

Ken Teague Marine Biology Scholarship

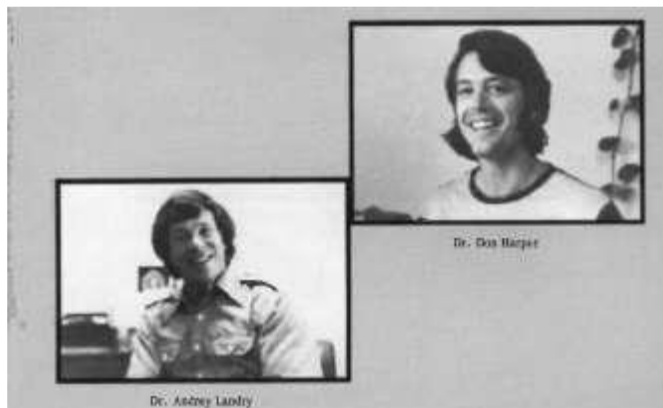
Established in 2015 by Kenneth G. Teague



If you are reading this, perhaps you are a recipient of this scholarship I committed to in 2015, with some qualifications. Hopefully, this will help you to have some understanding of me, and a better appreciation for the scholarship you have been awarded.

Hi, I am Ken Teague, and I am writing this while I am still very much alive, in 2021. I arrived at what was then Texas A&M University's Moody College of Marine Sciences and Maritime Resources- the precursor of Texas A&M University at Galveston- in August of 1976. The dorm on Pelican Island was new, and we were required to live there. I was a sophomore, having completed my first year of college at Wharton County Junior College. I was scared, lonely, heartbroken, and almost broke. I came because of my love for the ocean, having grown up fishing and boating in Matagorda Bay, Texas, and around the sea islands of Georgia, and having recently become addicted to surfing (though I was not a good surfer). I also liked that I was not too far from my home in El Campo, Texas.

I survived my first year and returned the following fall to live off-campus. Eventually, I moved to an old house in town, close to the beach, with three housemates. Most, if not all my classes were at Ft. Crockett. We loved old Ft. Crockett, and the fact that you could go to class barefoot and bring your dog. We loved spending time near our professors- Don Harper, Andy Landry- and the real old-timers- Sammy Ray, David Aldrich, William Wilson- and their graduate students (Norm Sears). It was an epic period for this "old-school marine biology" institution.



I worked hard during this time. Good grades did not come easy for me. But it was also during this time that my strong desire to study marine biology was finally realized and my marine biology studies took off in earnest. I truly enjoyed this period of my life though it was stressful. I graduated in August 1979, Cum Laude- which admittedly was not uncommon, but was a feat for me.

Financially, I lived on a few hundred dollars per month- \$150 or so from my part-time job at the UT Marine Biomedical Institute and \$2-300 per month from my Hinson-Hazlewood College Student Loan. These funds had to pay for everything. My senior year though, the financial aid office proposed to withdraw my last year of assistance. After some desperate pleading, I was able to get this decision reversed, and with the student loan, I was able to complete my degree. The point here is- I know how difficult it can be to come up with the funds to live and work on a college degree. And tuition and fees then were outrageously low- a little over \$100 per semester! But due to living expenses, it was still hard for me to pay for my education at Moody College. If not for the State of Texas' wisdom during that time- in choosing to subsidize a college education by keeping tuition and fees very low- and to provide low-cost student loans- I would not have gotten a college degree.



I went on to graduate school in estuarine ecology at LSU after graduating from Texas A&M, worked in research for a short time at LSU, then did another short stint in the Bays & Estuaries and Instream

Flows programs at what was then the Texas Water Commission, and finally, worked for 28 years in the coastal and wetlands programs at EPA in Dallas.

My parents, JoAnn and Gene Teague, encouraged me early in life to get a college degree. They supported my decision to major in marine biology, though it must have been obvious to them that it might not be the easiest area in which to get a job. They helped me as they could. Their support – particularly my mother's – were critical in me completing my education.

I am now retired, and I enjoy commenting on wetland permit applications, water quality actions, National Environmental Policy Act compliance documents (EISs), and proposals for RESTORE Act funding. I also enjoy helping citizen environmental groups to oppose poorly-regulated proposals to degrade the coastal environment.

I felt compelled to propose to fund this scholarship partly out of a sense that I owed what is now Texas A&M University at Galveston, for helping to make me the person I became. More specifically, I owed TAMUG for making me a traditional marine biologist. My perspective as a young, traditionally-trained marine biologist was then my starting point for my future education as a coastal ecologist, a wetlands ecologist, and a systems ecologist- much of which was very different than my training in traditional marine biology at TAMUG. However, I believe this early training served me very well. During my graduate education and working career, I was able to draw on my early marine biology training as I learned to be a coastal ecosystem ecologist, and later, as I worked to manage and restore coastal environments.

I wanted to encourage undergraduate students at TAMUG to work in the areas of coastal wetlands and coastal water quality- issues which I largely developed an interest in during my graduate education at LSU, and during my working career. Due to my own undergraduate experience trying to marshal the funds to complete my college degree, I wanted to try to help. While this scholarship will only provide a small portion of the funds that will be needed by a student, I believe it will help.

Finally, I suppose I felt compelled to propose this scholarship partly due to the fact that I have no children or spouse. If there is any money left when I die (if you are reading this, there is), I want somebody deserving to benefit from it. And selfishly, maybe I like the idea of something that helps people long after I no longer exist, and with my name on it. Maybe in this small way, my memory will live on for a while?

I hope to encourage a few undergraduate students at TAMUG to become interested in coastal wetlands, seagrasses, and coastal water quality problems caused by nutrient over-enrichment. I also hope to help alleviate the financial problems of a few students so they can complete their marine biology/marine science undergraduate degrees.