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JOURNAL OF MARINE RESEARCH

The *Journal of Marine Research*, one of the oldest journals in American marine science, published important peer-reviewed original research on a broad array of topics in physical, biological, and chemical oceanography vital to the academic oceanographic community in the long and rich tradition of the Sears Foundation for Marine Research at Yale University.

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Introductory note from George Veronis, editor of the *Journal of Marine Research* and author of the following biographical sketch of Henry Sears, who founded the Sears Foundation of Marine Research, which publishes the *Journal of Marine Research*.

When I became editor of *JMR* in 1973, I naturally was curious to find out who had given the money to start the Journal in 1937. I asked the previous editor and the people on the advisory committee of the Journal about Henry Sears, who he was, what his interest in marine research was, etc. I had assumed that he was a graduate of Yale, had perhaps majored in some area of marine science and had set up a bequest to start the journal. To my astonishment, no one had ever met him or knew anything about him even though the director of the Sears Foundation would occasionally write to Sears, asking for funds for a special volume of the *Fishes of the Western North Atlantic*. Sears came through with the needed funds every time. The original contact with Sears had been made by Albert Parr before he became the director of the Peabody Museum as well as of the Sears Foundation and who eventually left Yale to become director of the American Museum of Natural History. I had met Parr some years ago when I was at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, where Parr was a member of the Board of Trustees, but I did not know him well enough to call him up and ask him for a history. As a result, I simply took on the task of editing the Journal and have done so up to the present time.

In the fall of 2000 his son, Dr. Henry F. Sears, phoned the *JMR* office and asked if he could come to Yale to find out what connection his father had had with Yale. He was unaware of any, but he had been visiting his widowed mother and noticed many volumes of *JMR* with an acknowledgment to the Sears Foundation. I was happy to try to comply with the request since I had long wondered about the same thing. Doreen Orciari, my editorial assistant, and I spent some time trying to find out about the origin of *JMR* and were lucky enough to find a file in the Yale Library archives which contained letters between Parr and Sears, which we copied and gave to Dr. Sears when he visited us. The following account contains what we learned from the Yale archives and from a few other sources acknowledged at the end of the article.

Henry Sears (1913–1982)

Henry Sears led a remarkably varied life centered on a love of sailing, racing and fishing. Even as a youngster he spent considerable time at sea because he had asthma and in those days sea air was considered beneficial for one with that ailment. He owned a Swampscott Dory at the age of eight and soon afterwards was sailing a 30-footer from Boston to the Maine coast. His education was unusual. It seems that he was dyslexic, although at the time of his birth dyslexia was not identified as such. During his childhood his family spent three months of the year in each of four locations: Boston, Paris, Beverly (MA) and Bryn Mawr. Sears spoke French fluently. The family traveled with tutors, so for much of his early life he was tutored, as was his sister, Mrs. Henry Cabot Lodge, with whom he lived during part of his teens. He spent part of the period from 1920 to 1925 in Europe where he was schooled at the Ecole Gory in Paris in 1923 and he attended St. Mark's School in Southborough, MA, from 1928 to 1930. He left St. Mark's in 1930 announcing his intention to study at Brooks School, but the latter has no record of him. Therefore, there is a real probability that his formal education ended at St. Mark's, even though many accounts report him as having studied oceanography at Yale.

He subsequently applied his expertise at sea working on the *Atlantis* shortly after the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (WHOI) was founded. The WHOI report for 1933 credits him with drawing the temperature and salinity curves from data gathered in the Gulf of Maine. During this period he made a remarkable discovery, viz., that even without a formal education one could contribute to scientific research by catching and preserving fish that were hitherto unknown. His skill at sea and his love of fishing evidently impressed Professor Albert Parr, who was on the staff (later director) of the Peabody Museum at Yale and had been on an *Atlantis* cruise with Sears. Parr offered to train Sears at Yale on how to preserve fish and send them to the Museum to be added to the collection of the Bingham Oceanographic Laboratory. According to the Peabody director's report for the year 1934-35, Sears "joined the Bingham Laboratory staff to receive special training in deep-sea ichthyology and marine research in general. He subsequently undertook a cruise to various tropical Pacific islands from which valuable collections of marine life were returned to the Bingham Laboratory."

There are two points to be emphasized here. First, the three-month training period at the Bingham Lab is the source of the statement that Sears had studied oceanography at Yale. He was never enrolled as a student. Second, the cruise referred to was on a private yacht, not a scientific expedition. There are letters in the archives of the Yale library of the correspondence

between Sears and Parr, indicating that Sears used his own money for equipment needed to preserve the fish that he caught. The Bingham Lab is now defunct, but the fish that Sears sent back are part of the collection of the Peabody Museum and three of them are listed as *Searsia* new genus, *Searsia koefoedi* new species and *Searsia polycoeca* new species.

The letters between Sears and Parr indicate that Sears' active contributions to the Museum collections ended in the spring of 1935. Even during his few "oceanographic" years, Sears was taking part in yacht races. After June 1935 all of his time at sea was focused on racing. But the correspondence between Sears and Parr continued, and though fishing was still discussed, it was no longer the main topic. That takes us to another part of Sears' life.

Sears had a bachelor uncle, David Sears IV, who spent the majority of his time between the wars in Paris rather than in Boston. It is possible that during the early part of the period that Sears spent in Paris he lived with his uncle. In any event, he and his uncle developed a close relationship. Around the time that Sears was involved with Parr and fishing, his uncle died and left some of his money to his young nephew. (He also donated enough money to Harvard to build one of the four buildings that now constitute the Harvard Medical School.) Sears must have felt that his involvement with fishing and the collections was really a special part of his life and he apparently decided to use some of his inheritance to create a lasting monument to that area of science. The letters between him and Parr after June 1935 mostly referred to conversations that they had had about a foundation at Yale (now the Sears Foundation) to support marine science and, in particular, to start publication of what eventually became the *Journal of Marine Research*. Sears' first contribution was for \$1500 but he added to that with larger amounts and by the end of 1938 the contributions totaled \$85,000 to support the publication of the *Journal of Marine Research* and a book series on *Fishes of the Western North Atlantic*.

In 1936 Sears built the Paine 36, ACTAEA (a nymph from Greek mythology after whom he named eleven successive sailboats), and sailed it to finish third overall in the very stormy Bermuda race of that year. In 1937 he married a widow, Mary Aikman Pouch, whom he had met in Tahiti during his fishing explorations in the Pacific. He had been a crew member on a yacht owned by Mrs. Pouch's husband, who was killed in an auto accident in 1935. He sailed a larger, 65-foot ACTAEA in the Bermuda race in 1938 and the following year he sailed to the Bahamas and to the Maine coast. He continued to compete in races until 1941, when, sensing that the U.S. would enter WWII, he applied for a commission and succeeded in being accepted into V12, the program for training officers for the U.S. Naval Reserve. He attended anti-submarine school in Miami, served on convoy duty in the Atlantic and ended up as captain of the U.S.S. Wesson, a destroyer escort in the Pacific on which he had served as shakedown officer, executive officer and, finally, as commanding officer.

His ship was hit during a kamikaze attack in April 1945 and returned to San Francisco, where it was repaired and subsequently returned to active duty. In the meantime, he reported for duty as commanding officer of the U.S.S. Pillsbury in July 1945. After the war ended in August 1945, he was discharged after having been awarded a series of medals including more than one Bronze Star.



Young Henry Sears
ca 1937

Before the war Sears had been a senior partner of Sears & Griswold, a real estate company, which had merged with Webb & Knapp in 1937. In 1952 he formed Henry Sears & Co., a venture capital company in New York. During that year he was also the chief fundraiser for the campaign leading to Eisenhower's nomination.

He had resumed racing immediately after WWII and won the U.S. Navy Challenge Cup race in 1952 and the Alumni Class cup in 1953. He acquired a new ACTAEA in 1954 and won a race from the Eastern Yacht Club to Boothbay Harbor in Maine. Later that year he was elected Commodore of the New York Yacht Club for the year 1955 to 1956.

The Herreshoff Marine Museum (http://www.herreshoff.org/achof/henry_sears.html) reports the following passage about Sears' activities in the New York Yacht Club: "In 1956, after a nineteen-year hiatus in America's Cup racing, Sears, as Commodore of the New York Yacht Club, appealed to the Supreme Court of New York to amend the Cup's Deed of gift. Greatly increased building and operation costs, plus a shortage of qualified hands, had virtually prohibited continuation of J-Class racing. Harry Sears' action resurrected the competition in smaller, more practical yachts, the 12-Meters. Commodore Sears then served as syndicate head and navigator of the 1958 Cup Defender, COLUMBIA. His leadership ushered in a new era of fine racing for the America's Cup that continues to this day, thanks entirely to the action of Commodore Sears." The COLUMBIA won the America's Cup that year.

He retired from Henry Sears & Co. in 1972. Until his death in 1982 he ran the 5000-acre Chino farm in Chestertown, MD. His interest in the oceanographic activities at the



Commodore Henry Sears
1956

Peabody Museum never flagged and he donated funds for special volumes of fishes at various times during his lifetime.

Sears' accomplishments are very impressive. He overcame the difficulties that he faced with dyslexia and asthma in his youth. As a young man with no formal educational training he sailed both the Atlantic and the Pacific to discover and record fish that had not previously been identified. His service to the U.S. military effort during WWII was exemplary. His efforts to restore the America's Cup will forever be remembered by those who love to compete in yacht racing. In the later period of his life he was on the board of the American Museum of Natural History, the Fiduciary Trust Co. of New York, the Mercantile Bank of Baltimore and the Johns Hopkins Hospital. He also served on the board of overseers of the Astrophysics Department at Harvard. We can all be grateful for the generous contributions to the academic community by a man who did not acquire the usual academic credentials before becoming a benefactor. He maintained that interest and involvement throughout his life.

Acknowledgments. Some of my material came from letters in the archives of the Sterling Library at Yale and some from an obituary on Sears in the NY Times, March 25, 1982. I am indebted to his cousin, John Sears, and especially to his son, Dr. Henry F. Sears, for much of the material about his early life.

George Veronis, Editor