

## In Memoriam Dr Robert H. Peters

We are sad to report to our marine colleagues the death of Robert Henry Peters in June of 1996. For readers of the limnological and ecological literature, Robert Peters is recognized as a major figure, whose work was both scientifically significant and philosophically challenging. He received his Ph.D. under Frank Rigler at the University of Toronto. He conducted postdoctoral studies in Pallanza, Vienna, and Munich. During this time, he developed his love for Italy—its language, food, wine and culture. Not coincidentally, he also met and married Antonella Cattaneo. Rob spent the balance of his career at McGill University (Canada), returning to Italy frequently, especially when he needed relief from academic duties to write and think.

Rob made numerous scientific contributions but is best known for his work on phosphorus cycling, allometry, and zooplankton ecology. Although primarily a limnologist, he co-authored several papers with students and colleagues on marine topics ranging from primary productivity to fish feeding. The sweep of Rob's work extended beyond the wet world and included ecotoxicology, plant ecology, life history patterns, and the application of science to environmental management. This breadth reflects Rob's emphasis on formulating interesting and relevant ecological questions rather than on becoming a specialist in any particular field. Rob also thought and wrote widely about the practice and philosophy of ecological research. He was critical of traditional approaches. He advocated a strong role for prediction and theory building based on comparison and discerning broad patterns in nature.

Rob was sharply critical of some of the extensions of evolutionary thinking into ecology. He synthesized these and other views in a book entitled 'A Critique of Ecology' which was received with great controversy. Rob's thinking in these areas was unconventional. Many would describe his views as completely wrong, others found them insightful. He was motivated by his profound concern that ecological research was not creating a science sufficient to address current and future environmental problems. He suggested that ecologists turn away from their increasingly expensive, technological, and complex research programs to ask simple questions. This argument was based on Rob's view that successful science deal with potentially soluble and scientifically tractable questions.

In recognition of his contributions to aquatic ecology, Rob was given the Rigler Award by the Society of Canadian Limnologists in 1992. He was also awarded the 1991 Prize in Limnetic Ecology by the international Ecology Institute (a nonprofit organization of research ecologists established by the editor of MEPS). An out-



Dr Robert H. Peters, 1946–1996

come of this prize was the book 'Science and Limnology' (Excellence in Ecology, Book 6; Ecology Institute, Oldendorf/Luhe, Germany), co-authored with the late Frank Rigler. This book presents the epistemological views of both of these outstanding scientists. Many of the day-to-day tasks that confront us, including teaching, grant applications, peer review, and the identification of worthy research topics, are illuminated in the context of a reasoned, personal philosophy for the individual scientist.

Rob was fond of a well made dinner in the company of friends and considerable wine. An evening at Rob's house was a memorable treat rich in discussion of cuisine, culture, and always science. Rob had an unyielding commitment to scientific advance. Personally, he was modest and jovial with a great love of life and an admiration for the beauty of nature. He was a truly remarkable person, an exceptional scientist, and an inspiration to those who worked with him. The legacy of Rob's ideas lies in his numerous papers and books. The legacy of his inspiration is reflected in the scientific work and lives of the many he touched. Those who came to know Rob emerged as better scientists, more critical and more sharply attuned to the important, tractable, and relevant questions. His memory will continually challenge us to create a science more meaningful to our looming environmental concerns.

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