

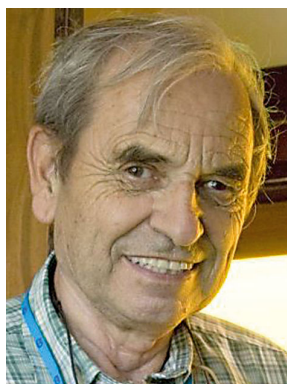
In Memoriam Tom Berman

This Theme Section of Aquatic Biology is dedicated to the memory of Tom Berman, co-founder and first Chairman of the Group of Aquatic Primary Productivity (GAP), who unexpectedly passed away in April 2013 during a trip to the Galápagos Islands.

Tom Berman was born in February 1934 in Hronov (Eastern Bohemia), close to the Polish border. Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, his life was saved from the Nazi terror by a *Kindertransport* to Scotland, where he subsequently grew up. In 1951 he emigrated to the newly established State of Israel and became a member of a Kibbutz in The Galilee. There he planted trees and did other hard manual work, as most Israelis did. He remained a Kibbutznik for the rest of his life. In 1956, he began his studies of Agriculture at Rutgers University and graduated summa cum laude in 1960. He then moved to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study microbiology, and was awarded his PhD in 1964.

He returned to Israel and worked in agriculture before he was appointed first Director of the newly established Kinneret Limnological Laboratory at the northern tip of Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) in 1967. He had no experience whatsoever in aquatic ecology. The Kinneret Limnological Laboratory had been set up by Professor Wilhelm Rodhe of Uppsala, Sweden, who was among the pioneers of modern aquatic primary production research and became Tom's mentor in the area of limnology. Tom Berman remained Director of the lab until 1971, then served another term between 1986 and 1999 until his mandatory retirement. His scientific approach was ecosystem-oriented, based on continuous field observations and complementary experimental work. To the present day, Lake Kinneret is the only extensively studied freshwater lake in the Middle East and among the very best studied lakes in the world. Long-term data sets such as those collected at Kinneret are of particular value in connection with global environmental change.

Tom Berman's personal scientific focus was aquatic microbiology, but his work also included



Tom Berman (1934–2013)

primary production research in the 1960s. This interest was instrumental in the idea first discussed during the International Society of Limnology (SIL) Congress in Kyoto in 1980, to establish GAP. The special characteristic of the regular GAP meetings is the combination of formal talks including Keynote Lectures, with joint field and laboratory experiments. The first such meeting took place at Constance, Germany, in 1982. Tom Berman's scientific interest during later years focused on transparent exopolymer particles (TEPs), which are intimately

involved in the formation of biofilms. After his retirement, he studied the formation of biofilms on membranes used for reverse osmosis in seawater desalination.¹

Tom Berman always understated his own achievements, always had a line or two of poetry at his disposal to quote, had a strong sense of family obligations and a great sense of humor, and considered dressing up as vulgar, rather than elegant. He published two small tomes of poems as a member of a group of English-language Israeli poets called *Voices Israel*, whose chairman he was for a few years. It is characteristic of his modesty that members of this group were not aware that a world-renowned scientist was in their midst as a common member. Conversely, most of us colleagues in science realized only at a late stage that Tom was a distinguished poet. Tom Berman was a great man without knowing this very fact himself. He was a loving husband, father and grandfather, a lover of dogs and cats, and for all of us who were lucky to be his colleagues, Tommy was a true friend. We all miss him beyond words.

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¹A list with some relevant publications can be downloaded from the ILOR Web page: www.ocean.org.il/Eng/Researchers/page_tberman.asp