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In Memoriam

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IN MEMORIAM

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Jacques Laborel (1934–2011)

Jacques Laborel, 'Dago' for his family and friends, was a distinguished marine biologist who died suddenly on April 14, 2011, age 76. His easygoing temperament will be missed in many quarters. He was devoted to the welfare of his discipline and used his great intellectual stature to advance it in many ways. But he also had a modest personality and those who came into contact with his anticonformist administrative skills often failed to realize that he had outstanding talents.

Jacques Laborel was brought up in Valence (South of France), spending many long summers with his parents on the coasts of Provence where he developed a passion for the sea and discovered diving and marine biology.

He held his first position at the University of Marseille-Provence as Assistant Professor in 1956 before defending his doctoral thesis (Ph.D.) in 1960 (Contribution à l'Étude Directe des Peuplements Benthiques Sciaphiles sur Substrats Rocheux en Méditerranée). From 1961 to 1964, Jacques Laborel carried out research in Brazil where he studied tropical madrepores for his Doctorat d'Etat, which he successfully defended in 1967 (Les Peuplements de Madréporaires des Côtes Tropicales du Brésil). He subsequently obtained a permanent tenure-track position.

He resided in Africa for several years, first in the Ivory Coast between 1968 and 1971, studying the benthic fauna of the rocky



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coasts and corals of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. During a second stay (1972–75) he was head of the Marine Science Laboratory of Tulear. With a great flair for novel research, he worked extensively on tropical coral biology and morphology.

He returned to Marseille and spent a number of years working on corals in the West Indies before developing an interest in biological indicators of sea-level change. During the last 30 years of his life, he concentrated his efforts on the uplifted coasts and archeological excavations of the Mediterranean Sea and, with the assistance of his wife Fanch, helped many research colleagues with his broad insights of the field.

Jacques Laborel was exceptionally bright. He was widely viewed as one of the prominent Mediterranean biologists and underwater geomorphologists of his generation. His innovative studies significantly contributed to understanding of Holocene relative sea-level changes. He was also a gifted teacher, authoring no less than 100 publications that inspired colleagues and students throughout the earth and biological sciences. He was a firm believer in interdisciplinary research.

Laborel's longstanding aim was to shed light on Holocene coastal landscape formation using diverse methods, which he achieved with great success. His warmth, humor, kindness, and intellectual capacities made him a very popular character. He had a rich personality, with a deep and abiding interest in the fine arts (especially poetry), travel, and multicultural life. All those privileged to have known him grieve his loss.

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