, but we did have a 5-yr grant from the Russell Foundation to train and work students at the Hydrolab in the Bahamas. The lure of saturation diving opportunities and a full-time job quickly brought Will on board. The challenges of operating water column studies from the bottom up was just too appealing to pass up.

Will brought to DISL an enormous ability to conceptualize the physical environment and to translate that understanding for both students and decision makers. This rare talent was of immeasurable value to the north-central Gulf of Mexico, which had been almost totally neglected by everyone but the oil and gas industry. Will was a descriptive physical oceanographer with an exceptional grasp of the

interests of both biologists and chemists. There was almost no quantitative data on the dynamics of the Mobile Bay system, much less on the interactions with the Gulf of Mexico shelf environment.

Will was one of the more practical and cunning of scientists and somehow talked NASA into setting up DISL as the only "ground-truth" station of the LandSat program outside of true NASA facilities. For years, two anchored buoys were maintained in the mouth of Mobile Bay generating long-term hydrologic data sets that were complemented with extended cruises from the venerable *R/V George Rounsefell*. Will's work in the bay produced the first understanding of the nature of stratified water columns in shallow water estuaries. Until the completion of Will's work there had been a general assumption that the salinity of the 10-foot-deep bay was largely homogeneous. This conventional wisdom had led water quality planners to assume that they could discharge both municipal and industrial waste directly into mid-Mobile Bay. On learning



Will diving the Great Barrier Reef 2 weeks before his death.

that the receiving water column might be half the volume, the courts rejected the plan.

Will was by nature an intrepid diver, explorer, and world traveler; a tireless advocate of both DISL and the University of Alabama's Marine Science Program; and a superb raconteur. No one was ever more fun to travel with. He was indeed one of the great storytellers, and his

adventures began with a South Sea cruise aboard the *Te Vega*, the research vessel of Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station. Will's last adventure was a reprise of that trip with his wife, Beth, and included a visit to the Great Barrier Reef with his son, Erich. He shared pictures from the original visit with natives of the islands and obviously took new ones.

Will retired to Colorado several years ago, had two hip replacements that didn't slow him down, and enjoyed life to the hilt—as he had always done. His death shortly after returning from the “cruise of his life” was quite a shock, but I have to think that this last adventure had to have been one of his best. I would have loved to have listened to the new stories.