

CARL LEAVITT HUBBS

1894-1979

by Dr. Martin R. Brittan

Dr. Carl Leavitt Hubbs, the dean of American ichthyologists and marine biologists died of cancer on June 30, 1979, at the age of 84. He is survived by his wife, Laura, a mathematician and zoologist and collaborator on many of his projects; two sons, Clark, a professor of zoology at the University of Texas, and Earl, a California biologist; a daughter, Frances, wife of University of Michigan ichthyologist Robert R. Miller; and nine grandchildren with 4 great-grandchildren.

Hubbs was born on October 18, 1894, in Williams, Arizona. He was educated in California schools, receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees from Stanford University and his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. He taught from 1920 to 1944 at Michigan and from 1944 to his retirement in 1969 at Scripps Institution of Oceanography of the University of California at San Diego. A prodigious worker, Hubbs turned out over 700 scientific articles and books and directed dozens of students and collaborators on research projects. He worked tirelessly in the cause of conservation at all levels, local to international. Working with the Mexican authorities, he helped preserve fur seals, elephant seals and gray whales. He was a founding director of Sea World. His research on aquarium fishes was outstanding.

Hubbs' consideration and help to students and co-workers were freely given. No letter to him went unanswered, though he was often literally buried with work. Ichthyologists, indeed all biologists, environmentalists and aquarists, have benefited from his work which, with his indomitable will, he kept up to the end. Hubbs the scientist and Hubbs the man will long be remembered by all whose paths crossed his.

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The following was written by Phil Pister who worked with Carl Hubbs in the struggle to preserve America's desert fishes from extinction:

Professor Carl L. Hubbs passed away on June 30 at the age of 84 years, a victim of the cancer which for several years had been draining his strength. Although I wept when I learned of his passing, I realized that my sadness was not really for Carl, but for all who have learned to love him. It helped enormously to know that Carl will never really leave us, but will live on forever both in memory and in the superb contributions that he made to fishery science. His career began at Stanford under the immortal David Starr Jordan. Carl proved to be a worthy successor to his former mentor, and history will show him to be no less a man.

Yet as great as were his scientific works, of even greater long term significance was his magnificence as a person, friend, father, and selfless teacher. Carl was never too busy to greet colleague, student, or stranger with a smile and a genuine offer of assistance. There has never been a truly great man without humility, and Carl's greatness was matched and enhanced by his unfeigned awe at the magnificence of the creation about him.

A few years ago Carl and Laura sent a fine photograph of themselves taken at the time of the dedication of the Hubbs - Sea World Research Institute. I keep it pinned next to my desk to serve as often needed inspiration. When I look at it and consider the scope of Carl's accomplishments, my own problems seem to dissolve. Typically, Laura is at his side, ever his faithful wife, superb mother of his three children, colleague and helpmate, always a twinkle in her eye as she did so much to make him what he is. Their life together constitutes a love story seldom duplicated.

Perhaps the great philosopher and humanist Loren Eiseley said it best: "I see Christ in every man who dies to save a life beyond his life." He continues: "I have been accused of woolly-mindedness for entertaining even hope for man. I can only respond that in the dim morning shadows of humanity, the inarticulate creature who first hesitantly formed the words for pity and love must have received similar guffaws around a fire." Yet some men listened, for the words survive."

It was this same optimism that motivated Carl and made him so effective in inspiring others to work toward the goals that he knew were right. He, too, "received guffaws around a fire." Yet men did listen, and because of his great research, foresight, inspiration, and genius of communication, men are now beginning to understand and are working to preserve resources that otherwise would have passed unnoticed from the face of the earth. It is an absolute certainty that without Carl Hubbs, the Desert Fishes Council would never have been formed.

I find comfort in the knowledge that Carl is now with the Creator of all that he lived for and loved. And this same Creator will bless him for his good works here and the sensitivity and reverence for life that he exemplified, much as Carl would often express his appreciation to those who espoused and worked for the ideals that he held so dear.

Carl Hubbs is not really gone, he is just away. And even then, not very far.

Phil Pister
 Executive Secretary
 Desert Fishes Council

