



# AFRICAN SEA TURTLE NEWSLETTER



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SPECIAL ISSUE TO HONOR  
AN EXTRAORDINARY MAN  
Dr. PETER PRITCHARD

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# Honoring an Extraordinary Man

Manjula Tiwari & Jacques Fretey



Compiling this tribute has been a labor of love and an opportunity to honor a remarkable man. Through the stories, photographs, and memories of 68 people, we celebrate Peter. Several common threads weave through these stories – his impact on turtle biology and conservation is unparalleled; his wisdom, kindness, humility, charm, humor, and generosity of spirit left an indelible mark on the lives of many; his curiosity and love for life, turtles, and people made him a giant among men.

We thank all the contributors for sharing a bit of the Peter they knew for future generations of turtlers – may they too be inspired by Peter's legacy!

Manjula Tiwari & Jacques Fretey

Footnote: All contributions are in the original language that they were submitted. Please use <https://www.deepl.com/en/translator> for a translation



## Peter Charles Howard Pritchard: In Memoriam The Pope of the Turtles is Dead

Jacques Fretey

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As a young researcher, I was taught that a publication in a scientific journal must be apolitical, non-religious, and must not show personal feelings. But how can I write, devoid of all emotion on Peter Pritchard, who was my friend for about 45 years?



*Peter Pritchard examining the skull of a *Dermochelys coriacea* from French Guiana in the author's office (Photo: J. Fretey).*

One day I was in Florida sitting with him in his stunning 1957 Rolls-Royce Silver Cloud when he said with a laugh: "When I park this car in an Oviedo supermarket parking lot, people think that the Pope is coming to do his shopping!" But in fact, it was true since he was the Pope of the Turtles.

Even if Peter bought this legendary car in a moment of madness, it was above all an umbilical cord that linked him to his British origins and to his maternal great-grandfather, Henry Edmunds, from Halifax, Yorkshire. His ancestor was both an engineer and an inventor and worked with Thomas Edison and Henry Royce. In a rally in 1902, Henry Edmunds drove a prototype of the Royce 10 HP, an avant-garde automobile model, two years before the Rolls-Royce Company was founded. But Peter's grandfather never drove any of these prestigious models, and our zoologist wanted to make up for this shortcoming.

Peter Charles Howard Pritchard was born on June 26, 1943, in England. When he was 10, his grandparents took him to the London Zoo. He saw a large turtle and was dumbfounded that such a living being could exist. His vocation, therefore, became obvious to him. His parents bought him a Greek Tortoise in a London store. It was his first close contact with a turtle. From 1952 to 1961, he lived in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where his father was a professor of anatomy at Queen's University. In 1961, he entered Magdalen College in Oxford after receiving a scholarship in chemistry and biochemistry. He graduated with honors in 1964. At Magdalen College he had a bin in the dormitory where he raised freshwater turtles, which he fed with meat, but the smells generated did not please everyone. It became clear then that he would not keep studying chemistry. When he was a teenager, Peter supposedly said: "Turtles are not trying to dominate Earth. They're just trying to survive."

### The Guianas

During that same year 1964, he fell ill and was taken to hospital. He took the opportunity to read all the existing books on turtles. A friend of his father's, Sir Richard Luyt, had just been appointed governor of British Guiana (now Guyana) and came to see him at the hospital. As he knew about Peter's passion, he promised he would invite him to South America as soon as he recovered to see turtles in their natural habitat. The

promise was kept. One day as he was exploring the coast, he arrived not far from Venezuela at a site called Shell Beach. There he discovered dozens of leatherback and green turtle carcasses. Horrified by these massacres, he wrote his observations on a governorate letterhead paper and sent it to a minister in Great Britain, then to Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, President of WWF-United Kingdom at the time. He also sent a report to the legendary Professor Archie Carr at the University of Florida, Gainesville, who took the observations of the young naturalist very seriously and agreed to take him as a student.

Joop Schulz, a biologist with the Forest Service in Dutch Guiana (now Suriname which became independent in November 1975) corresponded with Archie Carr and reported on the numerous nests of green turtles, olive ridleys and leatherbacks, particularly near the estuary of the Maroni River, the border with French Guiana. Archie Carr went to Dutch Guiana in 1966 and agreed on the importance of this region for sea turtles. He offered to send Joop Schulz his student, Peter Pritchard, and suggested the reproduction of the olive ridley, *Lepidochelys olivacea*, as the topic of his Ph.D. thesis. Peter defended his brilliant dissertation in 1969. It was the first proper synopsis on the *L. olivacea* and marked the differences between this species and the *kempii* form. I think he followed Leo Brongersma's advice and focused on the great diversity of scales in *L. olivacea*.

According to the Amerindians, who lived near the estuary of the Maroni River that forms the border with Suriname, Joop and Peter carried out field surveys on the beaches of French Guiana. During an aerial survey over the Organabo River estuary in 1968, Peter took pictures of different beaches with numerous leatherback turtle tracks, one of which he called "Silebâche" (Ilets Bâches). Judging by the number of tracks he observed, he estimated the reproductive stock at 15,000 females coming ashore on the Guyanese beaches.

From 1969 to 1973, Pritchard worked on various marine turtle conservation projects with IUCN and WWF. In the 1970s, he became Vice-President for science and research at the Florida Audubon Society, as well as a professor of biology at Florida Technological University and Florida Atlantic University.

During one of his regular visits to Guyana, the "chelonograph" Pritchard, 6' 4" tall (he told me one day he was only 3 cm shorter than General De Gaulle!) met little Sibille Hart during a party. Sibille was two years younger than him, she was a journalist and was not interested in turtles. But Peter knew how to share his passion, and that is how in July 1983 Sibille was the official representative of Guyana at the Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium I in San José, Costa Rica, where she presented the national report on the situation of sea turtles in her native country. During their first years together, Sibille accepted that their bathtub was used to raise freshwater turtles and crocodiles and not to take baths.

His main field project was launched in Guyana and was deeply marked by the massacres he had discovered during his August 1964 expedition to Shell Beach. Note that it was on this beach that, in addition to carcasses, he saw for the first time a very large green turtle nesting. It was the largest green turtle he would ever see in his life. As his Arawak guide had wished to take the eggs, Peter offered to split them in two, half for the guide's family and the rest left for natural incubation. Before Jack Frazier in the Indian Ocean and the Tamar Project in Brazil, Peter looked for solutions to reconcile traditional village life and marine turtle conservation. He imagined alternative solutions such as chicken and pig farming. Abandoning proper scientific research, he devoted himself to Guyana with the help of Romeo De Freitas and an Arawak team made up of



former poachers to create more harmonious relationships between Arawak Indians and turtles. He created "conservation camps" for young native students, having them observe sea turtles laying their eggs at night, and giving classes on mangrove ecology, ophidians and birds during the day. To do this, he established a permanent station in the north-west of Guyana. Thanks to the program and the activities of the station, the protection of sea turtles became a family decision for the Arawaks and did not depend on a law or on a foreign zoologist.

In order to benefit from funding from donors, patrons and environmental organizations for the monitoring of nesting sites and the education program in Guyana, he created the Marine Turtle Conservation Society with the help of Prime Minister Sam Hinds.

On various projects Peter developed the concept of conservation and non-confrontational dialogue with the people eating turtles and potentially seen as his adversaries. He developed consensual strategies, less violent than direct and unrealistic law enforcement, in order to achieve sustainable change.

### **Lonesome George**

Peter undertook six expeditions to the Galapagos Archipelago, where he narrowly escaped drowning when his boat sank. In December 1971, the Hungarian malacologist, József Vágvölgyi, took a photo from a distance of a large turtle "with a horse saddle" and a long neck on Pinta Island. The snail specialist showed the photo to Peter, who was very surprised as he had long been thinking that Pinta Island has been emptied of all its turtles by the whalers in search of fresh meat to take in their holds. In 1972, an expedition was undertaken on Pinta Island with naturalists from Darwin Research Station and hunters in charge of eradicating the goats. The hunters were working on their own. They captured a large land tortoise and brought it back to the base camp where Peter and Sibille discovered it. It was estimated to be around 30 years old, without absolute certainty. This solitary tortoise was brought back by boat to Santa Cruz Island and kept in a pen at Darwin Station. It was called Lonesome George (Georges le Solitaire). In October 2003, Peter organized a big expedition, a research commando of 15 people, to try and find other "Pinta Tortoises". They only found the bones of 16 tortoises but no live tortoise. First identified as the last survivor of the subspecies *Geochelone nigra abingdonii*, Lonesome George was then validated as the last surviving tortoise of the species *Chelonoidis abingdonii* (Günther 1877). Lonesome George died in 2012 after forty years in captivity and multiple breeding attempts with females genetically close, from the volcano Wolf. Peter had always been convinced that "Old George" was not alone on the island when it was discovered in 1972 and that significant funds should have been officially mobilized at the time to carry out further research. He also deplored the controversies accusing him of having brought Lonesome George from an island other than Pinta, and the decision of the Darwin Station to release captive sterilized male land tortoise having no direct relationship with *C. abingdonii*.

The last survivor of a relictual species, Lonesome George became a media icon symbolizing the conservation of species in the Galapagos Archipelago. As Peter was already ill, his wife Sibille was later involved in the making of a BBC film on this subject.

### **Mexico**

In 1968, Peter and René Marquez worked together to study the reproductive behavior of the Kemp's Ridley, *Lepidochelys kempii*, on the Mexican nesting site of Rancho Nuevo. They showed a correlation between the mass arrivals of females (*arribadas*) and the

direction and strength of the wind. Peter went back to the site several times to continue the study and make observations from 80 females he had tagged. In their 1972 IUCN monograph, René and Peter estimated that the overall population of *L. kempii*, which had been estimated at 40,000 females in 1947, was reduced to a nesting population between 2,500 and 5,000 females.



Observing a *Lepidochelys kempii* nesting on Rancho Nuevo beach (Photo: G. Ruiz).



Storing and butchering of olive ridley turtles in PIOSA slaughterhouse (Photo: P. C. H. Pritchard).

At the end of October 1980, he flew over the Pacific coast of Mexico, from Maruata (Michoacan) to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (Oaxaca), along approximately 1000 km. He discovered high concentrations of nests of *Dermochelys coriacea* in several places all along the coast, as well as many carcasses of freshly killed turtles between Bahia Potosi and El Tamarindo (Guerrero) and towards Puerto Escondido (Oaxaca). He noted a high density of nests on 8 km of beach between Bahia de Chacalapa and Bahia Mascalco. He also counted aggregations of nests of *Chelonia agassizii* at Maruata (Colola) and *Lepidochelys olivacea* at Playa la Escobilla (Oaxaca). The nest counts in Mexico gave him the opportunity to try and make an assessment of the major nesting sites of *D. coriacea*. In supplementary information C. Peñaflores told him that the density was around 500 turtles per night on the 40 km of beach along Tierra Colorada, with a peak of 1500 coming ashore in the three states concerned.

After he had discovered the nesting areas in French Guyana and estimated the number of females at 15,000 in 1971 (with later confirmation by Fretey & Lescure 1979), Peter had calculated that the world population was expected to be between 29,000 and 40,000 females. He calculated that the breeding stock for the Michoacan-Oaxaca region would reach some 75,000 female leathebacks. Adding to this figure the estimates for the 3 Guyanas, Central America, Indonesia, Malaysia, and other known sites, the worldwide total came to 115,000 adult female leatherbacks. It was the first time such a calculation had been done. It later served as a basis for a regular status assessment of the species by IUCN.

It was also in Mexico in the 1980's that he participated in a dialogue with Antonio Suárez, the owner of the Pesqueras Industriales de Oaxaca, Sociedad Anonima (PIOSA) industrial slaughterhouse, who for several years killed tens of thousands of olive ridley turtles every year for their meat, skin, and eggs in Escobilla in the State of Oaxaca (Mexico). Antonio Suárez assumed that if a sea turtle industry provided a highly profitable activity, other big entrepreneurs like him would settle in the region, in turn creating local jobs and reducing poaching. These manufacturers would work with the government, which would develop a national plan with rational controls over the exploitation of sea turtle products. A tax imposed on the companies for every turtle caught or sold would subsidize the monitoring of the nesting beaches.

Suárez also argued that the conservation of sea turtles in Mexico would lead fishermen to unemployment and that the only economic alternative for them would be growing and selling marijuana. Peter answered that the inevitability of the exploitation of sea turtles in poor countries could be questioned because other countries like Suriname or Costa Rica had already introduced a strong policy of conservation without any trouble for the local people. Antonio Suárez sold out his business, which eventually closed down.

### **The WIDECAST adventure**

During the endless, but friendly, WIDECAST meetings, sitting side by side, we sometimes fantasized, half-serious, half-joking (he spoke very good French with an English accent) about expeditions to be undertaken together, or about projects that one had done and not the other. That is how we had imagined being dropped off by balloon at the bottom of the crater of the Alcedo Volcano on Isabela Island in the Galapagos to observe the mating of *Geochelone elephantopus*! Unfortunately, it was just a fantasy. Another time, in 1995, I remember, he told me that he had been on the magnificent reefs of Entrecasteaux, the nesting place of *Chelonia mydas* in the Coral sea in French territory, before me. He was amazed to have seen the magnificent atolls he had flown over with George Balazs in 1979. But the pilot of the plane had never been able to find them again during a second flyover in 1987.

During this discussion, Peter drew a leatherback turtle on the notebook where I used to take notes at WIDECAST meetings and planted a French flag on it, saying something like "females leatherbacks in French Guiana are under French responsibility, take good care of them". Of course, I kept this drawing. I must point out here that we had exchanged mail in the early 70s after he and Joop Schulz had discovered the importance of the nesting site for *Dermochelys coriacea* not far from Organabo. He had been happy when in 1977, Jean Lescure and I had found the necessary funding to start the monitoring of the nesting sites and to prove what he had estimated as a breeding stock of leatherback turtles in French Guiana.

As for the reefs of Entrecasteaux, we would have to wait until 2017 when Marc Girondot and I showed the international importance of this 'hotspot' Peter had told me about 20 years earlier.

### **The Chelonian Research Institute**

In 1998, Peter and his friends Robert Wood and Rob Truland created the Chelonian Research Institute in a house built in the 1920s on a 15-acre piece of land at 402 South Central Avenue, in the small town of Oviedo, Florida, opposite his own house. Another building and another piece of land were purchased later to expand the storage possibilities for the collections and to provide office space.

Note that the plots of land include patches of forest where *Gopherus polyphemus* and *Terrapene bauri* are naturally present. Peter claimed that he had censused about fifteen species of Chelonians within a radius of some 3 km around the Institute and the nesting of two species of sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas*) on the nearest beach.



Peter in one of the rooms of the Chelonian Research Institute (Photo: F. Bonin).

The main building of the Institute is a beautiful wooden house with a single floor. It is a colonial-style house with small columns and a large balcony. In some rooms, shells and turtles hang from the walls and the ceiling, while in other rooms, hundreds of skulls, carapaces, and jars filled with eggs or embryos are lined up on shelves.

His collections of Chelonians, with 16,500 specimens from 86% of all existing species, compete with the largest museums. They come in a number of specimens after the Carnegie Museum, and are considered among the most complete in the world. Peter turned

his Institute into a research center that could accommodate students and researchers free of charge. Anyone who has never drunk freshly squeezed orange or grapefruit juice for breakfast there, picked directly from the tree, next to large live turtles (*Centrochelys sulcata*, *Aldabrachelys gigantea*) doesn't know that a little paradise of zoological research, free from constraints, really exists.

He was assisted in this undertaking of updating collections and studies by post-doctoral students and assistants like Ghislaine Guyot, Noriko Oshima, Treva Marshal...

As a logo for the Institute he took the famous drawings by Guillaume Rondelet published in his book *Libri, in quibus vera Piscium effigies expressae sunt* dated 1554: *Testudine coriacea*, a leatherback turtle captured in France off Frontignan, and *Testudine cortica*.

### An enthusiast of taxonomy

Beyond sea turtles and his innovative work on them (I will come back to that later), Peter developed a passion for taxonomy. He was a great traveler, a true 19th-century explorer and naturalist, an inquisitive-minded encyclopaedist. He discovered new species and subspecies and also confirmed some binominal names.

Taxonomy is a thankless science, and rarely will a proposal submitted by a systematist at a given time be preserved forever. For example, some forms such as *Kinosternon oaxacae* and *Mauremys iversoni*, defined in 1979 and 1991 by Peter, were used synonymously through the complicated effect of the nomenclature Code.

In 2003 he wrote: "In the language of the retail trade or the military profession, we chelonian systematics are currently living in an era of promotions... Four different color

morphs of *Cyclemys dentata* are now recognized as distinct species. The Mediterranean tortoise species *Testudo kleinmanni* and *Testudo marginata* have each been bisected into two full species, Horsfield's tortoise (*Testudo hosfieldi*) is now considered to be an assemblage of four species in their own genus (*Agrioemys*), the Aldabra tortoises are now at least three species...”.

Pritchard & Trebbau (1984) recognized 31 genera in the Cheloniidae alone, only five surviving today, and it may be assumed that many other genera, and certainly a host of species, disappeared without leaving any trace.



*Peter Pritchard examining a beautiful fossil of Archelon ischyros at the Naturhistorisches Museum of Vienna (Photo: J. Fretey).*

In the open debate on the taxonomic separation of *mydas* and *agassizii* within the genus *Chelonia*, Pritchard (1999) proposed three possibilities for the black form: a). It is a colored morph of *Chelonia mydas*; b). It is a subspecies of *C. mydas*; c). It deserves its own designation as a complete species. One of his taxonomic struggles was to have the Pacific black turtle recognized as a valid species *Chelonia agassizii* Bocourt, 1868. He described significant external differences between the two forms, *agassizii* being characterized by a more domed and heart-shaped carapace, the curved postero-lateral margin of the carapace above the hind limbs and dark grey pigmentation on the plastron.

Other authors have later inventoried other differences. But mitochondrial DNA analysis of the *mydas* and *agassizii* forms shows a low level of genetic variability, and molecular analyses reveal that the black turtle *agassizii* is a regional melanistic population of *C. mydas* (Karl & Bowen, 1999) in the Pacific clade. However, the variability of the microsatellite loci has shown a male-mediated gene flow, confirming a real genetic divergence between the Atlantic and the Pacific *Chelonia* populations (Roberts *et al.*, 2004). The genus *Chelonia* has a wide global geographical distribution, and therefore, it is not surprising that it has developed phylogenetic morphs with strong regional identities, as well as an overlap between *mydas* morphs and *agassizii* morphs, with individuals showing characteristics belonging to one or the other (Wai Jang & Shintaku, 2012).

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### **Travels in French Overseas territories**

As a Francophile, he was familiar with the history and culture of France, its great philosophers and scientists. He had supported the national and international actions and initiatives of SOPTOM (Station d'Observation et de Protection des Tortues et de leurs Milieux) since it was created in the south of France. In 2006, he translated the encyclopedia "Turtles of the world" by Franck Boni, Bernard Devaux and Alain Dupré for an English edition by A & C Black Publishers Ltd.

His travels in a large part of the French overseas territories (including in Martinique with Jean Lescure and me for shared expertise) led to reports rarely published in scientific journals, but the observations they mentioned proved to be very interesting. Let us not forget that he was the first scientist to point out the importance of French Guiana for the reproduction of *Dermochelys coriacea*, which led WWF a few years later to finance the first campaigns for the monitoring of nesting sites.



Examining a big skull of *Caretta caretta*  
(Photo: M. Tiwari).

During the time when the green turtle ranch operated on La Reunion Island and the international debate it created, Peter agreed with me that it was ranching and not farming, putting France in an anachronistic situation regarding CITES in the process of ratification. This issue only brought us a little closer. During a stormy meeting of the IUCN Marine Turtle Specialist Group in Tortuguero (Costa Rica) where Peter and I were sitting, a lively discussion started between Leo Brongersma and Archie Carr on farming. "To farm or not to farm?" in the context of conservation, that was the subject. After his stay in Costa Rica, Leo was invited by Peter to his house in Oviedo. They both resumed discussions on nesting and

agreed that a farm like the one in the Cayman Islands could prove useful in providing breeding adults of *L. kempii* to repopulate declining natural populations.

While in Guadeloupe in 1984, he asked fishermen about sea turtles. One of them had lived on the island of Petite-Terre for about forty years and told him about a turtle he called "Cul rond" that came to lay eggs on the island. He made a distinction between that turtle and the "White Turtle" *Chelonia mydas*, whose nesting had been monitored locally for several years. This interesting, but unknown data, was commented on by Fretey & Lescure (1999).

After his flights of 1979 and 1987 in New Caledonia, Peter managed to organize an expedition with the New Caledonian Association for the Protection of Nature (ASNNC) to go on the reefs of Entrecasteaux in December 1991 with funding from the Chelonia Institute and the PROE. He counted 310 tracks on Surprise Island, 1800 tracks on Huon Island, 572 tracks on Fabre Island, and 130 tracks on a 4th unnamed islet. He estimated an average of 50 ascents per night on Huon and an overall number of about 2,800 nests per year.

### **A man of many talents and distinctions**

PCHP as we called him had only one face, that of a charismatic man, charming, smiling, full of humor, very attentive to others, a scholar, curious about everything, an encyclopaedist in the old way.

Reducing him to the mere image of a *turtleman* that made him known to the world of science and conservation would be simplistic and too limited. He was ready and willing to get into philosophical discussions. He spoke Spanish and French fairly well, which often was a great asset during his travels in Central and South America and in the French Overseas Territories.

He was a very good photographer, and some of his pictures were published in National Geographic and exhibited at the United Nations.

PCHP was a zoologist, a taxonomist, an ethologist, an ethnozoologist, and very involved in species conservation, but also an environmentalist/ecologist in the political sense we use the terms today.

His struggles were most often geographically very distant from the United States of America. However, he never neglected the quality of the environment in Florida where he had chosen to live, hence his book "Saving What's Left" to fight wildland development in Florida. For the Audubon Society he organized the first Symposium of specialists on the Florida puma (*Puma concolor coryi*), a feline of which about only fifty individuals remain in the South of Florida. Then he wrote a national recovery plan. He also supervised a study on the presence of radionuclides in the tissues of wild animals present on phosphate mine sites in Polk County. He was also editor-in-chief of the first edition of the six-volume "Rare and Endangered Biota of Florida".

He was a good herpetologist and could write on other Reptiles than Chelonians, if he considered an observation particularly interesting, which he did in 1987 concerning the habitat of *Crocodylus intermedius*.

He belonged to that generation of specialists in sea turtles, the "Children of Archie Carr", who explored the techniques and considered the philosophy of biodiversity conservation. He was very interested in our French artificial incubation programme in thermoregulated rooms in Yalimapo. He understood the wishes of some colleagues to save eggs from erosion or poaching by placing them in wire mesh enclosures, but he was generally opposed to transplanting nests outside the nesting site (see The Conservation of Sea Turtles: Practices and Problems, 1980). He said that, if possible, it was better to let the eggs incubate under natural conditions. It was the result of a reflection related to his own experience as he himself, a few years earlier, had transplanted eggs of *L. kempii* threatened by coyotes and village poaching to an enclosure (see Endangered species: Kemp's Ridley Turtle, 1976). In 1979 he also shared his reflections on the principle of head-starting for *Lepidochelys kempii*.

When the book "Conserving Sea Turtles" written by Nicholas Mrosovsky was secretly published in 1983, Peter did not fail to show his disagreement with the author on some points concerning his own philosophy of what, according to him, sea turtle conservation should be. He also reproached Mrosovsky for criticizing field projects without having ever directed any or for making gross taxonomic and anatomical errors (crimes of lèse-majesté for Peter!).

He served on numerous national and international organizations and on numerous Boards of Directors. He was Chairman of the Florida Endangered Species Advisory Committee, founding Chairman of the IUCN Marine and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, member of the Fish and Wildlife Service Manatee, Kemp's Ridley, Florida Panther Recovery official groups. He also served on the Marine Turtle Conservation Committee of the US National Academy of Sciences. He was a founding member and honorary Chairman of the French association Chélonée.

He was the recipient of the *Turtle Conservancy Conservation Achievement Award* and the *Kemp's Ridley Research Award* of the Sea Turtle Society for his extensive research on this endangered species. He also received the prestigious *John Behler Award* for turtle conservation, the *Lifetime Achievement Award* from the International Sea Turtle



*On Tortuguero beach, Costa Rica, George Balazs (left), Nicholas Mrosovsky (standing) and Peter (right) examine a female green turtle that has been turned over by the night monitoring team to do the tagging by day (Photo: J. Fretey).*

Society, and the *Archie F. Carr Medal* from the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida.

He was involved in many film productions on sea turtles: *Homeward Journey*, *Farewell Ancient Mariner* (with Greenpeace), *Adios Arribadas* (with Florida Institute of Oceanography), *The Heartbreak Turtle* (with KUHT Television from Texas). He also was an advisor for the film, *Something Nobody Else Has*, a documentary on the decline of the alligator snapping turtle. Peter owned the only existing pictures of the famous Lonesome George on Pinta Island, and has often been requested by TV stations around the world to provide and comment on them.

### **His writings**

Peter Pritchard's book production is important. He wrote more than a dozen books, including seven scientifically significant ones, a book for children as well as hundreds of scientific publications and reports.

Let us quote the enormous work he did for the "Encyclopedia of Turtles" in 1979, supplementing the first version of 1967 to include all his knowledge. This bible was intended for the use of all naturalists and tortoise lovers, and not only for initiated scientists. The author explained that he had found it unnecessary and impossible to list the 1000 publications he had consulted and that he had decided to quote the references that he felt were important to know, by species, at the end of each chapter.

He took most of the photographs illustrating this book. The others were from friendly colleagues with whom he had corresponded such as Robert Mertens and Walter Sachsse in Germany, Federico Medem in Colombia, the American ichthyologist Herbert Richard Axelrod, Harald Schultz in Brazil, George Hughes in South Africa ...

Released in 1984, "Turtles of Venezuela" was much more than just a guide. I do not know about the participation of Pedro Trebbau in the writing of the guide, but this voluminous book gave Peter the opportunity to describe in a very precise manner for each species the synonyms of its scientific name, the inventory of its vernacular names, its anatomy, its geographical distribution, knowledge about its reproduction and feeding, etc.

His 1989 monograph on the alligator turtle, *Macroclémys temminckii*, was a publishing success and had to be republished in 2006, including new information, new knowledge, and the actions taken for its conservation.



From the early 2000s he showed a passionate interest in the genus *Rafetus* and entered into partnerships with China and Vietnam to save the Blue River softshell turtle, *Rafetus swinhoei* (Gray, 1873). At Hoan Kiem Lake in Hanoi, this mythical turtle is considered a national treasure and one of the last specimens probably lived there and died in 2016. Two wild turtles are believed to be still present in Dong Mo and Xuan Khanh lakes. In 2012 Peter published "Rafetus: The Curve of Extinction".

His book "Tales from the Thébaïde" released in 2007 was an opportunity for him to share some of his memoirs, not enough though, talk about his origins and tell anecdotes from some of his trips.

He has been editor-in-chief of the journal Chelonian Conservation and Biology and of the major IUCN publication, Conservation Biology of Freshwater Turtles.

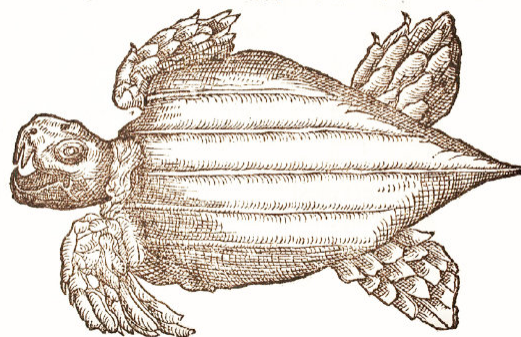
In 1998, he prefaced the reprint of the 1914 John Van Denburgh monograph "Expedition of the California Academy of Sciences to the Galapagos Islands, 1905-1906 - The Gigantic Land Tortoises of the Galapagos Tortoises". PCHP has written some 350 scientific publications and reports.

Peter and I had been considering the microcephalus of *Caretta caretta* and were currently writing about it. The enormous skull presented in a collection at the Gorée Sea Museum was at the origin of this unfinished writing.

Peter had three sons with his wife Sibille: Dominic, Sebastian, and Cameron. Dominic was in the army and died as a result of the Gulf War, which came as a terrible shock for the whole family. During an interview for his magazine La Tortue in 1993, Bernard Devaux asked Peter: "Which do you prefer? Sea turtles, land turtles, or freshwater turtles?" Peter replied with a laugh: "Ah ... difficult. I have three sons and I love the three of them equally."

In the 2000s, Peter was severely affected by Alzheimer's disease. A bad reaction to an antibiotic shortened his life. Peter died on February 26, 2020. A few days later, on March 8, Roger Bour disappeared as well. In two days the international scientific community lost two exceptional personalities on the knowledge and taxonomy of the Chelonians.

De Testudine coriacea siue Mercurij.



## Peter Pritchard 1943-2020 parmi nous pour toujours

**Mustapha Aksissou**

*Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Faculty of Sciences, Tetouan, Morocco  
(email: [aksissou@yahoo.fr](mailto:aksissou@yahoo.fr))*

Suite à la proposition de Jacques Fretey et à la demande de Manjula Tiwari, et même si je n'ai pas eu de contact vraiment direct avec l'éminent chercheur Peter Pritchard (1943-2020), j'ai le plaisir de contribuer modestement à la commémoration de ce célèbre scientifique. Je me rappelle bien le jour où pour la première fois j'ai rencontré cet homme de 1,93 m ; c'était en Crète lors du « 26th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation, du 3 au 8 avril 2006 ». Manjula me l'avait présenté; il était souriant et très sympathique. Je l'ai vu aussi lors de 2 ou 3 des symposiums auxquels j'ai assisté aux USA. Mais d'après sa littérature, je vois la grande richesse de sa production scientifique et ses actions de conservation montrant que Peter s'est consacré durant toute sa vie à la science et aux tortues en général, marines en particulier.

Peter est de la génération des spécialistes des tortues marines, les " Enfants d'Archie Carr" qui réfléchiront aux techniques et à la philosophie de la conservation de la biodiversité. Moi aussi, je suis des chercheurs émerveillés des tortues marines qui sont des animaux très bizarres. Elles passent toutes leurs vies en mer, mais un jour, la femelle sort quelques heures sur le sable pour pondre ses œufs et revenir immédiatement. Y a-t-il un phénomène aussi extraordinaire? Je ne crois pas ! Sûrement que Peter était aussi fasciné et émerveillé. Il est répété, et d'après Jacques Fretey, que Peter aurait dit adolescent : « Turtles are not trying to dominate the Earth. They're just trying to survive». (Les tortues n'essaient pas de dominer la Terre. Elles essaient juste de survivre).

Lors d'un interview pour sa revue La Tortue, Bernard Devaux demanda en 1993 à Peter: « Qu'est-ce que vous préférez ? Les tortues de mer, les tortues de terre ou les tortues d'eau douce ? ». Peter répondit en riant: «Ah... difficile. J'ai trois fils, et je les aime tous les trois de la même façon».



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**Peter C. H. Pritchard (1943-2020)  
In Memoriam**

**Diego Amoroch**  
*President-Elect, International Sea Turtle Society*  
(email: [amorocho.diego@gmail.com](mailto:amorocho.diego@gmail.com))

There are people who inspire our life and professional practice, but few like Peter Pritchard did for many generations of us who have dedicated ourselves to turtle research and conservation. His passion for these reptiles led him to travel the world in search of species, curious facts, but especially the people who interact with them and share their habitats. Maybe that is why Peter was a pioneer in community-based conservation. He was the one who urged us to understand the importance that turtles have for native communities in their daily lives.

I especially remember Peter at one of the Sea Turtle Symposia held at the end of the 1980s. Due to his great stature, he stood out among our group of students and recently-initiated conservationists who had surrounded him to nourish ourselves in the presence of that charismatic and kind man who shared his knowledge with charming anecdotes that produced smiles, and to listen to his advice: "if the community is not involved from the beginning in your conservation project, you will be guaranteeing a successful path to failure."

The year of 2020 will remain in our memories as one of the most difficult that life has given us. However, despite the pain and difficulties that many of us have suffered and faced in these months, there is something that Peter taught us that will keep us dreaming of a new dawn. And that is the hope that we will continue as a scientific community doing what we are so passionate about as he did in life. His legacy will remain for generations, and the memory of that great researcher and exceptional gentleman will persist as long as the turtles continue to inhabit our Planet.



*International Sea Turtle Symposium - Miami 2002  
(Photo: A. Fallabrino).*



## A Glimpse from the Shoulders of a Giant

**Ana Rebeca Barragán**  
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There are events that mark the career of a young biologist. For me, that event was my first attendance at the Annual Sea Turtle Symposium, back in 1992, a mere couple of weeks after obtaining my Bachelor's degree in Mexico City. For a Mexican student, going to the Symposium was (and still is) like walking on the Red Carpet at the Oscars: a chance to see up-close and hopefully talk to those scientific celebrities you keep reading about and admiring their work. So, there I was, gasping at all those familiar names. And then, I met Peter Pritchard.

If the Symposium was the Oscars, Peter was Richard Burton. Tall, good-looking, and charismatic, Peter was a giant in many ways. But what was really notable was how approachable and easy-going he was, always with a smile and good stories to tell. The day we met, somebody told him that I came from Mexico, and immediately he broke into all these tales of Kemp's ridleys in Rancho Nuevo and of leatherbacks in the Mexican Pacific. Peter was such a good storyteller.

But aside from his stories, it was his science that impacted my career. I devoted my efforts to the conservation of the leatherback turtle in Mexico, for which Peter had done the first estimate of the nesting population size a decade earlier. He concluded that Mexico hosted the largest leatherback nesting population in the world, and this information helped put Mexico's efforts to protect the species into perspective. We went from being a group of biology students trying to protect a very cool sea turtle species to being the conservation group that fought to avoid the extinction of a globally important sea turtle population. Peter's research became the baseline for the monitoring activities of the recently born "Proyecto Laud" (Leatherback Project) and became mandatory reading for countless biology students that participated in our project. When Laura Sarti and I started the aerial surveys project in 1996 to estimate the leatherback population of the Eastern Pacific, we used Peter's paper from 1982, using the same technique as a starting point for planning and executing the monitoring of the distribution of the leatherback population for the following ten years. During the flights, I frequently thought of Peter flying the same route and watching the same shores that we did and, of course, how much this population had changed since the early 80s. The collapse in such a short time was as evident as it was scary.

Over the years, we kept meeting at the Annual Symposium. Peter always remembered who I was, was kind enough to follow my career, and we were always happy to see each other. He always had a kind comment on my work, and I always enjoyed having the chance to talk leatherbacks with him. I always felt grateful for the opportunity of meeting him and his work, which was the stepping-stone that helped my own work go global. That stepping stone also helped me see things with a different perspective, from the shoulders of a giant, and taking a glimpse through his worldwide lenses. Thank you, Peter, for the opportunity.



## Rencontre avec Peter Pritchard

**Wafae Benhardouze**

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Lorsque j'ai commencé ma recherche bibliographique sur les tortues marines comme étape préliminaire à la préparation de ma thèse, j'ai été étonné du nom de Peter Pritchard en tant qu'auteur de plusieurs ouvrages et articles, un nom qui revenait très souvent. J'étais curieuse d'en savoir plus sur cet auteur. La recherche sur Google m'a indiqué qu'il était le principal conservateur des tortues sur plus de 40 ans, et qu'il était honoré des noms scientifiques de trois tortues ; j'ai appris aussi qu'il est connu dans la famille scientifique comme le père des tortues. J'avais alors souhaité de rencontrer en personne ce merveilleux auteur.

Lors de plusieurs rencontres internationales, j'ai eu la chance de rencontrer Peter Pritchard et sa gentille épouse. Nous avons discuté ensemble pendant plusieurs minutes. Peter Pritchard, en tant que personne, était très sympathique, modeste et serviable. En tant que scientifique, il était une source d'information sur n'importe quel sujet, en particulier sur les tortues marines. Après notre discussion sur le statut des tortues marines au Maroc, il m'enrichit de conseils pertinents et il m'encouragea à surmonter toutes sortes d'obstacles pour poursuivre mon étude et la conservation des tortues. Enfin, je conclus notre entretien en lui parlant de son nom de père des tortues. Je lui ai dit : « Si vous êtes le père des tortues du monde entier, moi, je suis la mère des tortues au Maroc ! », et je lui ai expliqué que les pêcheurs, les étudiants, les professeurs et toutes les personnes qui me connaissaient quand ils oublient mon nom exact, m'appellent Madame Tortue. Son sourire d'alors me montra son bonheur. Vraiment, nous et les tortues, restons orphelins après le décès de Peter Pritchard.



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## Tribute for Peter C. H. Pritchard

**Karen A. Bjorndal**

*Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research, Department of Biology,  
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It is difficult to know where to start when writing about Peter Pritchard's inspiration for all students of turtle biology and conservation. Peter was involved in many global and local issues, and was one of the relatively few of us who study terrestrial, freshwater and sea turtles. His contributions took many forms: his books and articles that enriched individuals from both the scientific community and the general public, his mentorship of many individuals from around the world, and his insistence that all individuals no matter their age or level of education should have access to museum collections.

Peter was always in the thick of conservation debates from turtle farming to egg harvesting to conservation status of turtle species. He lent a voice of reason and global perspective to these debates, and Peter never shied away from taking an unpopular position if he felt it was right. He also engaged in taxonomic debates. Should *kempii* be spelled with one i or two? Is the black turtle a separate species? When faced with these questions, I always followed Peter's advice and knew I would not be led astray.

Peter completed his PhD in 1969 under the advisement of Archie Carr. Four years later, I began my graduate studies with Archie and was his first student studying sea turtles since Peter. Jeanne Mortimer and Anne Meylan soon followed. Archie often regaled us with amusing anecdotes from Peter's exploits while in graduate school. Archie also held him up as a role model, urging us on in our field work with descriptions of Peter's adventures in the field – walking remote beaches and traversing jungles “with only a bag of lemondrops in his pocket.”

Peter left us many gifts, which are his legacy to turtle biology and conservation. First, his books and monographs have inspired many and will educate future generations. Second, his phenomenal collection of turtles that he gathered over his lifetime and housed in the Chelonian Research Institute adjacent to his home in Oviedo, Florida. This collection is the most comprehensive collection of chelonia with about 13,000 specimens representing 100% of genera and about 95% of living species. Third, although Peter studied turtles on every continent where they are found, and with sea turtles throughout their range, Peter's longest study was on the sea turtle nesting beaches in northwestern Guyana, where he pioneered the now common approach of engaging local communities – in this case the Arawak people – in sea turtle conservation.

I have only touched on a few of Peter's many contributions, but I want to end, on behalf of all turtle enthusiasts throughout the world with the message – thank you, Peter, for being you!



**Peter Pritchard**

**Pat M. Burchfield**

*Gladys Porter Zoo, Brownsville, Texas, USA  
(email: [cdepat@att.net](mailto:cdepat@att.net))*

It had been raining the way it does only in the tropics, and the dirt road to my friend's house was impassable by truck. Even a 4-wheel drive does not go if you are buried up to the axles, so I parked my truck beside a small concrete building on the west side of the coast highway. The mud in that part of Mexico is heavy with clay, which builds up on your boots with each consecutive step. You have to stop frequently to de-mud your boots in order to try to get to where you are going. Eventually I reached the clearing in the forest, which was the small Ejido of San Rafael. Jose lived in a palm-thatched adobe building with his elderly mother. My friend Jose Bernal was both my friend and guide. I had originally met Jose while I was on a snake hunting expedition for the Gladys Porter Zoo in the spring of 1971.

On this particular day in May of 1972 as Jose and I hiked toward some forested foothills on the east side of the Tampico highway hunting for tropical rattlesnakes, he mentioned in passing that there was a gringo and a Mexican on the beach doing something with turtles.

“Who were they and what were they doing?”

Anxious to find out what this was all about, we set out to see for ourselves. The cattle trail, which led to the beach, was an amazing place in those days – a gallery of tropical deciduous forest overhung the narrow, dirt cattle trail road interspersed with tropical thorn scrub. At the bottom of the first hill was a small adobe casita with a palm-thatched roof similar to Jose's. In front of the house, beneath a beautiful red-orange blooming Flamboyant tree, was a donkey tied to a hitching post. Beside the house a vaquero (cowboy) was busily skinning an ocelot, which he had shot raiding his chicken coop. While he and Jose were engaged in lively conversation, a brilliantly colored coral snake crawled from the grass onto the mud road. I dashed forward and scooped it into a snake bag, which I had tucked into my belt. What a magical and wondrous place this was! Jaguars, ocelots, ornate hawk eagles, parrots, motmots, jaguarondis, tamanduas, coatis, tropical rattlesnakes and sea turtles just to mention some of the many species of animals which abounded in this area. Little did I realize that this was the beginning of an odyssey, which was going to last more than 40 years and continues today! Likewise, little did I realize that sadly I was to witness the disappearance of most of what I have just described. Eventually we reached the beach and encountered two individuals, Dr. Peter Charles Howard Pritchard and Dr. Rene Marquez Milan, in their small-tented beach camp with a small protective corral for translocated turtle egg clutches.

Peter had an amazing presence. He was a fairly large-framed handsome man, and when he spoke, he spoke with authority based on scientific facts. This coupled with his British accent gave him both an imposing countenance and a charismatic aura.

Peter began telling us the story of the Tortuga lora and its meteoric decline towards extinction.

Peter said that on one of his trips to Rancho Nuevo in 1970, he observed construction workers feverishly erecting a structure immediately adjacent to the camp, which he pointed out and we walked through. Workers claimed it was for processing fish from the local artisanal fishery, which did make sense.

Why not locate it in La Pesca or Barra del Tordo where those boats “charangas” were based? It was obviously for harvesting meat and leather from ridleys!

Peter went to the Mexico D.F. and met with a government official and confirmed that a permit had been issued to harvest 1500 ridleys, essentially the entire population at that time.

Thanks to Mexican and international outcry from the conservation community the turtles were spared. Pritchard and Rene Marquez Milan saved the Kemp’s ridley from probable functional extinction right then and there!

Peter’s scientific knowledge of this species along with all other turtle species was amazing and inspiring to all he met and mentored to say the least. His obvious devotion to saving this species from extinction was infectious and left you with only one option. “What can I do to help?”



*The Rancho Nuevo kitchen in 1978 (Photo: P. Burchfield).*

Well in April 1978, Peter stopped in Brownsville and overnights with his university student crew from the University of Central Florida on his way to Rancho Nuevo and the beginning of the bi-national program to save the Kemp’s ridley.

In a casual way Peter said, “Oh, by the way would you pop in on them if you’re in the area and see if they need anything?”

That was the beginning of the Zoo’s involvement.

On May 19th of 1978, I accompanied Peter, Sibille and their small son to Rancho Nuevo in Peter’s British Leyland Land Rover. The trip from Brownsville to San Rafael was around six hours or longer in those days and the 13 kilometers into the beach took varying amounts of time depending on the condition of the dirt cattle trail from the coastal highway into the beach. When it rained, it rained hard and on this trip all the way from Matamoros. The cattle trucks made deep ruts in the clay mud trail and even a four-wheel vehicle couldn’t always make it if the driver wasn’t skillful, but Peter was.



After the first straight way you needed to climb up a hill and you had to have a pretty good downhill speed and negotiate a curve to make it up the next hill, which was slippery mud but we did. Over the ensuing years, before they rerouted the dirt road, a lot of trucks ended up in the ditch. Deep water at the bottom of the hill especially in the June-July rainy season made it impassable.

I don't after 42 years remember if there were 10 or 13 gates separating the ranches or pastures along with pipe cattle guards, but opening those gates was always a chore, but the surrounding habitat made every trip a unique adventure. Well after several hours the land rover finally broke down just to the west of the small cattle community of Rancho Nuevo. Peter set off in the pouring rain to find help while I stayed with Sibille and their small son.

Eventually help arrived and we made it to Rancho Nuevo after midnight.

Another greatly admirable trait that Peter always exhibited was his ability to bounce off adversity with a positive attitude and continue with the task at hand.

All who knew Peter miss his humor, wit, expertise, and dedication to the turtles.



## Some Highlights of Peter C.H. Pritchard's Participation In and Support of Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Research, Conservation, and Population Recovery

**Charles Wax Caillouet, Jr.**

Retired June 1998 from NOAA-NMFS SEFSC Laboratory, Galveston, Texas, USA  
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I am grateful for having known Peter C.H. Pritchard and for the times our paths crossed. I benefited professionally and personally from Peter's dedication to Kemp's ridley sea turtle (*Lepidochelys kempi*) research, conservation, and population recovery. Herein I highlight Peter's roles in (1) reintroducing Kemp's ridley nesting to National Park Service's (NPS) Padre Island National Seashore (PAIS) on the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) coast near Corpus Christi, Texas, (2) head-starting at the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) laboratory in Galveston, Texas, and (3) captive-breeding, and I include a relevant bibliography.

Peter had been involved in a green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) reintroduction project in Florida for six years when in 1974 Robert G. Whistler and Henry H. Hildebrand proposed a 10-year project to reestablish Kemp's ridley nesting on Padre Island (<https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/DownloadFile/476200>). An outline of the proposal was included as Project 9 in NPS' 1974 Natural Resources Management Plan for Padre Island National Seashore (<https://archive.org/details/naturalresources00padre/page/n69/mode/2up>). In 1976, at the request of NPS, Howard W. Campbell, US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), conducted a study of the feasibility of reintroducing Kemp's ridley nesting to PAIS, and reported his results and recommendations in 1977. During 1977, Peter assisted in planning the US-Mexico Kemp's Ridley Restoration and Enhancement Program (KRREP) which included (1) restoration of nesting at PAIS, and (2) head-starting, which involved captive-rearing Kemp's ridley hatchlings to larger sizes thought to be better able to avoid natural predation, but also so that they could be safely tagged in multiple ways to distinguish them as restoration ridleys after release into the GoM. At the time, Peter was Florida Audubon Society's Vice-President for Science and Research, and he had conducted Kemp's ridley research at the species' primary nesting beach near Rancho Nuevo on the GoM coast of Tamaulipas, Mexico. Beginning in 1966, Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Biológico-Pesqueras (INIBP) had been protecting and monitoring Kemp's ridley nesters, clutches, and hatchlings at Rancho Nuevo, but the population was still declining. The bi-national KRREP was initiated in January 1978. Peter assisted in the work at Rancho Nuevo during the 1978 nesting season and conducted research there during some additional seasons. He was also a member of the KRREP's Science Advisory Board, which included Archie F. Carr, Henry H. Hildebrand, and Rene Márquez M.

During each of the 1978–1988 nesting seasons at Rancho Nuevo, tens of individual clutches of eggs were carefully collected and placed in separate polystyrene foam incubation boxes containing PAIS sand, and then the boxes were transferred to PAIS. As each clutch hatched, its emergent hatchlings were released on the PAIS beach and allowed to crawl to the shallow surf; after brief exposure to the surf, they were collected with dip nets, and transferred in separate containers to the Galveston laboratory, where they were head-started for 9–11 months, tagged in various ways, and released into the GoM. It was hoped that such exposures of eggs and hatchlings (both sexes) would “imprint” them to PAIS so that head-started females that survived to maturity would return to nest at PAIS. In addition, some hatchlings from early year-classes “imprinted” at Rancho Nuevo were transferred to the Galveston laboratory for head-starting and release into the GoM, for comparison with those that were PAIS-“imprinted”.

In 1979, Peter and others urged the development of a captive-breeding stock, distributed among multiple facilities, to preserve a Kemp's ridley gene pool in case other conservation interventions failed. It was developed using head-started "yearlings" and hatchlings that emerged from Rancho Nuevo nests.

Peter was one of two leaders of the team that developed the 1984 Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles. He participated in the First International Symposium on Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Biology, Conservation and Management held at Texas A&M University, Galveston, in October 1985. He was a member of the Committee on Sea Turtle Conservation that authored the book *Decline of the Sea Turtles: Causes and Prevention*, published by National Academy Press in 1990. Peter also was a member of the recovery team that developed the Kemp's Ridley Recovery Plan in 1992. He was among stakeholders who participated in meetings held on 13–14 April 2004 and 23 February 2006 in Houston, Texas, pursuant to the development of the *Bi-National Recovery Plan for the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*) second revision*, published in 2011.

The PAIS-"imprinting" phase of the KRREP was terminated in 1989 after the release of the 1988 year-class, but NPS continued restoration efforts at PAIS, using hatcheries and other methods comparable to those applied in Tamaulipas. The source of hatchlings for head-starting the 1989–1992 year-classes was Rancho Nuevo until head-starting was terminated in 1993; thereafter, 200 or fewer hatchlings from Rancho Nuevo continued to be captive-reared annually at the Galveston laboratory for use in research. After viable hatchlings were produced by captive-breeders at Cayman Turtle Farm (1983) Ltd., captive-breeding was terminated in 1992. Surviving captives that had been received as hatchlings from Rancho Nuevo were transferred to Xcaret Park, Cancun, Mexico; those that had been head-started at the Galveston laboratory and distributed among multiple facilities were released into Galveston Bay, Texas.

Fortunately, the first recorded nesting of a PAIS-"imprinted" and head-started Kemp's ridley occurred in 1996. The nesting colony was eventually restored at PAIS by continued conservation efforts that enhanced the production of hatchlings from clutches laid by Kemp's ridleys nesting at PAIS. Although the nesting colony at Tamaulipas is by far the dominant source of Kemp's ridley hatchlings, satellite colonies at Tecolutla, Veracruz and PAIS are important to population diversity and resilience. Trends in nesting by these three colonies are correlated, suggesting that environmental factors constraining Kemp's ridley recovery may impinge on all three colonies through similar mechanisms. If true, the enormous annual hatchling production at Tamaulipas over the past two decades may have increased the abundance of neritic immature Kemp's ridleys to levels that are now inhibiting an increase in abundance of adults, thereby preventing an increase in annual numbers of nesters at all three locations. Moreover, this situation may be exacerbated by the declining carrying capacity of the GoM ecosystem for the Kemp's ridley population. Peter anticipated that a time would come when "the more turtles the better" conservation philosophy and associated interventions should be reconsidered. Perhaps "the more nesting colonies the better" will save Kemp's ridley, as the climate warms and sea level rises. Lessons learned from restoration, head-starting, and captive-breeding of Kemp's ridley could resume their usefulness in the establishment of new nesting colonies north of Tamaulipas and Texas.

If Kemp's ridley was not Peter's favorite turtle, it certainly must have been among those he most preferred. Peter's support of restoration, head-starting, and captive-breeding was unwavering. It was an honor and privilege for me to have known Peter, and I owe him a debt of gratitude for his professional and personal support of my staff and me at

the Galveston laboratory, as we worked to fulfill our roles in the head-starting phase of the KRREP and other sea turtle research.

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## **Peter's True Colors & The Time I Almost Killed Peter C.H. Pritchard**

**Simona A. Ceriani**

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***Peter's True Colors:*** I had the privilege of sharing many adventures with Peter. Peter was not simply "The Turtle Man" but an EXCEPTIONAL human being. He always had time for everybody. He was truly interested in everybody's story, he truly meant what he said, he was comfortable with everyone regardless of their education, income, living quarters, and social status. Everybody was at ease around him, and kids were attracted to Peter like a magnet. Maybe because they share the same sense of wonder?

Mini collage of Guyana memories and diversity of experiences I was lucky to share with Peter: meeting with the Guyana Prime Minister; live radio interview about the 50 years of the sustainable sea turtle conservation project Peter developed with the Arawak native community; boat travel to Santa Rosa, Shell Beach Protective Area stakeholder meeting. Locals welcome Peter as an old friend, and a short walk takes hours because Peter loves talking to each one of them. A three-year-old girl plays around a big box of chicken eggs. She is shy at first. A minute later, they are playing as if they have known each other forever. Back on the boat, we stop to visit Maria, an old friend that lives by the river. Maria and her husband keep moving their hut as the sea level rises, and as they do so, they slash and burn a bit more of the primary forest. For self-defense, Maria may occasionally kill a jaguar or two... not exactly the type of person I thought would have much in common with a conservationist such as PCHP. I couldn't have been more wrong! Maria is a fascinating woman. She welcomes us warmly, cooks us a tasty meal, teaches me how to squeeze some delicious juice, shares some great conversation, and laughs with her longtime friend Peter. We end up deep in conversation about sea level rise and how it affects us and our environment. She directly experiences sea-level rise and understands it way better than many of our politicians! This is one of the many memories I cherish that exemplifies Peter's approach to conservation based on native involvement and the value of their knowledge. After some hammock time (Peter LOVED his hammock time!), we resume the trip to the field station at Shell Beach. Then turtling time begins, but that's another story.

***The Time I Almost Killed Peter C.H. Pritchard:*** It is 2008. Peter and I are in San Jose, Costa Rica. On a free afternoon, Peter suggests going on a walk to the Natural Science Museum La Salle. After a while, we must cross a major intersection. We make it through the first six lanes just fine. We are about to cross the last two. At the last second, I look left and realize it's NOT a one-way street... I scream, "Peter!!!" Too late, he's already crossing. Peter gets hit by a car's passenger-side mirror, spins and falls on the ground by the sidewalk. Passport and camera fly in the air and land in the middle of the road. I jump instinctively (and irresponsibly) into the middle of the road to grab them. Passport saved, I turn and see Peter sitting on the edge of the sidewalk, bleeding from his forehead, scratches on his knee, and a swollen ankle. I am terrified. I am a first-year PhD student, and I am about to become famous in the turtle community as the girl that almost killed PCHP! Peter is responsive and appears fine. I clean his forehead; thankfully, it's a superficial cut, but he did hit his head and I want to seek medical help. Shortly after, in a very "Peter way," he smiles, puts his glasses on, stands up, and says, "Let's go to the museum before they close." I yell, "Are you out of your mind? You just got hit by a car!" He smiles, insists he's fine and that we should go to the museum



because "they have an excellent collection." Peter is a bit shaky; he did get scared, but he's stubborn. We resume our walk toward the museum, and I hold his hand at every crossing. From that day on, I always held his hand when crossing a road, any road. We arrived at the museum and...it was closed.



*Simona with Peter and Romeo De Freitas in Guyana (Photo: K. Stewart).*



**“Thank you, Peter”**

**Didiher Chacón-Chaverri**

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More than 25 years ago, when for professional reasons, I started working with sea turtles in Costa Rica, I literally buried myself in the library to do bibliographic reviews. In so doing, I saw many names of "celebrities" recurring due to the amount of work that they did in the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. One of those people that I began to admire, even without having the pleasure of meeting, was Peter Pritchard. Then I managed to attend the International Sea Turtle Symposium in the early 1990s and had the pleasure of shaking hands with Peter. For a young biologist it was an incredible experience worthy of what would be a photo for Facebook today. He talked to me for about five minutes while other people came up to him to greet him.

Years later, I visited him in Florida, where I was once again impressed by his effort in collecting material about turtles and his tenacity to leave us all a little of his knowledge. For my generation and in the words of today's young people, Peter was one of the most outstanding "influencers" of my youth. I want to say "Thank you, Peter" for everything, and especially because despite the celebrity status, you had the humility to give so much to so many.



## Mi amigo Peter Pritchard

### Anny Chaves

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Como estudiante del Dr. Douglas Robinson en la Universidad de Costa Rica, a inicios de la década de los 80, tuve la oportunidad de conocer a grandes investigadores de la herpetofauna mundial y en particular a los que estaban relacionados a las tortugas marinas. Con mis compañeros de clase, nos familiarizamos con sus nombres a través de sus publicaciones y entre bromas les llamábamos “amigos”, sin imaginar que en pocos años realmente formaría parte de una gran hermandad que me daría una de las experiencias más enriquecedoras de mi vida.

Entre los estudios y proyectos de investigación, identifiqué la necesidad de actuar más allá de las aulas y me involucré en iniciativas que se requerían para conservar a las tortugas marinas. Específicamente, las comunidades costeras que tienen una condición marginal y gran dependencia de los recursos marinos. Entre estas iniciativas estaban las alternativas de aprovechamiento de los huevos de tortuga en condiciones de arribada en Playa Ostional y la captura de tortugas verdes en el Caribe de Costa Rica, ambas actividades polémicas en el mundo de la conservación.

En 1985 fui seleccionada, junto con el presidente de la cooperativa de pescadores de Limón, para participar en una reunión en Isla Guadalupe, de una organización naciente WIDECAST (*Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network*) que reuniría investigadores y conservacionistas de la Cuenca del Caribe interesados en la conservación de las tortugas marinas. Fue así como llegué a conocer y compartir con los amigos, autores de los artículos de estudio. Ya había conocido a muchos de ellos en la gran reunión de WATTS I en San José en 1982, sin tener un contacto personal, mientras que en Isla Guadalupe fue la oportunidad de establecer un nexo de amistad y colaboración con ellos.

En esta reunión de WIDECAST se presentaron temas de fondo, como contexto a una visión integral, para elaborar un plan de manejo para cada uno de los países representados en la organización y surgieron polémicas interesantes donde se podían identificar los diferentes puntos de vista - unos orientados a la preservación y otros al manejo. Las propuestas que llevábamos para Costa Rica eran retadoras, novedosas y todavía requerían de más sustento científico. Sin embargo, como era un plan naciente, había que tomar la libertad de exponerlas y defenderlas. En esas discusiones conté con el apoyo destacado de Ross Witham, Peter Pritchard y Jacques Fretey quienes tenían una posición vanguardista y se identificaban con la posibilidad de manejo con base en evidencia científica.

El plan de Costa Rica quedó esbozado en la reunión de Isla Guadalupe y posteriormente completado por los miembros de WIDECAST locales. Se integraron los esfuerzos gubernamentales, los pescadores de tortugas, organizaciones locales de conservación y cultura y el apoyo de la oficina de la Presidencia de la República.

Por varias razones de cercanía y un particular nexo con Costa Rica, Peter Pritchard se involucró personalmente y concretó su apoyo a las gestiones para el manejo y conservación de las tortugas marinas de Costa Rica. Nos amparaba con su presencia en la difícil tarea de congeniar pescadores, conservacionistas, inspectores de pesca y poblaciones que reclamaban el derecho cultural a comer carne y huevos de tortuga. Es importante señalar que en esa época, Costa Rica contaba con una ley que permitía una cuota de caza regulada de tortugas verdes para consumo local, por tres meses al año.



*Peter Pritchard shares information with visitors at Playa Ostional, Costa Rica, in 1998 (Photo: L. du Toit).*



*Anny and Peter after the WIDECAST meeting in Guadeloupe in 1985 (Photo: J. Fretey).*

Sin embargo, la administración del estado no lograba ese control, ya que la logística era compleja y dispersa.

Muchas noches amanecimos en el matadero de Cieneguita de Limón con el olor de la sangre y las tortugas volcadas, vientre arriba, esperando ser sacrificadas, además de contabilizar las tortugas que ingresaban, tomamos datos reproductivos y logramos muestras sobre los machos, ya que pocas veces se tiene esa oportunidad,... Peter se aventuró a acompañarnos a pesar de ser un sitio de alto riesgo social. La sola presencia en el matadero, nos abrió la puerta para comunicarnos con los pescadores y concretar una propuesta de control consensuada con los grupos organizados.

Se convocó a una gran reunión con los pescadores, donde participaron Peter Pritchard y Ross Witham y les hablaron sobre la mejor técnica de implementar actividades complementarias, que ayudarían a disminuir la presión sobre las tortugas marinas, como, por ejemplo, la captura de langosta y la mejora de artes de pesca para otras especies. El ambiente fue propicio para llegar a acuerdos y la temporada de captura de tortugas 1985 fue, entre las condiciones posibles, bastante controlada. Terminamos con una gran actividad cultural y educativa, el primer festival de las tortugas marinas, en las que se liberaron a las últimas tortugas capturadas como una gratitud a los recursos que el mar da a los Limonenses. Por dos años se hicieron esfuerzos para manejar la situación, pero finalmente, aspectos administrativos que no favorecieron el compromiso de las autoridades, lo que posteriormente dio pie para que, mediante un recurso de amparo, la Sala Constitucional de Costa Rica

cancelara en 1998, la autorización de caza de tortugas marinas.

Peter mantuvo su interés y trabajo en Costa Rica, con la dedicación de tiempo para buscar financiamiento para la realización de documentales y protección de playas de anidación. Escribió artículos resumiendo criterios sobre las opciones de manejo propuesto y contribuyó en la realización de estudios de campo. Manifestó un especial interés en apoyar a los jóvenes investigadores y nos abrió las puertas de su casa cuando viajábamos a los simposios de tortugas marinas. No solo nos hospedaba, sino, que nos hacía parte de su familia y de su colección de tortugas, tanto los especímenes preservados como de las que caminaban por la casa.



*Isla Uvita, Limón 1986. Walter Gutierrez, Peter, Anny, Bruce Jailedagian (Greenpeace International ) (Photo: Programa Tortugas Marinas UCR).*



*Anny Chavez received the award from Dr. Peter Pritchard, representative of the Florida Audubon Society (Photo: Nota obtenida del periódico La Nación del día 19 de julio de 1986. Sección Nacionales pag 6. Fotografía tomada por Lucía Cortés de La Nación).*

Con el interés de fortalecer el compromiso con la conservación, promovió la creación del premio "Florida Audubon Society Latin América Award", el cual fue otorgado a muchos jóvenes promesas en el campo de la conservación en América Latina. Yo recibí el premio del año 1985 y la ceremonia de entrega fue particularmente emotiva con un discurso de parte de Peter en presencia del señor Presidente de la República Oscar Arias y la primera dama, Margarita Penón, así mismo Sibille la esposa de Peter, de quien recibimos también mucho apoyo. Esta actividad fue clave para lograr el respaldo gubernamental a la conservación de las tortugas marinas.

Peter caminó muchas veces por las playas de anidación de tortugas de Costa Rica, recolectaba todo tipo de indicios, pedazos de caparazón, cráneos y algunas otras interesantes piezas

traídas por las olas. Durante estas caminatas, a la espera de ver salir una tortuga o encontrar el trazo de su huella en la arena, discutimos muchos temas herpetológicos o compartía historias de tortugas del mundo, entre las que, el “Solitario George” y otras historias de las Islas Galápagos eran de sus favoritas.

Fue la coincidencia que vino a Ostional para mi última arribada en 1998, unos meses antes de que el Centro de Investigación Douglas Robinson fuera incendiado, Peter pasó todo el tiempo respondiendo preguntas de los visitantes, en particular dio atención a un grupo de estudiantes de primaria que se hospedaba en la estación. Me queda como un grato recuerdo la hermosa imagen de mi amigo Peter Pritchard, con los ruedos de los pantalones arrollados y sombrero de paja, iluminado por el sol naciente, compartiendo con el grupo de niños sus conocimientos.



Please use <https://www.deepl.com/en/translator> for a translation



## We Had Many Adventures Together as a Team

### Romeo De Freitas

*Chelonian Research Institute, Oviedo, Florida &  
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(email: [romeodefraitas2017@gmail.com](mailto:romeodefraitas2017@gmail.com))*

I first saw Peter in 1986, one evening whilst I was canoeing from school in the village of Santa Rosa, Guyana. He was amongst a group of turtle hunters; they had returned from the beach earlier that day and had brought a live green turtle back to the village. Myself, along with a few other school children going my way, stopped by to have a close-up view of the turtle. Peter was excited as we all gathered around. I clearly remember him standing tall with his camera hanging around his neck as he took several photographs.

Two years later in June 1988, we encountered each other once again; this time he was a guest at our home along with my father Audley, whom he'd met on the beach killing turtles a few weeks earlier. My father was a seasonal turtle hunter along with his brothers and other relatives.

After spending two days with us, Peter and dad departed for the beach and started the Guyana marine turtle conservation project.

In March 1989, I decided to join the conservation project, quite odd for a teenager – whereas my classmates were off to study medicine and other industrial subjects. I somehow chose the remote and mosquito-infested beach to be alongside my dad and Peter.

We had many adventures together as a team. We stepped on every single nesting beach along the coast of Guyana. And reached out to every turtle hunter and local fisherman, either on the beach or in their communities. We engaged and started a beach environmental education awareness program, which attracted several hundred local students for over two decades.



*Peter and Romeo with the former Prime Minister of Guyana, Samuel Hinds (Photo: R. De Freitas).*

For 32 years I was alongside Peter as my mentor, friend, and even like a father. I was charged with energy and gained uncountable experiences and guidance. He had always given me the opportunity to take the lead and never made a fuss towards any decision I've made out in the field or even elsewhere. We had developed a unique understanding and trust amongst ourselves as a team.

I was very fortunate, as many others, to have toured the world with him and enjoyed his company and the many, uncountable stories that have resulted from those adventures. Especially the way he debated on topics in relation to turtles; I always remember in the older days when one of his favorite arguing buddies was Nicholas Mrosovsky. Peter would always smile and say, "oh, here he comes" - they would both agree and disagree, but in a mannerly way.

There was always a Peter Pritchard time! And those times relate to events of either Sibille, his wife, standing at the exit trying to get his attention, while he stands leaning on one side holding a bag with books, or all gathering around him after a long day of turtle talks. Or, standing somewhere along the corridor, a student waiting for him to get a copy signed. Peter was never in a hurry to walk away and leave someone without giving them attention. He had a special touch in socializing that I always refer to as the Peter Pritchard way.

Many times, we got separated from the luxury of a kitchen and had the last bottle of soda and crackers shared amongst us - yet we would sit in remote locations either waiting for a turtle to lay its eggs or continue looking for remains of dead turtles in a dump or someone's backyard. I have learnt from him that there must never be a fuss in life, everything goes around in circles, and there is always a way out.

Peter stood alongside me at my first International symposium in Awala Yalimapo, French Guiana, in 1999. I was somewhat nervous at first, but my courage developed by just looking at him as he cautiously went through the slides using the light to ensure he placed the right one for me to present. He had that positive, relaxed, and confident look on his face that gave me the courage from then onwards at presentations.

We have shared so many international adventures that only Peter Pritchard could have probably gotten away with.

One time we rented a car in Cayenne, French Guiana, only to find out that the last drop-off location was 30 miles away in a small-town call Kourou, which happened to be even less than a third of our journey to the border of Suriname, our destination. After a long conversation with the agent, he came out smiling and said that we had got permission to dispose of it at the border.

I started laughing because I had had other similar experiences before where the term "dispose" came up. In Costa Rica, we toured the Santa Rosa National Park using a rented Toyota Corona car; the guard at the Park gate warned us about the road conditions. However, we made the trip and I swear that one car had to be probably disposed of after its return at night!

A few years later we were attending a Regional meeting of the Guianas, hosted in French Guiana. And our return travel to Guyana was via Suriname using the overland route. Shortly before departing we discovered that Peter's visa had expired and the logistics of getting a new one would take forever.

So, smuggling him through Suriname illegally was the only option on hand. Peter was in for that adventure as usual. We got to the border of Suriname in Albina and boarded a bus, which was waiting for us. The driver took Peter to a safe location within the



*Romeo and Peter at Rewa River, south Guyana (Photo: P. Pritchard's collection).*



community, and then we were taken to the immigration office. Thirty minutes later we returned to find Peter was gone; he had made his way through a backyard amongst hanging clothes to a beer garden not too far away. We found him leaning against the bar enjoying a Parbo beer - he smiled and said, "oh, I am catching up with some old friends here."

During the last five years, I came up at least twice a year to Florida and spent valuable time with Peter and his family. Even though he was ill, we had lots of fun travelling around town, visiting parks, beaches and even attended his final International Symposium in Las Vegas. In 2017, we took him back to Guyana, which he always referred to as BG (British Guiana) -we all knew it would have been his final trip to one of his favorite destinations. His company was enjoyed by all, especially on the beach.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020, I sat next to Peter on his fancy relaxing chair, and as always there was a book for company. Eventually I said to him, "I will be heading back to BG in the morning." He looked at me and smiled. So, I told him about my new job working offshore on a seismic vessel as a Marine Mammal Observer looking out for dolphins, whales, and turtles during the survey operations. His smile got wider as he uttered to me the word "Good." His sense of humor was always there, especially that quick wink of the eye as he drew your attention to something important.



*Most recent photo of Romeo and Peter in Florida (Photo: R. De Freitas).*



**Gémir n'est pas de mise...  
Hommage à un homme d'exception**

**Bernard Devaux**

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En 2020, la "Grande Faucheuse", la mort, a bien travaillé. Elle a même TROP travaillé ! Avant même que ne sévisse le coronavirus, en février, elle a emporté deux de nos plus éminents chercheurs, et compagnons de route, Peter Pritchard et Roger Bour.



*Peter et Roger lors d'une mission ensemble au Sénégal  
(Photo: B. Devaux)*

Peter et Roger ont eu une importance capitale dans la création et le développement de la SOPTOM et des Villages des Tortues. Non seulement par leurs conseils et leur aide scientifique, mais plus encore par l'amitié constante qu'ils nous ont témoignée. Peter fut durant trente ans un de nos plus fervents conseillers, et un des piliers majeurs de nos cinq Congrès Internationaux. C'est lui également qui fut le traducteur, en langue anglaise, de notre Encyclopédie, et qui diffusa au mieux partout dans le monde, notre revue La Tortue.

Peter Pritchard avait une allure typiquement anglo-saxonne ! C'était un homme très grand, carré d'épaules, avec un front haut et intelligent. Ce que l'on appelle « *un bel homme !* ». Dans une assemblée ou un congrès, on ne voyait que lui. Il dominait tout le monde, à la manière d'un sénateur romain, « *Primus inter pares* ». Il avait tout d'un intellectuel de la City, ou d'un froid directeur de Muséum, mais quand il vous apercevait, il vous broyait la main, et un sourire jovial inondait son visage. Car ce qui ressortait, en dehors même de ses compétences et de son profond intérêt pour les tortues, c'est sa gentillesse, son humanité, et mieux encore, son humour. Il était toujours fraternel, aimable et disponible. Au lieu d'être empesé dans une redingote d'expert et de scientifique, il affichait dans la vie journalière une simplicité et une humilité dont nous nous souviendrons toujours.

Peter ne voyait la vie que sous de belles couleurs. Sa compagnie était aussi revigorante qu'attrayante. Avec lui, les journées passaient vite, les conversations filaient à vive

allure, et ses découvertes de terrain étaient toujours captivantes. Ses connaissances étaient encyclopédiques, et son talent pour disséquer une tortue frôlait le miracle. Nous l'appelions entre nous « *le Sherlock Holmes des tortues* ». Il suffisait de lui confier un bout d'écaille, un morceau d'humérus, une esquille de boîte crânienne, pour qu'en une minute il en définisse l'espèce, la provenance, le sexe, l'âge, la cause de la mort, et le statut conservatoire !

Jamais je ne l'ai entendu dire du mal de son prochain, ni critiquer l'un de ses collègues. Il ne voyait en autrui que des gens intéressants, généreux et dignes ; comme lui. C'était naturellement un puits de sciences, et il accumulait les diplômes, les récompenses, les réussites et les publications, sans que cela n'entame sa modestie. Barak Obama lui a serré la main. Il a été « *Hero of The Planet* » sur Time Magazine, et bien entendu c'est lui qui a fondé le Chelonian Research Institute d'Oviedo, en Floride, un centre de recherche sur les tortues respecté dans le monde entier. Il est l'auteur de centaines de publications et de plus de quatorze ouvrages, dont le plus fameux a été son *Encyclopedia of Turtles* éditée en 1979, et plusieurs tortues portent son nom. Il a toujours eu un faible pour les tortues marines, car son mentor était Archie Carr, le premier biologiste à s'être consacré à la conservation des Chéloniens. Et l'un de ses « disciples », quelques années plus tard, fut Jacques Fretey, un Français qui est resté l'un des meilleurs spécialistes au monde de la Tortue luth. C'est grâce à Peter, et à l'UICN, que les tortues marines ont toutes été classées à l'Annexe I de la CITES, ce qui en assure la protection maximum.

Mais ce n'était pas un homme de laboratoire et de bureau confiné. Ce qu'il adorait était de parcourir le monde, et en ce sens il était proche de nous. Il disait toujours « *Les tortues, je veux les voir, les toucher, dans leur habitat, sur le terrain, pas dans un bocal* ». Ce n'était pas comme certains biologistes, un amoureux des terrariums et des cadavres confits dans l'alcool. Il n'était à son aise que sur le tarmac d'un aéroport, et dans la carlingue d'un avion, car il savait que le lendemain, il aurait les pieds dans la boue, la tête fouettée par la pluie, et qu'il marcherait des heures dans la jungle, pour découvrir en bout de journée un minuscule animal de huit centimètres de long, que personne avant lui n'avait encore tenu dans sa main ! C'est lui qui ramena *Lonesome Georges* (Le Vieux Georges), le dernier exemplaire de la *Chelonoidis nigra abingdoni*, de l'île Pinta où il l'avait trouvée jusqu'à la Station Darwin de Santa Cruz ! C'est lui aussi qui s'était entiché d'une tortue molle asiatique, immense et quasi disparue, la *Rafetus swinhoei*, dont il n'existait plus que quelques exemplaires vivants. Et avec Gerald Kuchling, un autre fou de tortues, il bichonnait le dernier couple dans un bassin de Suzhou, en Chine, en espérant une miraculeuse ponte (espoir déçu, malheureusement, car le dernier mâle est mort l'année dernière).

Je me souviens de tant de bons moments avec Peter, qu'il m'est difficile d'en choisir deux ou trois, pour raconter ce qu'il avait de proche et de fraternel. Nous avons passé, avec notre collègue Franck Bonin, tant de jours heureux dans sa propriété d'Oviedo, qu'il avait transformée en musée, que sélectionner un seul moment admirable me semble difficile. Peter avait gardé une seule faiblesse de son ancien monde londonien, une vieille Rolls-Royce blanche, encore en bon état, dont il nous confiait parfois les clefs. Avec cette vénérable mécanique, il nous emmenait parfois au restaurant italien d'Oviedo, où nous passions des moments délicieux en compagnie de sa femme Sibille. Sibille était aussi exceptionnelle que son mari. Elle était née en Guyana, et portait sur son visage la merveilleuse beauté hâlée des Amérindiennes. Comme Peter, elle était devenue une passionnée de tortues, et une femme d'une gentillesse et d'une générosité sans limites. Je me souviens d'un amusant moment, dans ce restaurant italien où nous allions. Nous avons laissé la Rolls-Royce à un chauffeur, et en fin de repas, il restait quelques restes des délicieux carpaccio de cet établissement. Peter, en

bon Américain qu'il était devenu (bien que de nationalité anglaise), demanda au serveur un *doggy bag*, pour emporter ce qui restait du repas (une pratique qui pour nous Français ressort du blasphème). Je revois encore la scène de ce grand homme à l'allure prestigieuse, arrivant devant sa Rolls-Royce, avec à la main le petit carton emballé que lui avait remis le serveur ! Il gardait son calme et sa noblesse, mais dans un clin d'œil vers nous, il signifia qu'il n'était pas dupe. Si ce grand homme était resté en Angleterre, je pense que la Reine l'aurait élevé un jour à la Pairie, et que nous l'aurions en rigolant appelé « Sir Peter ! ».

Mais je ne peux pas tout raconter de Peter Pritchard. Car il y faudrait une dizaine de volumes, et personne d'entre nous ne souhaite revenir sur le passé. Simplement deux moments s'imposent à ma mémoire, car ils résument parfaitement l'être exceptionnel qu'il fut. Comme il voyageait beaucoup, il surgissait d'un seul coup n'importe où dans le monde, et il nous surprenait par son ubiquité. Chaque année, il venait nous voir à Gonfaron, en France, avec Sibille, et nous avons voyagé avec lui dans d'innombrables pays, comme naturellement au Sénégal et à Madagascar, mais également en Guyane, aux Seychelles, au Mexique, en Afrique du Sud, au Myanmar et au Bangladesh.

Mais un jour, je me trouvais au Sud d'Isabela, la plus grande île des Galapagos, dans le petit village de Villamil. Dans cette minuscule bourgade lovée au bord de la mer, il existait un élevage de la plus rare tortue locale, la *Chelonoidis nigra vicina*, où plusieurs centaines de juvéniles étaient produits chaque année, afin de repeupler ultérieurement le Sud de l'île. Mais ce jour là, je m'intéressais à une autre espèce rare, dans la zone corallienne voisinant Villamil ; les iguanes marins. Là, en bordure de mer, dans les embruns et les gifles d'eau du Pacifique, s'insolaient des dizaines de ces curieux reptiles rougeâtres, au faciès dinosaurien. Après avoir plongés dans les eaux glaciales de l'océan, pour se nourrir en rongant les algues accrochées aux récifs, ils s'immobilisaient sur les rochers pendant de longues heures, afin de se thermoréguler. J'observais ces animaux sortis de la préhistoire, je les photographiais, j'admirais leur absence de crainte envers les humains... quand en levant la tête, je vis une silhouette altière s'interposer dans le soleil ; c'était Peter. Nulle surprise de nous trouver là ; nous savions que nos errances avaient tendance à avoir un même but, et que nos boussoles intérieures nous poussaient souvent vers les mêmes lieux. Nous passâmes la journée à regarder ces étranges sauriens, puis à discuter du travail mené à Villamil, et le soir, dans la lumière rougeâtre du couchant, je me souviens que nous étions tous les deux en admiration, avec deux bières fraîches devant nous, devant l'ineffable beauté du monde. C'était un moment magique.

Le lendemain, nous vécûmes un moment plus insolite. Nous retrouvant à la Station Darwin, que Peter avait contribué à créer trente ans plus tôt, nous décidâmes d'aller voir une colonie importante de *Chelonoidis n. nigra*, l'espèce nominale des tortues des Galapagos, dans une forêt au Nord-Ouest de l'île, au lieu-dit El Chato. Peter me dit qu'il aurait aimé voir « le plus gros mâle des Galapagos », qu'il suivait depuis des années, et pour lequel il avait une sorte d'affection. Nous nous retrouvâmes donc dans la forêt humide et chaude de El Chato, un habitat naturel inchangé depuis des siècles, sinon des millénaires, et où subsistait un groupe important de tortues géantes. En arrivant, nous constatâmes que quelques naturalistes arpentaient également ce milieu mythique, et que deux ou trois gardes du Parc patrouillaient sous les ombrages. Ce milieu était constitué de grandes prairies herbeuses, abritées par de grands arbres feuillus, des *Scalesia* et des Robiniers, et l'on y voyait des dizaines de tortues se déplacer avec cet air digne, pattes très hautes, que Darwin autrefois avait comparé à « une démarche de sénateur ». Dans un creux, une grande mare de vingt mètres de diamètre, et de 80cm de profondeur, faisait fonction de « thermes chéloniens ». On y apercevait une trentaine de grosses tortues, à demi immergées dans la boue, qui venaient se baigner en clans

familiaux. Elles y trouvaient la fraîcheur et l'humidité, mais surtout s'y nettoyaient de leurs tiques et innombrables parasites, en se couchant et se roulant dans le substrat caillouteux et boueux. Nullement gênées par notre présence, elles rêvassaient dans ces bains tranquilles, comme des curistes prenant les eaux !

Mais nous cherchions *The big*, et il nous fallu plusieurs heures, pour que Peter, d'un geste, me désigne un superbe animal, cou bien dressé, qui venait vers nous. C'était un mâle, naturellement, impressionnant. Ses pattes étaient immenses, et il les posait avec force sur le sol, comme l'aurait fait un pachyderme dans le Serengeti. Je ne doutais pas un instant qu'il ne fut le patriarche de toutes les tortues de l'archipel, car il respirait la puissance, et le glorieux passé d'un animal probablement centenaire. Il passa à deux mètres de nous, et Peter, bien entendu, sortit de sa poche un mètre à ruban, et tenta de mesurer sa longueur, tandis qu'il s'était figé en nous regardant. « C'est bien lui, dit-il, 132 cm, le plus grand, il doit peser pas loin de 300 kilos ».

C'est alors que nous entendîmes un sifflet strident, et que deux des agents du Parc se précipitèrent vers nous. Ils sermonnèrent Peter, en vitupérant « qu'il était interdit de toucher aux animaux ! ». Et Peter, humblement, s'excusa et baissa la tête, comme un enfant pris en faute. En voyant cela, bien que je sois nul en langue anglaise, je m'insurgeais contre les pandores, et je tentais de leur expliquer, en bafouillant, que s'ils avaient un emploi, et si les tortues des Galapagos étaient bien protégées, c'était grâce à cet homme qu'ils avaient devant eux, qui était l'un des directeurs scientifiques de la Station Darwin ! J'étais outré, mais Peter, gêné, me prit par le bras, et me tira loin des deux cerbères, qui n'étaient pas très éloignés de me passer les menottes. « Ils ne font que leur métier » me dit-il. Et il avait raison.

Mais j'avais été blessé que ces deux fonctionnaires n'aient pas reconnu ce savant prestigieux, qui pourtant était à l'origine de tous les programmes scientifiques des Galapagos, et indirectement de leurs emplois.



*Peter à l'entrée du Village des Tortues à Noflaye, au Sénégal (Photo: R. Bour).*

Je terminerai (puisque'il faut bien terminer) par une anecdote qui est si représentative de ce qu'était véritablement Peter, que je la garde comme un joyau, un souvenir inestimable de cet être exceptionnel.

Nous revenions du Sénégal, dans un avion 747, en pleine nuit. Vers 3-4 heures du matin, tout le monde dormait, comme à l'intérieur d'une cathédrale assoupie. Mais je vis quelques rangs devant moi, la faible loupote tombant du plafond, éclairant les silhouettes de Peter et de Sibille. Je m'approchais pour voir ce qui les occupait. Et je découvris alors que Peter avait déployé sur ses genoux et ceux de sa femme un grand carton qui formait comme une tablette, bien éclairée par le fanal au-dessus de sa tête. Et sur ce carton, il avait étalé sous forme de puzzle une centaine de petits os, de vertèbres et

de morceaux de crâne, de plaques osseuses et de tibias, qu'il s'évertuait en remettre en bon ordre, en les fixant avec de la colle forte. Il avait ramassé tous ces petits ossements dans le Ferlo, et il tentait, sur sa tablette, de reformer le squelette d'une tortue

*Centrochelys sulcata*, d'environ cinquante centimètres de long. L'ouvrage était presque achevé : la bête tenait sur ses pattes, et il était en train de fixer les dernières plaques de la dossière, comme s'il se trouvait dans son bureau d'Oviedo. Le spectacle était saisissant. Dans cet appareil qui ronronnait à 10 000 mètres d'altitude, au milieu d'une assemblée de touristes endormis, il était la seule conscience éveillée, comme un prophète au milieu d'une peuplade assoupie ! Bien entendu, son travail fut interrompu par une hôtesse qui passait dans les allées, et qui faillit pousser un cri en apercevant ce sacrilège. De sa vie, elle n'avait jamais vu pareille folie humaine ! Elle lui murmura qu'il fallait absolument éteindre cette lumière, cacher ce monceau d'os, et faire comme tout le monde : dormir !

Je garde de mes deux grands amis Peter Pritchard et Roger Bour des morceaux de souvenirs, des images fortes, des clichés que j'aurais aimé conserver sur pellicule ; ce furent des compagnons précieux dans une vie d'aventures, des jalons de bonheur et de fraternité. Peter, Roger, vous allez nous manquer, durablement. Vous allez ME manquer, *ad vitam aeternam*. Et le paradoxe est que j'ai quelques années de plus que vous, et que je ne suis pas parti le premier ! Mais rassurez-vous, dans quelques années, nous nous retrouverons dans je ne sais quelle thébaïde imaginaire, au bord d'un fleuve, d'une mer ou d'un désert, avec nos chères compagnes à carapace.



*Peter et Bernard (Photo: F. Bonin).*



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## The Man Who Inspired Me to Launch the African Chelonian Institute

### Tomas Diagne

*African Chelonian Institute – The Rhodin Center - Centre de conservation des tortues d’Afrique Ngazobil, Senegal*  
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My period of drawing inspiration from Dr. Peter Pritchard spans nearly three decades. I first met Peter at the SOPTOM Chelonian Conservation Conference in 1995 in Gonfaron (France), where he was introduced to me as the premiere turtle conservationist on the planet – a title I soon came to realize was more than deserved, but also one which fell short of conveying what a true friend and gentleman Peter was to all. I remember thinking to myself how surreal it was for me, just an African teenager who loved turtles, to be meeting a man of his caliber in the world of turtle conservation. Many go a lifetime without meeting someone so influential and inspiring who can teach and make you feel like a colleague at the same time. The Gonfaron conference marked only the beginning of what would become one of the most meaningful friendships of my life, resulting in Peter being the best man at my wedding and a constant supporter of my conservation story.



*I first met Peter at a turtle conference in Gonfaron, southern France, in 1996 (Photo: B. Devaux).*

I sent him the first specimen of *Pelusios adansonii* for the collection at his Chelonian Research Institute (CRI), for which he was truly grateful, while I was just ecstatic to contribute and continue my relationship with Peter. In 2001 Peter made his second trip to Senegal with his wife Sibille for the opening of the Village des Tortues ("Tortoise Village") de Noflaye along with Dr. Roger Wood. During that visit, after attending the opening of the Village des Tortues, I could tell Peter was eager to go exploring for some turtles in the wild. Of course, conversations quickly led to what turtles we could find in Senegal, leading to our first trip to Lac de Guiers in Northern Senegal, which was the founding trip of the eventual formation of the Tocc-Tocc community reserve for the conservation of *Pelusios adansonii*. His discoveries over the next week, including confirming the only known site for *Pelusios adansonii* in Senegal, continue to shape my conservation career. Lac de Guiers, the site of Peter's discovery, has become the home of the Tocc-Tocc Community Reserve, one of the most important *in-situ* conservation programs for turtles in West Africa. Though I was unable to join that trip, they personally provided me with their findings from that trip.

Over the next decade, I would go on to make many a trip to Peter's Chelonian Research Institute (CRI) in Oviedo, FL, a voyage that Sibille often likened to my version of a pilgrimage to "Mecca." CRI truly was my "Mecca," and Dr. Peter Pritchard will forever be not only my greatest inspiration but the reason I have chosen to dedicate my life to the species he championed. A couple of years ago, a French herpetologist who visited us at my Senegal base commented to me, "Truly...Tomas now you have become the African version of Peter Pritchard." I was so, so pleased by this comment.

Peter was the ultimate inspiration for conserving wildlife in Africa and for me choosing to dedicate my life to conserving chelonians.

I regret that Peter and I never got to experience our goal of seeing the Nubian Flapshell Turtle (*Cyclanorbis elegans*) in the wild together, a mutual goal of ours for a long time.

Peter had so many great ideas for turtle research in Africa – so many that even he, one of the most productive biologists of our time, would have required ten lifetimes to accomplish. He left many great ideas for the inspired biologists he leaves behind.



Peter and Sibille at my wedding in September 2010, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, USA. (Left) Peter wearing a traditional Senegalese hat. (Photo: C. Merigo).





## A Memory of Peter Pritchard – As Tall as His Legacy

**Stephen G. Dunbar**

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I'm not one of the 'long-time Turtlers' and never undertook formal sea turtle training under one of the turtle masters, so I had not known of Peter Pritchard until I began studying the sea turtles.

However, in devouring all the reading and reports I could find on the sea turtles of Central America, two names continued to surface as historical figures: Archie Carr and Peter Pritchard. In 2008, my students, Country Director Lidia Salinas, and I began studying the olive ridleys of the Honduran portion of the Gulf of Fonseca, and I was reminded that I was walking some of the same coastal areas that both Carr and Pritchard had walked in the 1960s.

In 2008, I attended my first International Sea Turtle Symposium (ISTS) and heard about the legendary Dr. Pritchard, but it took until my attendance at the ISTS in San Diego in 2011 to work up the nerve to introduce myself to him and strike up a conversation about his previous ventures along the south coast of Honduras, and our recent work there at that time. To my pleasant surprise, Peter took a genuine interest in our work and in knowing someone was conducting research into the turtles and local community conservation efforts in the area. It was an easy and enjoyable conversation that had a deep impact on me. I came away with both a sense of genuine pride that I had been able to sit down for a conversation with the legendary Peter Pritchard, who expressed great interest in our work, and a sense of the humble kindness of a man of notoriety who had traveled the world to study and conserve all kinds of turtle and tortoise species. I was even more pleased that at subsequent ISTS meetings, Peter recognized me and paused on many occasions to gather updates on our continuing work and provide ideas and suggestions for future studies.

Although immediately recognizable by his stature, soft English accent, and encyclopedic knowledge of so many reptile species, what struck me most about the man was Peter's gentleness and interest in every individual he interacted with. Peter's legendary nature was as grand as his physical stature, and I'll remember him with great fondness.



*The 2011 Boyd Lyon Winners Group:  
(L -R) Bobi Watson, Melania Lopez-Castro (2009 BLS winner), Patricia Zarate (2010 BLS winner), Dean Bagley (Award Committee member), Dean Lyon, Peter Pritchard, Noemi Duran (2011 BLS winner), Mark Spalding (President, the Ocean Foundation), and Steve Dunbar Photo: H. Ito).*



## Peter

### Peter H. Dutton

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Peter is a celebrated scholar, scientist and naturalist. Those aspects of his life are well known to all that have read and been inspired by his books and articles, as I was when a university student decades ago. But upon reflecting on how his life intersected with mine on a personal level, I think of him as a raconteur, pioneer, explorer, and traveler.

Long before I met him in person, embarking on my own adventures I saw his footprints in the sand and his silhouette on the remote beaches in Suriname, Trinidad, Mexico, Galapagos, heard his name mentioned around campfires by fishers rarely visited in far-off places - folks he had clearly made an impression on and who assumed I must be related to, since my name was also "Mr. Peter".

When I did finally meet him in person, it wasn't so much his impressive encyclopedic knowledge about turtles that struck me, but the depth of his understanding of human nature and his talent for being able to spin a good yarn, and connect with people of all cultures and stations in society. A shared field trip with him in Costa Rica brought to life a cast of characters and humorous misadventures that he had experienced at one time or another as he told his stories connected to the turtles, people and places along the way.

It was his ability to connect with people that inspired curiosity and motivated conservation. One of the last times I saw him was in Austria, when I was visiting my mother in Vienna and he was there for a wedding. I never associated that part of the world with sea turtles, but once again Peter opened my eyes to the marvels I had been oblivious to in a city I had spent a good portion of my childhood in when he announced he'd arranged an impromptu behind the scenes tour of the Natural History Museum to view a rare specimen of Archelon. For him this was an adventure almost as thrilling as counting turtles on the nesting beaches in Mexico, and for me the gift of another story to tell.



## Peter's Contribution to Caribbean Sea Turtles

**Karen Eckert<sup>1</sup> & Julia Horrocks<sup>2</sup>**

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WIDECAST's story starts nearly 40 years ago when, following the adoption of UNEP's Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme in Montego Bay (Jamaica, April 1981), IUCN and the Caribbean Conservation Association joined forces to convene a regional meeting of NGOs in August 1981 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to discuss the role of the non-governmental community in the new treaty, and to consider the opportunities that would likely accrue to the region when the Caribbean Sea formally joined the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. Among the Santo Domingo recommendations was that a "Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan should be prepared ... consistent with the Action Plan for the Caribbean Environment Programme." A Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Recovery Team and Conservation Network was chartered and tasked with implementing the recommendation.

Dr. Peter Pritchard, a renowned herpetologist and one of only a handful of experts working with sea turtles in the Caribbean at that time, was invited to consult on the Action Plan and to participate in the nascent recovery team, which would become known as the WIDECAST network. He attended early meetings of WIDECAST, including at the University of Turabo in Caguas, Puerto Rico, in January 1984, where he made a presentation entitled, "Declining Sea Turtle Populations in the Wider Caribbean Region."

He was a towering man, Oxford-educated with a 'plummy' accent, and he loved to throw out comments that he knew would excite controversial opinion, always with a smile on his face. It was Peter who decided that "Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Recovery Team and Conservation Network" should be shortened to "WIDECAST" – much less of a "mouthful", he was fond of saying. We will always be indebted to him for guidance and friendship, and for his unique ability to inspire us all to safeguard the region's imperiled sea turtles for generations to come.

We've come a long way since Peter started the Sea Turtle Monitoring Project in Guyana in 1964, following a visit to Shell Beach and his amazement at the number of sea turtles nesting there. His stories of reaching the beach by canoe, working with local indigenous groups, and seeing four species nesting on that one beach, made the rest of us quite jealous. His awareness of the cultural significance of sea turtles helped him to seek mutually beneficial, non-confrontational solutions to conservation problems. His efforts, along with those of local communities in Guyana, highlighted the importance of this beach and led to it finally being declared a protected area in 2011.

In Guyana and far beyond, Peter has left a legacy of research and conservation efforts that forever changed the prospects for sea turtle survival in the Wider Caribbean Region. But perhaps most importantly, he gave every indication that he loved every minute of it. He was independent and irreverent and unafraid – and we all loved him very much. Peter, you are dearly missed.



## **A Tribute to Dr. Peter C. H. Pritchard: Scientist, Colleague, Friend, and Consummate Turtle Man**

**Llewellyn M. Ehrhart**

*University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA  
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I am humbled and deeply honored by the opportunity to pay tribute to the man I regarded as a genuine friend and “kindred spirit,” an eminent scientist and a true gentleman. I can honestly say that I have never met a kinder human being nor one more devoted to preserving the beauty and diversity of living things with which we human beings share this planet.

About five years ago I had a similar honor at the meetings of the (US) Southeast Regional Sea Turtle Network (SERSTN) at Jekyll Island, Georgia, when that organization asked me to present Dr. Pritchard with its first “HALL OF FAME AWARD.” I was accompanied in that presentation by Dr. Simona Ceriani, for whom Dr. Pritchard had served as mentor and scientific colleague.

It was altogether fitting and appropriate to have the two of us do that; one representing the venerable, more seasoned contingent of the chelonian world, and one who represents well the younger members, in whose hands the future of the sea turtle conservation movement resides. No one mentored and inspired more young turtle biologists/conservationists than Peter Pritchard.

On that day we honored the man known internationally as the “ultimate authority” on the evolution, morphology, and conservation of the chelonians – the turtles and tortoises – as a group. Most readers of this will have known Dr. Pritchard, having interacted with him personally or through the myriad of books and other publications he has produced. The books include two encyclopedic volumes on chelonians, and others on marine turtles of Venezuela, the Alligator Snapping Turtle, Galapagos Tortoises, and the Asian Flatback, *Refetus*, among others. If you call yourself a “turtle person” and haven’t yet read at least part of his largely autobiographical, “Tales from the Thebaide: Reflections of a Turtleman,” you owe it to yourself to do so.

I began to get to know Peter and appreciate his intellect about 47 years ago, in the early 1970s. Not long before that he had completed the doctorate under the tutelage of the legendary Professor Archie Carr at Gainesville. Peter had already begun to develop a reputation as a serious and consequential zoological scientist by the time he accepted a position with Florida Audubon, in 1973. For example, when the Florida Committee on Rare & Endangered Plants & Animals (FCREPA) was formed in 1973, Peter was chosen as the Series Editor for the six volumes of accounts produced by FCREPA, that have formed the foundation of imperiled species concern in Florida. To this day I’m not sure how he managed to continue to grow and publish as an alpha biological scientist while, at the same time, fulfilling the duties of an environmental activist and conservation advocate.

One notable example of his success as a broad-scale environmentalist is another book, about which many turtle folks are unaware, entitled, “Saving What’s Left.” It’s a manual on saving environmentally endangered lands in Florida that has been widely acclaimed by conservationists, legislators, and land stewards.

Peter has been widely recognized for his work by others, including being named “Champion of the Wild,” by the Discovery Channel, “Floridian of the Year,” in 2001, by the Orlando Sentinel, and as a “Hero of the Planet,” by Time Magazine. As an example of the unabashed irreverence that kids often exhibit toward their highly-accomplished

parents and elders (and the delightful wit of the entire Pritchard family), when Peter told his family about the “Hero of the Planet” award, one of the boys replied.....”Which planet?”

Also on a personal note, may I say that I was privileged to spend quite a few nights on the turtle nesting beach and some days onboard a research vessel (on the Indian River Lagoon) with Peter. The breadth of his experience and insight, not to mention his scintillating sense of humor, placed each of those experiences among the most memorable in my 45+ years of marine turtle work. I am reminded, also, of one other collaborative moment when, in March of 1991, Peter was working on the leatherback nesting beach in Guyana. The leatherbacks were having an unexpectedly robust season and Peter found that he was running short of tags. For some reason Dr. Carr was unable to supply more tags at that time, so Peter sent an urgent message to me at my project at the Archie Carr Refuge on Florida’s east coast: “Could I loan him some tags in a hurry?!” Luckily I was in a position to do that and I shipped 95 tags (B5101-5125; B5130-5200) to him post-haste. That was just enough to get him through to the end of the season.

The world has lost an immensely effective environmental conservationist; turtles and tortoises and those of us who cherish them have lost a champion and guiding light. We should and must honor his memory by intensifying and redoubling our efforts to protect all chelonians



*Peter Pritchard (right) and Llew Ehrhart at the Archie Carr NWR, summer, 2000 (Photo: L. Ehrhart).*



**Dr. Pritchard**

**Lalith Ekanayake**

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In 1996, I met Dr. Peter Richardson in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to join the sea turtle work. This is the first time I learnt about sea turtles. He showed me a giant book called "Encyclopedia of Turtles" with lots of turtles and tortoises. Then in August 1996, I went to Rekawa, Sri Lanka, to start my first sea turtle field studies at Turtle Conservation Project (TCP) for my Master's degree.

In the second week of August, Peter Richardson came to Rekawa with some visitors. He introduced me to a giant man with a little woman – Dr. Peter Pritchard and his wife, Sibille Pritchard. They were visiting Sri Lanka to attend the International Conference on the Biology and Conservation of the Amphibians and Reptiles of South Asia, held at the Institute of Fundamental Studies, Kandy and University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, August 1-5, 1996. I saw that he was a giant like his turtle book.

He was a very nice person with always a smiling face. Within a short time we had chatted about my objectives for my Master's on sea turtles. He gave me good guidance on how to select a good topic with achievable targets. I was very happy that I could meet this big turtle researcher and conservationist during the first couple of days of my sea turtle work. His guidance was very helpful to me for my studies. Then in 2000, during the International Sea Turtle Symposium, I had a chance to visit him at the Chelonian Research Institute, Oviedo, Florida. Since then I have met him at all the sea turtle Symposia, which I have attended. Moreover, I was there when the Sea Turtle Society awarded him a special tribute, "Do It Like Peter," during the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation in Las Vegas, Nevada. Finally, a true conservationist who had dedicated his life to the turtles.



## Una muestra de Humildad

### Andrés Estrades

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A fines del año 1999 estaba buscando información acerca de la incidencia de las placas supernumerarias en los caparazones de las tortugas marinas. Eran tiempos donde no se podía conseguir mucha información en internet, así que tomo valor y le escribo a Peter Pritchard (al cual no conocía personalmente). Le pido un pequeño trabajo que había sacado como nota, si me lo podía mandar por correo postal. Peter me pregunta si planeaba asistir al simposio de Orlando, le contestó que sí, y me responde que lo busque allí y que hablaríamos. Que ilusión!!

Al llegar al simposio, lo veo dos o tres veces por los pasillos, pero no me animo a hablarle, van pasando los días, Al fin tomé coraje, me presento, Andrés Estrades de Uruguay. Al fin!!! me exclama, estaba cansado de cargar todo esto. Inmediatamente me extiende un gran sobre conteniendo copias de toda la biografía existente de placas supernumerarias en tortugas marinas, unos 40 trabajos en total. Se tomó un rato para hablar con un estudiante de grado de 22 años que no conocía, que participaba en su segunda conferencia, sin experiencia y hablando inglés horrible! Me escucho y me dio un par de buenas ideas.

Siempre recordaré esa lección de humildad de un grande, un profesor de la vida. Hoy en día cada vez que un estudiante que recién comienza me frena para preguntarme algo, pienso en Peter y sonrío.



*Simposio Orlando 2000 (Photo: A. Fallabrino).*



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## Working with Peter in the Galapagos

**Joe Flanagan**  
Houston Zoo, Texas, USA  
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I had the honor of working with Peter in the Galapagos in 2008, home to his other extreme passion! Here are a few images:



*Peter and tortoise- on Wolf Volcano: tortoise population census 2008 (Photo: P. Oxford).*

A training session on how to collect a blood sample for the people going into the field:



*Myself and Peter, with me restraining the tortoise and giving him pointers on how to collect tortoise blood (Photo: J. Flanagan).*



*Peter working with Mike Rusello and Kevin Shoemaker who also were on the excursion (Photo: J. Flanagan).*





**For Peter**

**Angela Formia**

*Wildlife Conservation Society, Gabon (email: [aformia@wcs.org](mailto:aformia@wcs.org))*



*With Peter in Costa Rica, 2004  
(Photo: A. Formia).*

The first time I met Peter was when I attended my first sea turtle Symposium and potted along to the Marine Turtle Specialist Group (MTSG) meeting. I was young and clueless, but I sensed there were big debates in the air, tensions were running high among the members, something had been happening though I wasn't quite sure what... those were the days before listservs, and CTURTLE was still in the distant future. We were seated in a rough circle of chairs, there was no podium, and PowerPoint was not so ubiquitous. But when Peter stood up to speak, his words resonated, he commanded everyone's attention, he was articulate, wise, insightful, inspiring, controversial. Not everyone agreed with him, but he put my own feelings into elegant, eloquent words. A lightbulb switched on in my head, I was nodding vigorously, and to this day I still remember thinking to myself I'd just found my guru. The topic was sustainable use and the importance of working within local communities, almost mainstream these days,

but in the nineties, sea turtle conservation was a bit younger too, and the village-scale had not yet gained its rightful and equal place "on the map" (and at the Symposium). Some may argue that it is still lagging, that despite great progress, community sea turtle conservation is still under-represented and under-valued. Peter was a hotshot easily belonging to the world of superstars, but ever since I first knew him, he inspired the most wonderful appreciation of all scales of human existence and environmental realities up-close; he seemed just as comfortable in that MTSG meeting as in a remote village chatting with indigenous people.

I was lucky enough to travel with him years later... in Senegal, Costa Rica, India. He was an insatiable traveller; every day was an adventure, every situation had a humorous twist, every event was the starting point for a story. At mealtimes, we were treated to an unending supply of amusing anecdotes about wildlife and human nature, fascinating glimpses on the world – but never from a spectator's point of view; he was always delighted to jump into the story and invariably made it memorable.

With Peter, one always felt that nothing could go wrong. Not even when our city car began to strenuously object to being driven down a road that was little more than a rocky ravine, and began to lose its parts along the way to a remote nesting beach. We bounced along laughing and screaming «ouch» every time the bottom scraped the road, and then laughed some more at the absurdity of it all... and eventually smiled sweetly when we returned the rental in "mint" condition! I'm no good with anecdotes myself, but I so wish someone had been taking notes during those travels... Peter's biography would surely make a beautiful best-seller. But his humanity, his way of making everyone feel important, his joyous fascination with nature, those are contagious and will live on in all those who knew him.



## Remembering the Tall Man Beside the Corner Aquarium

**Jack Frazier**

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Dredging back half a century into my memory, it would have been a fine summer's day in 1965. I would have finished cleaning and providing food for animals in various displays and cages at the Reptile House of the Bronx Zoo. One of the favorite areas for which I was responsible was the display of red-legged tortoises and dwarf caimans: that is where I first heard a mysterious clucking noise, and later learned that it was the courting male red-legged tortoise that sounds like a chicken.

The reptile keepers would have been informed that by late morning, or early afternoon, a visitor would be arriving. We met him in the public area, just around the side of the red-legged tortoise and dwarf caiman display, in front of the tall, corner aquarium. This was the aquatic display of the Fly River, or Pig-nosed turtle. To be honest, although I thought that the turtle in the aquarium was unusual and interesting, I had paid little attention to it – I was not responsible for that display, so I had no need to spend time there. Yet, our visitor, a tall man with a somewhat different English accent, had travelled to the Bronx Zoo's Reptile House specifically to see and photograph the Fly River turtle, *Carretochelys insculpta*. In fact, when the turtle had finally been netted and held out so that our visitor could photograph it, from different angles, it was obvious that the animal was remarkable in several ways. As its common name made clear, the "nose" was reminiscent of that of a pig, although it was more elongate, looking like a snorkel. The scientific name also indicated other distinctive features: the front legs, unlike the paddles typical of aquatic turtles, were flippers with elongated finger bones, similar to the front flippers of marine turtles, not unlike the flippers of the loggerhead sea turtle, *Caretta caretta*; and both outer edges of the carapace were bordered by an arc of white-marks where a series of pits (*insculpta*) were located. No doubt about it, now that I could see it more clearly, this was a remarkable – fascinating – turtle. Our visitor had traveled all the way to the Bronx Zoo to photograph this very special turtle.

After numerous photographs and some friendly conversation our visitor thanked us and departed, and I went back to my normal activities for the rest of the day. Although I did not fully appreciate it at the time, the photographs taken by our visitor were precisely to illustrate this unique turtle, so that anyone interested in turtles could have a clear visual image of the remarkable Fly River turtle. The carefully planned visit to the Reptile House, involving considerable amounts of investigation and correspondence to find out where a Fly River turtle could be found and photographed, was part of the Tall Man's extended efforts to produce an accessible book on *Living Turtles of the World*.

My next contact with this Tall Man was about a year later, more than a thousand kilometers south along the east coast of North America. From casual conversations among graduate students at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida, I heard that he had just returned from an extended field trip in Latin America. And then, there he was arranging his belongings in his graduate-student space, which included many marine turtle bones and, even more notably, a casually-made enclosure on the floor with a bright green snake, which he calmly mentioned was a venomous *Bothrops* pit viper. Clearly, he had enjoyed his travels, and was widely respected by the graduate students in the Department of Zoology.

With the march of time, our journeys took different directions. After he graduated from the University of Florida, as a student of Professor Archie Carr, the Tall Man was employed at the Florida Audubon Society, where Professor Carr's wife was a prominent

conservationist. This non-governmental organization has been at the forefront of conservation since 1900, taking on social fads of women adorning themselves with egret plumes, and dealing with illegal hunters murdering game wardens, and intentionally burning bird rookeries. In that mix of political and social conflict, in which wildlife conservation had to navigate, the Tall Man was soon one of the better-known conservationists at Florida Audubon, frequently travelling and always engaged – at multiple levels - in turtle studies and conservation. Yet, his initiatives were not restricted to turtles; one of the earliest issues into which he jumped was the highly endangered Florida panther (*Puma concolor coryi*).

Meanwhile, I had crossed the Atlantic Ocean to a city where, later, we met again. This was the city named far, far back in history for a place where oxen would be taken to ford the river Thames and more recently famous for its magnificent “dreaming spires”. Some years earlier, well before I arrived at this place, the Tall Man had studied chemistry as an undergraduate student at Magdalen College, an institution founded in 1458, and well known for its unique Medieval buildings. The college information brief summarizes the environment as: “*Almost the entire College is listed and features on the statutory list of buildings of ‘special architectural or historic interest’.*”

It's been about half a century since we met up there, so many details of the meeting have long gone from my memory, but I do recall that we had a very pleasant conversation. Although my project at the time would have been on crows, I have little doubt that what we talked about then was turtles, and their conservation. At that point in time the Tall Man was recognized as an authority on marine and other turtles. I also recall that we stopped at a place which was special to him in order to enjoy some chocolate cake.

As a former student of Archie Carr, the reputation of the Tall Man continued to rise, in some ways outstripping that of his professor as a world authority on turtles of all kinds. He was also well known for traveling to remote and exotic places, and also for giving public addresses, often at very short notice, that evinced a love for history (having spent formative years among the Medieval buildings of Magdalen, that was inevitable), and just as remarkable, he was well known for his eloquent use of the English language (virtually inevitable from his years at Magdalen College).

Not surprisingly, the Tall Man became Scientific Coordinator of the Marine Turtle Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), responsible for promoting marine turtle work round the world, and facilitating liaison between turtle conservationists and the IUCN. He was in that capacity when I wrote to him in 1972, using an old-fashioned letter, writing with a pen on a sheet of paper that was put into a paper envelope to which a local postage stamp had been affixed, and sent physically through the international postal system. The letter was mailed from Moroni – not to be mistaken with the last Nephite prophet of the Book of Mormon, but instead the city of some 50,000 people on the south western coast of Ngazidja (Grande Comore), today the capital of the Union of Comores. Lodged in a modest hotel, I was somewhat despondent trying to figure out how to survey marine turtles on all four of the major islands of Comores, with just a modest grant of a few hundred dollars.

The reply to my letter, also in an old-fashioned letter, written with pen on a sheet of paper, and mailed in a paper envelope with a postage stamp affixed to it, arrived remarkably quickly, and I was surprised that it had not taken months. So, I was excited to receive the letter, but not overjoyed by the friendly advice that it provided: “*just go out and camp on the beach and then you can do your turtle work for very little cost.*”

When I was in Comores it was still a French Overseas Territory, but soon after the country went through growing pains of independence from France, periods of great instability, with more than 20 coups or attempted coups, repeated escapades by French mercenaries, and recurrent political competition between the four major islands. At any rate, camping out on the two most populace islands, Ngazidja and Anjouan, was not practical – for many reasons. However, in the end, consequent to the Tall Man’s suggestion, I did camp out on two other major islands: on the small islands off the south of Moheli and around most of Mayotte.

Years later, after living and working in other places such as Seychelles, Kenya, and Tanzania (always with the same type of shore-string budget), a colleague encouraged me to go to the US to write up the large and varied amounts of information that I had accumulated. Soon after leaving the western Indian Ocean, before settling in to write up my information, and in an attempt to understand better where I was now living, I traveled south down the eastern coast of North America, stopping briefly in places well known for marine turtles. One such stop, and a very memorable one, was in Oviedo, Florida, home of the Tall Man and his family. They graciously put me up for several days, where I had free run of the incredible library, adorned with countless curiosities he had acquired during his travels to many parts of the world – to say nothing of an enormous collection of specimens of turtles from all over the world. A decade later this would become the Chelonian Research Institute, an internationally regarded center for turtle specimens and research. The conversations and company there were incomparable, venturing freely into countless topics and locations on the planet.

Again, as ever, time marched on. Following a sojourn of nearly a year in Argentina, looking after the Right Whale field station on Peninsula Valez, I became a Research Associate at the Smithsonian Institution, where I began at the National Zoo. There I began more concertedly to write up accumulated information. Early on I was asked to review pre-final drafts by the Tall Man for a book chapter and some technical papers. His breadth of knowledge and fluid use of the English language were remarkable – although I did have some specific comments about certain parts of the drafts that I’d been sent. Some years later when we met, the Tall Man thanked me for the "sterling job" that I had done in my reviews of his drafts, one of his typically gracious, relaxed comments.

Over time our peripatetic paths crossed many times, in different places and events. Several occasions that stand out include major international meetings on turtles arranged by different organizations, including: Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium; San Jose, Costa Rica, 1983; Conservation, Restoration and Management of Tortoises and Turtles, Purchase, New York, 1993; International Congress of Chelonian Conservation, Gonfaron, France, 1995; Second International Congress on Chelonian Conservation: Saly, Senegal, 2003; and a score of meetings of the International Sea Turtle Society. In each of these events the Tall Man was conspicuous from the highlighted presentations that he gave, his eloquent spontaneous comments, and ultimately the honors and tributes presented to him.

There have been many tall men, some of enormous physical stature, but there has only been one Tall Man so distinctively experienced, versed, and recognized in the ways of turtles of every kind. Remembering such a unique human being gives us more than knowledge about shelled reptiles: it bestows us with personal glimpses of what characterizes humanity in the best of ways – and always with a turtle nearby!



## Mes rencontres avec Peter Pritchard

**Marc Girondot**

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Mes débuts avec les tortues marines en 1985 en Guyane française ont été baignés par un nom mythique, celui de Peter Pritchard qui avait décrit les pontes des tortues marines de la région dès la fin des années 1960. J'ai pu le voir de visu dès 1986 lorsque je suis allé à mon premier International Sea Turtle Symposium (ISTS), mais j'étais trop impressionné pour lui parler directement. Mais je l'avais vu !

Au cours des ISTS suivants, j'étais devenu plus entreprenant et enfin la discussion s'engagea. Je lui décrivais la situation de l'année précédente pour les tortues marines de Guyane française, et lui la replaçait dans un contexte temporel et spatial plus général. C'est au cours de ces discussions que j'ai pris conscience de l'importance de « l'argument d'autorité » que je décriais moi-même auparavant. Bien que les chiffres m'intéressent toujours autant, il m'a ouvert l'esprit et je suis moins sectaire ! Et il m'arrive même maintenant d'avoir recours aussi à cet argument, je l'avoue !

La dernière fois que j'ai vu Peter, c'était en Turquie pour l'ISTS. Nous avons fait une sortie commune pour aller voir des tortues palustres. Même diminué physiquement, ses yeux pétillaient toujours face à une tortue.



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## PCHP's Style

### Matthew Godfrey

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Apart from his amazing field stories and deep turtle knowledge, Peter's sharp wit was always on display. I remember once seeing him at a meeting somewhere, and an old colleague said to him: "You are looking more grey every time I see you." Peter quickly responded: "Yes, if I didn't color it daily, it would come in black." I also remember once at a different meeting, when I saw him, I asked if he would sign a copy of *The Encyclopedia of Turtles* for a friend who dearly cherished the book. Of course he agreed but not without quipping that for someone who supposedly loved the book, the spine hadn't been cracked open very much. When I told her what he said, she was deeply embarrassed and confessed she had two copies: one for reading, which was covered in duct tape due to extensive use, and one for display, which she sent to be signed. We still laugh about that story to this day.



*Peter signing the copy of The Encyclopedia of Turtles  
(Photo: M. Godfrey).*



## Peter Pritchard- The Kind Eccentric English “Turtle Man”

**Brendan Godley**

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I first met Peter in Bristol (England) at a meeting of the British Chelonia Group when I was in my early twenties. I was a nervous first-time speaker and he was receiving a lifetime achievement award. Although I thought he was an old guy, I was clearly wrong as he was younger than I am now! We were invited to dine with the committee and I was taken by, despite how long he had lived away from Blighty, just how very, very English he was. I was also impressed by just how many stories he had to tell but also just how so very kind he was. As I got to know him better over the next 20 years, these first impressions were only strengthened. The Rolls Royce, the generous hosting of travelling students from across the world in his home, the love of his family, and the high regard in which he was held by any of his overseas collaborators I met. One specific example I remember well was his effortless orchestration of a spontaneous collection to help a young traveller who had had all of his money stolen on the last day of the International Symposium in Malaysia. I would like to say it was a stylish Panama hat that he placed on the stage as he calmly encouraged fellow turtlers to donate a dollar or two. That detail, I am afraid, maybe one that I have added myself as it would have been just the type of hat that the kind, eccentric, English “Turtle Man” from Florida would have sported.



## A Tale of the Tracks Left in Venezuela by Peter Pritchard

**Hedelvy J. Guada**

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Centro de Investigación y Conservación de Tortugas Marinas  
WIDECAS Country Coordinator for Venezuela (email: [hjguada@gmail.com](mailto:hjguada@gmail.com))*

When I began to be interested in sea turtles in Venezuela around 1983, I visited the libraries of the Los Roques Scientific Foundation (*Fundación Científica Los Roques*, FCLR) and the Foundation for the Defense of Nature (*Fundación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza*, FUDENA) where, sure enough, I found information about marine turtles from studies in Los Roques National Park, Aves Island Wildlife Refuge, from other regions in the Caribbean, and from across the globe. One of the treasures that I found was “Turtles of the Spanish Main” (1980) by Peter C.H. Pritchard. A copy is still in my library today, where it sits alongside works by Archie F. Carr and other leading sea turtle researchers.



*Pedro Trebbau, Sibille Pritchard and Peter Pritchard at home, Oviedo, Florida, USA, 2016.*

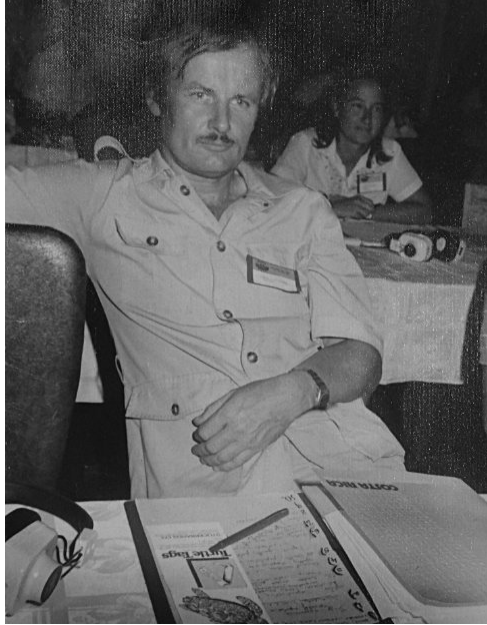
Shortly after my discovery of Peter’s work, an important contribution to turtles in the Western Hemisphere appeared: “Turtles of Venezuela” (1984), which was co-authored by Peter with Pedro Trebbau, a recognized zoologist and conservationist in the country. This contained an impressive amount of information about the turtles of northern South America and it had an enormous impact, both for the region and for me personally, proving to be highly influential throughout my career. I can only hope to contribute a fraction of what Pritchard and Trebbau (1984) contributed towards the study of turtles in my country.

Around this time I also learned that Peter himself had represented Venezuela at the Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium I (WATS I) held in Costa Rica in 1983. A sea turtle manual had been produced for that meeting (Pritchard et al. 1983) and I managed to make a photocopy of an original loaned to me by

a FUDENA biologist. It became a field bible for me, and remained so for many years until we had the MTSG techniques manual (Eckert et al. 1999).

Little did I know in the mid-80s that the “Turtles of Venezuela” would be one of the guides for my undergraduate Biology thesis concluded in 1990. Unable to find an advisor on sea turtles, biologist Alfredo Paolillo suggested I study an endemic subspecies of the slider turtle described by Pritchard and Trebbau as *Trachemys scripta chichiriviche* (now *Trachemys venusta chichiriviche*), which is what I did. Some years later, at an International Sea Turtle Symposium (ISTS), I gave Peter a preserved juvenile of the “morrocroy de agua” or “Venezuelan slider turtle,” which can now be found in the collection at the Chelonian Research Institute (CRI) in Oviedo, Florida, one of the most important turtle museums in the world. I’ve even had the privilege to visit CRI (<https://chelonianri.org/>).





*Peter C.H. Pritchard as the Venezuelan representative at WATS I, July 1983, Costa Rica. (Photo: unknown author; courtesy of Tito Barros, who took it at Dr. Pritchard's home.)*

In 2014, I was approached by Gilson A. Rivas, a herpetologist from the Museum of Biology of the Universidad del Zulia (MBLUZ), who proposed updating some of the chapters of the “Turtles of Venezuela” in Spanish since the original edition was in 1984. I was very happy to contribute to the five sea turtle chapters and the chapter on the Venezuelan slider turtle. “Venezuela y sus Tortugas” by Trebbau and Pritchard was printed in 2016, with two additional printings published in 2018 in English and Spanish (Trebbau and Pritchard 2018a,b).

The socioeconomic and political crisis has deeply affected any kind of field research in the country (see for example: <https://natureecoevocommunity.nature.com/posts/65506-collapse-of-venezuelan-science-threatens-the-world-s-most-sustained-monitoring-of-tropical-forests>). Sadly, this extends to sea turtle research and conservation efforts, and hardly a handful of projects by Venezuelan researchers, in collaboration with foreign partners, are continuing to fill gaps in information since the publication of the “Turtles of Venezuela”. These include studies of the movements of some species, mainly from the Gulf of Venezuela, Isla de Aves and Paria Peninsula, reproductive biology, population dynamics, illegal commerce, and indigenous use.

Throughout the years, I had the chance to see Peter at various turtle meetings such as the annual ISTS and at meetings of regional organizations such as WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network). I've been able to observe and appreciate just how far his knowledge of turtles has reached around the world. I last caught up with him in Lima, Peru, at the ISTS in 2016, where, as always, his wife Sibille was by his side. His health deteriorated, and sadly, he passed away last February 26, 2020. He will now be in turtle heaven for sure. Peter, your tracks in Venezuela are very deep. Thank you so much.

### **Acknowledgements**

I feel grateful to have been invited by Manjula Tiwari to submit this small contribution for this issue of the African Sea Turtle Newsletter. Gilson A. Rivas has been very kind in submitting pictures. Gilson Rivas and Emma Doyle improved substantially the note. Our acknowledgement to Helen Trebbau, daughter of Pedro Trebbau, who permitted us to use a personal picture of a visit to Peter and Sibille Pritchard, at the Chelonian Research Institute, Oviedo, FL, USA in 2016.

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*In an Oviedo restaurant, from left to right: Tito Barros (LUZ), a restaurant waitress, Gilson Rivas (LUZ), Peter Pritchard (CRI) and Peter's assistant, Oviedo, Florida, 2014, USA (Photo: unknown author).*



## Tribute to a Friend: Peter Pritchard

### George Hughes

*Founder Member of the IUCN Sea Turtle Specialist Group &  
Former CEO of the Natal Parks Board, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa  
(email: [george.hughes@iuncapped.co.za](mailto:george.hughes@iuncapped.co.za))*

As the years go by one is saddened by the passing of friends and colleagues. Many of whom have played very important roles in one's life. Peter has, alas, joined many others in that category and I am sad indeed to see that he has gone. Not that I regret his passing, for his achievements and writings on the lives, conservation, and delight in working with this wonderful group of animals, the turtles, will ensure that he will live on in the studies of generations of biologists and conservationists and, what is more, his life will be envied by many who will never have the opportunities that Peter had, and which opportunities he grasped with both hands and made them fruitful. I applaud his life.

Peter and I met at the first meeting of Sea Turtle Specialists in Morges, Switzerland, in 1969. We were the youngest amongst an impressive gathering of 12 biologists who had a strange interest in sea turtles. Peter was finishing his Doctorate under our mutual hero Archie Carr, and I was the totally new boy on the block from South Africa. Being British born, Peter and I drew together, discovered he had very good friends in South Africa, and tried to stay out of trouble as the gathering discovered how incredibly ignorant we all were. Joop Schulz was convinced that sea turtles never nested in clear water and most of the rest of us were convinced they only nested in clear water. Bob Bustard



*Marine Turtle Specialist Group First Meeting Morges Switzerland IUCN 1969 (Photo: G. Hughes collection).*



*Cayman Mariculture Inspection: George, Peter, and Stanley da Silva 1974 (Photo: G. Hughes collection).*

made sure that our limitations were clearly understood and Archie loved the occasion. It was a huge learning curve that we shared.

Peter emerged as the rapporteur of the Group and was given the responsibility of being the Group's liaison officer to keep us all in contact and aware of what the others were doing.

The second meeting saw Peter catch a bit of flack for not, in the perception of some, having made the best use of his opportunities and when one considers the amount of research in which he was involved, was forgiven by most and praised by many. In a period of some stress he and I were again the youngsters and drew strength from each other.

In the years that followed, Peter and I shared some developmental growth as we visited Grand Cayman to review the Mariculture farm and shared speakers' roles in Costa Rica, Washington DC, Miami, and Orlando. It was Peter who warned me in Costa Rica that there was a political boycott\* being planned because of my presence and who showed great filial loyalty in planning a strategy to deal with it.

I shall never forget that occasion nor indeed the many times over the years when our paths crossed and we enjoyed sharing our turtle adventures, which were many.

Peter had a lovely sense of humour (very British), which I thought he stretched a bit when in his house he handed me a Matamata and, when I (who had never seen one before) held it rather close to my face, drily suggested that any closer and the animal would improve my appearance by nipping off my nose!!

Through the years I have watched Peter's reputation as a true savant grow as he established and expanded his Chelonia Institute and became a figure of awe to many around the world. He never hesitated to share his knowledge and was forever willing to identify some of the lesser-known turtles of the world. He responded often and speedily when I forwarded enquiries from younger scientists whose knowledge was fast outpacing mine and they all remember Peter for so willingly helping them on their way. Such a contributor deserves all the recognition he generated and the happiness he enjoyed.

Of course Peter received a great deal of support from Sibille his undoubtedly long-suffering but always cheerful and lovely wife of many years who has so much to be proud of. I too am proud indeed to have counted them both as friends and the thought of Peter no longer being there in Orlando grieves me but makes me glad that I knew him.

Peter loved his turtles and so should we all who were brought together in a global arena by this fascinating family of animals that triggered the formation and created the foundations of deep friendships and loyalties.

Peter lived well and left a huge legacy for the future and he helped a lot of animals. Who can fail to weep over the loss of this gentle, humorous, talented, and loyal biologist and friend.



*\*Footnote by Jaques Fretey: At the international meeting of WATS I from 17 to 22 May 1983 in San José, Costa Rica, George represented South Africa, where he was conducting marine turtle research in Maputaland Coast. Due to the rise in violence and police repression against blacks, South Africa was at that time internationally condemned for a harsh policy of apartheid. South Africa was subject to an international boycott of culture and sport. WATS I took place 2 months after the dramatic attack on Church Street in Pretoria by the military wing of the African National Congress (ANC) that injured 200 people and killed 19. Many of the national representatives at WATS I were black. A political boycott was attempted against George.*



## Reflections on Peter

**Mike James**

*Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Bedford Institute of Oceanography, Nova Scotia, Canada (email: [mikecjames01@gmail.com](mailto:mikecjames01@gmail.com))*

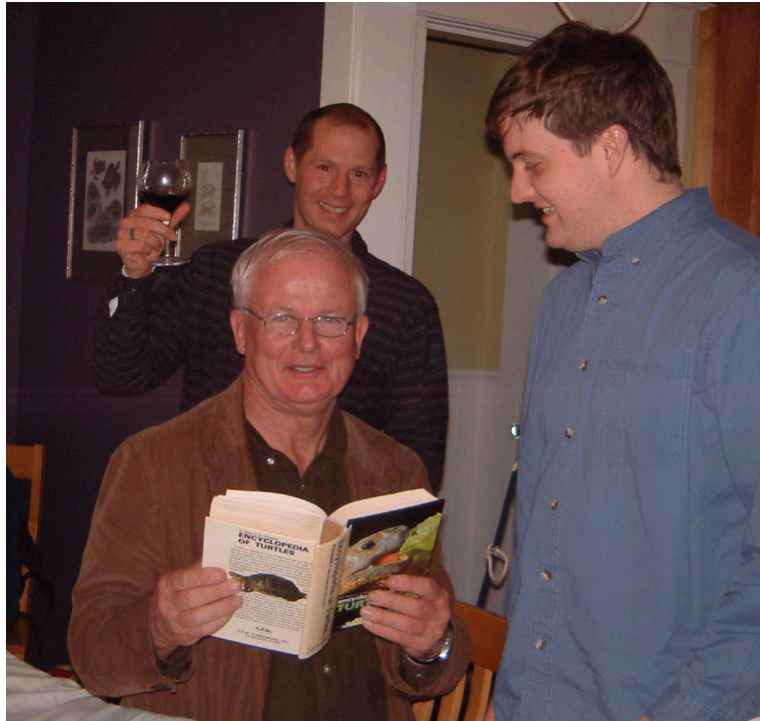
In the early 1980s I used to visit a pet shop in what was then the north end of Toronto (the shop has since been replaced by a condo and the location is now considered practically downtown). The store had a curious layout. On one side was a massive collection of books, mainly focused on the care of dogs. On the opposite side there were two tiers of aquariums that ran the full length of the shop. The top tier housed a variety of rodents: hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs and the like, while the bottom level contained an array of reptiles and amphibians. This shop, I would later learn, was the city's best source for pet herptiles and supplies, and the owner himself had a strong interest in turtles. I made a habit of visiting the shop a couple times a month.

At this point in my young life I had already amassed a large collection of natural history books in my personal library. Among these were field guides to every living thing I might encounter during my hikes and paddles in southern Ontario, but the books on reptiles spanned species diversity across continents. At the pet shop, I would often recognize the varieties of turtles on display from the pages of my reptile books; however, at other times I beheld unfamiliar species. When I pressed for information on one such mystery specimen, the shop owner walked across the store to the bookshelves and consulted an intimidatingly-detailed and beautifully-photographed squat book with a formidable spine binding nearly 1,000 pages. I held the heavy volume and thumbed through it. It was an *Encyclopedia of Turtles*! I was surprised and delighted that such a remarkable publication existed. The book came with a hefty price tag: nearly \$100 – a lot of money back then – but I was determined to have my own copy. I began saving for this purchase and one evening after school walked home triumphantly with the *Encyclopedia of Turtles* under my arm.

As I read the book, I learned the author, Dr. Peter Pritchard, was a world-renowned turtle conservationist who had made one of his life's passions – turtles – also his work. Not only were turtles the focus of his PhD dissertation, but he had travelled to all corners of the globe to document the taxonomy and life history of countless species. It seemed impossible he was only in his mid-30s! Dr. Pritchard wrote in an infectious prose replete with anecdotes and personal vignettes. The *Encyclopedia of Turtles* soon became a favourite book of mine, and it fed my burgeoning interest in turtles. Pritchard's *Encyclopedia* is one of those books that has been carefully packed and moved countless times throughout my life—from my childhood bedroom bookshelf to university dorm rooms to apartments, then to my own home – at every new location, always proudly displayed. I suppose it has family heirloom status.

Inspired by the likes of Peter Pritchard and others, I began graduate work in the field of turtle biology a decade after the *Encyclopedia of Turtles* entered my life. It was 1998, I was living in Atlantic Canada, my supervisor was a specialist in freshwater turtle biology, and I had absolutely no contacts in the sea turtle "world." However, my thesis had evolved to focus on leatherbacks, and I identified the International Sea Turtle Symposium in Mazatlán, México, as a meeting I wished to attend. Following one of the talks I remember hearing a man deeply engaged in conversation with another meeting attendee. The voice was commanding; he was British; I could see his name tag: it was Peter Pritchard! Here was one of my idols. I was standing nearly beside him, yet I was so nervous I couldn't even introduce myself. What would I say? I dashed back to my room and emailed my wife the news.

I continued to attend the sea turtle Symposia whenever I could. Peter was always there (I was eventually introduced to him and while I didn't really know him personally early on, I felt I could now address him using his first name). He presented, he questioned, he eagerly participated in workshops, breakout sessions, and working groups. Everyone knew him. He had strong, well-informed opinions. He appreciated the varied cultural significance of turtles and perspectives concerning their consumptive and non-consumptive uses. It was clear that he valued the role of communities and grassroots groups in advancing the study and conservation of turtles. He always had something interesting and intelligent to contribute.



*Peter autographs my beloved Encyclopedia of Turtles in my own dining room (Photo: M. James).*

In 2004, NOAA formed a working group to assess leatherback turtles in the Atlantic Ocean. I was excited to participate, not only because I'd been working with leatherbacks "up north" in Canada and the sea turtle research community seemed very far away in those days, but also because several biologists I greatly respected, including Peter, would be contributing, too. The group convened four times. The second meeting was hosted by Marc Girondot in France. Peter was accompanied by his wife, Sibille, and when the work sessions had concluded for the day, the pair toured the group through Paris. As we walked, they interpreted the city and its history, and they brought us to some of their favourite haunts. While in line at Notre Dame Cathedral, Sibille suddenly exclaimed "Michael!", and she and Peter dashed over to chat to a figure whom Sibille identified as former Massachusetts governor Dukakis. Sibille introduced the group to him and we continued on. We all had a good laugh afterwards, as we polled one another and reached a quick consensus that the broad and varied social circles of the Pritchards were surely unmatched by others in the sea turtle community, and this couple was probably among the most experienced globetrotters any of us knew. Peter lived "outside the box" in many ways, and it was entirely refreshing to be around him. His funky vibe might perhaps be aptly summarized by an observation I was to make

several years later when I visited Peter's cherished Chelonian Research Institute in Florida and was greeted by Peter as he stepped out of a vintage Rolls Royce: not the conventional daily driver for a biologist — but nor was Peter your conventional biologist!

In March 2006, the leatherback working group met in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I was excited to host the group, and I have wonderful memories of this first time an international group of sea turtle biologists convened in my home province, braving one of the coldest months of the year. That week of meetings also facilitated one of the most cherished moments in my career. Peter was among several group members whose travel plans allowed for a final dinner at my home, and I seized the opportunity to ask him to autograph my beloved *Encyclopedia of Turtles* in my own dining room! As he signed the book, I could scarcely believe what was happening. Peter was also eager to see the box turtle, Felix, whose time with me precedes my acquisition of the *Encyclopedia*. I remember Peter carefully stooping his tall frame to navigate the narrow staircase to the basement of our old home, only to discover that the low ceilings of the room where my turtle lives still precluded him from standing upright. He returned to the living room where he warmly played with and read to my young children.

The International Sea Turtle Symposium was held in Crete, Greece, a month later. Peter was there, as usual, accompanied by Sibille, and he was eager to capitalize on the meeting location by also visiting a local freshwater turtle field project. A group of us were invited along and Peter rented a van for the excursion. We assembled outside the hotel one afternoon, and Peter appeared, smiling, with a knapsack slung across his back. We piled into the van and Peter drove us through the countryside and village squares until we reached our destination, where an eager graduate student greeted us from the shoreline of a large pond. No sooner had we stopped than Peter began rifling through his bag, extracting a hat, hip waders and boots. Within seconds he had changed and was waist-deep in the pond. We observed from the water's edge as he chatted excitedly with his host, all the while scanning the pond. We snacked on treats kindly provided by Sibille while Peter waded about, then, almost casually, we watched as Peter reached down into the muck and extracted a live turtle, slightly larger than his hand. We marveled at how quickly and effortlessly Peter had located the turtle. He proceeded to join us, interpreting his catch and photographing it from every angle. He then returned the turtle to the pond and spied something on the shore. This time it was a dead turtle —which he seemed equally enthusiastic about. Sibille was beside Peter in an instant; she knew Peter was contemplating the logistics of how this find could join the collection at the Chelonian Research Institute, and she wasn't keen on transporting the specimen back home from a trip, which had only just begun. We could hear Sibille reminding Peter the hotel was no place for a stinky turtle and there was no room for it in the van, but a twinkle in Peter's eye suggested he had other plans. Peter removed his field gear and ushered us back into the van. When we were all seated, I spied Peter walk nonchalantly to the back of the van and surreptitiously hook a plastic bag on the rear window wiper, then climb into the driver's seat again. We were off again at good speed, with the plastic bag and its contents swinging like a pendulum as Peter maneuvered the twists and turns of the narrow road.





## Peter Pritchard- Kaplumbağa -Yakup Kaska

### Yakup Kaska

*DEKAMER, Sea Turtle Research, Rescue and Rehabilitation Center, Dalyan, Mugla, Turkey (email: [caretta@pau.edu.tr](mailto:caretta@pau.edu.tr))*

Peter always said “**kaplumbağa**,” meaning turtle in Turkish. He knew this word from his visit to Turkey, and since then he always repeated the word “kaplumbağa” whenever he met me. This was the word connecting us, and therefore, “kaplumbağa” forms the connection between him and me in the title of this contribution.

Peter Pritchard was a turtle biologist and every new generation starts learning about turtles by reading his and other giant turtle biologists’ works (Archie Carr, Nicholas Mrosovsky, and so on).

I started learning and reading the scientific information on turtles in 1988. I was just in my second year as an undergraduate biology student at that time. I also started monitoring the beaches as a volunteer in that year and it has become a habit since then. I continued my MSc and finished it in 1993 and my PhD in 1998. Peter is known throughout the world as the “Ultimate Authority” on the biology and conservation of turtles and tortoises. This was the first time I was reading his articles, but did not know him.



*Peter & Yakup at the 35<sup>th</sup> International Sea Turtle Symposium in Turkey (Photo: Y. Kaska).*

I was not expecting to meet him on the beach during my nest excavation one summer. I was excavating the nest and had a bucket with me. One morning, one tall man approached me during my nest excavation. He kept asking what I was doing, why I was doing it, did I know their embryonic development and temperature determined sex ratio changes, and so on. I was getting angry at his questions. I stopped digging the nest cavity and looked towards him; his long body gave me shade under the sun. I started asking him how he knew this information and who he was. He started smiling and said he was Peter, Peter Pritchard. I do not remember exactly what I did, but I threw my bucket and hugged him. I never forgot that moment. Similar hugs happened at every Symposium that I have attended.

As I was the President of the 35<sup>th</sup> International Sea Turtle Symposium in Turkey, I invited him with his wife, Sibille and his son Cameron. I invited Peter to the opening ceremony, and with the help of Sibille, he presented how we met and how he remembered everything about that moment nearly 20 years later.

He was interested in all turtles, but particularly interested in freshwater turtles. We had many freshwater turtle sessions with him and many other friends, especially Chuck Schaffer. He always asked me about the softshell Nile turtle, *Trionyx triunguis*, at Kükürtlü Lake in Turkey.

Peter Pritchard also founded the Chelonian Research Institute, in Oviedo, Florida, for the study and preservation of turtles. My former MSc student, Çisem Sezgin, has also spent some time with his family and stayed at the Institute. She has many memories of her time with his family and keeps telling me about them.



*Peter Pritchard and his wife, Sibille, narrate the story of how Yakup met Peter in the middle of a beach during the next excavation in Turkey (Photo: Y. Kaska).*



*Peter presenting the certificate to one of the winners at the 35<sup>th</sup> International Sea Turtle Symposium in Turkey (Photo: Y. Kaska).*



*A softshell Nile turtle, *Trionyx triunguis*, nested (left) on the sandy banks of Kükürtlü Lake in Turkey and a hatchling on the sand (right) (Photo: Y. Kaska).*



## Lettre de Laurent à Peter

**Laurent Kelle**

Responsable WWF-France, bureau Guyane, WWF Country Manager, French Guiana  
(email: [lkelle@wwf.fr](mailto:lkelle@wwf.fr))

Plage de Montabo, entre Orénoque et  
Amazone, le 13 septembre 2020.

Cher Katalu Yolokan,

Je garde à l'esprit notre première rencontre à Mana, en Guyane, en juillet 1999. Je me souviens parfaitement de ta silhouette unique, de ton large sourire, et tes premiers mots: «Chers hôtes Kali'na, nous sommes venus ici avec nos amis Arawaks: puissent vos deux peuples autrefois ennemis s'associer autour de la préservation des tortues marines des Guyanes».

Tout était dit, déjà: Ta connaissance et surtout ton *respect* des communautés autochtones, au sein desquelles tu dis avoir trouvé de fantastiques formateurs; ta volonté de coopération entre tous; ton intuition que les tortues marines étaient en danger, mais représentaient aussi un trait d'union unique entre communautés, entre individus, entre humains.

Et puis les Guyanes, Pays des eaux et des mythes (des acéphales au lac Parimé - de plus en plus pollué d'ailleurs), dont tu as été le premier scientifique à parcourir le littoral, à la poursuite de récits dont tu souhaitais entrevoir la véracité. Venu au Guyana à la recherche du Crotales, tu entendis les dires d'habitants du littoral Ouest de la «Guyane anglaise» évoquant la présence de petites tortues marines à écailles...

Scientifiquement impossible: les Tortues olivâtres, à ton arrivée dans la région, n'étaient connues que dans l'Atlantique Est. Mais si les gens en parlaient, c'est bien qu'il se passait quelque chose, sur la côte... Tu as transmuté ces rumeurs en preuve scientifique dans la région de Shell Beach, puis tu entrepris un nouveau voyage vers les régions *Tilewuyu* de Galibi, la Guyane hollandaise de l'époque, guidé là encore par des contes venus du littoral. Nouvelles découvertes majeures, avec des scènes d'arribadas qui nous font encore rêver aujourd'hui. Et à nouveau, nouvelles indications de la part des communautés autochtones Kali'na: il existerait, toujours plus vers l'Est, une plage très isolée, uniquement fréquentée par les quelques habitants de Aouara (devenu Awala), et d'Organabo, lors de la saison des crabes. Ton estime pour la parole locale, associée à ton instinct naturaliste, t'a poussé à organiser, depuis la «Guyane hollandaise», un survol du nord-Ouest de la Guyane française. Découverte scientifique majeure (mais très banales pour les Kali'nas *Tilewuyu*) du plus grand site de ponte de Tortue luth de l'époque.

C'est aussi dans cette région que tu as commencé à baguer les *kulalasi*, que les blancs appellent les Tortues olivâtres. Et que, bien plus tard, j'ai appris ton surnom: «Katalu Yolokan». Le Diable des tortues marines... Pourquoi ? «Parce que quand ce grand blanc a commencé à mettre des morceaux de fer sur les pattes des *Kulalasi*, elles ont disparu des plages là où il passait ses nuits à les chercher... ». Ton dernier séjour dans le coin aura aussi permis d'en rire collectivement !

Immense référence au sein de la communauté scientifique, tu as toujours su concilier rigueur scientifique et éthique intellectuelle. Mais bien au-delà de tes compétences scientifiques, c'est ton humanisme et ton humilité qui m'auront marqué. Sans parler de ta débordante curiosité enfantine, vrai moteur de ton insatiable soif de rencontres, de discussions, de découvertes.

Salut à toi, l'Alchimiste, qui aura si souvent changé de banales discussions, d'interminables réunions, en moments rares, où la quintessence de l'esprit scientifique souhaitait avant tout se mettre à la portée de tous, aux côtés de chacun, et au service de l'intérêt général. Saches que, depuis ta nouvelle thébaïde, tu continues à nous inspirer.

Laurent Kelle  
Responsable WWF-France, bureau Guyane  
WWF Country Manager, French Guiana



Please use <https://www.deepl.com/en/translator> for a translation



## A Friendly Face

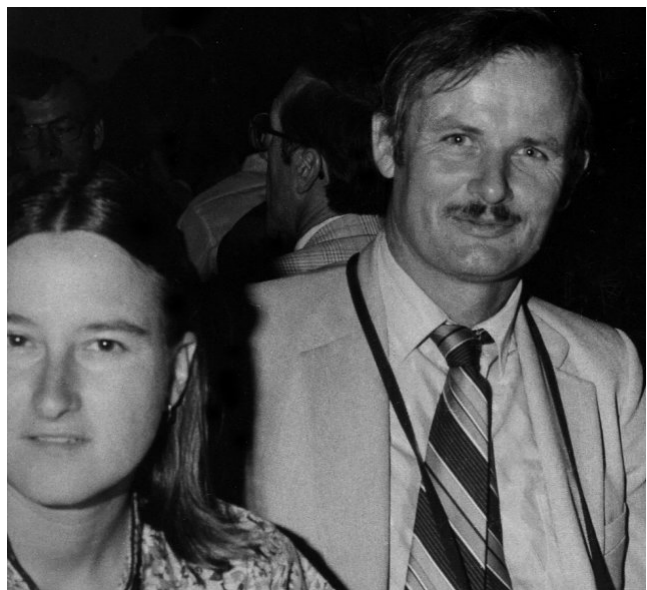
**Cynthia J. Lagueux**

*Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research, University of Florida, Gainesville, USA  
(email: [cjlagueux@gmail.com](mailto:cjlagueux@gmail.com))*

Unbeknownst to me when I was assigned as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1981 by the Honduran Department of Renewable Natural Resources (RENARE) to work on an olive ridley nesting project in the Honduran portion of the Gulf of Fonseca that I would be following in the footsteps of both Dr. Peter Pritchard and Dr. Archie Carr. What did I know about sea turtles? At the time, I had an undergraduate degree in Wildlife Management from the University of Minnesota, a Midwest state, almost two thousand kilometers from the nearest ocean. Each year, during olive ridley nesting, I was assigned by RENARE to nightly patrol one of several beaches for nesting females.

At the time, the government established a *veda* (closed season) of several weeks against taking eggs. During the *veda* we would collect clutches and move them to a hatchery where eggs would incubate, hatch, and hatchlings released. Dr. Pritchard was one of a handful of people that was kind enough to take the time to respond with details to my many questions about collecting and transporting eggs, managing a hatchery, and releasing the hatchlings. I later learned that Dr. Pritchard had conducted research for his dissertation in Punta Ratón, Honduras in the 1960s (Pritchard 1969) and Dr. Carr visited in 1947 to witness olive ridley nesting (Carr Jr 1948).

It was amazing to see local egg collectors stake out a claim to a portion of the beach while they waited for a nesting female to emerge. As soon as a female was spotted, they would run into the surf, grab her, carry her on their back to the upper beach, place her down on the sand and expect her to make a nest and lay her eggs. If the female began to crawl back to the ocean, she would be picked up again and brought back to the upper beach and “helped” to dig a nest cavity, and to my amazement, more often than not she actually would make a nest and lay her eggs!! Even more fascinating was when I learned that both Drs. Pritchard and Carr had witnessed the same phenomenon many decades earlier.



For at least four decades, nearly 100% of the eggs laid were collected and sold to various intermediaries until consumed in bars and markets as aphrodisiacs. So, how on earth was there still olive ridley nesting in the Gulf of Fonseca if there had been no recruitment into the population? Several years later I had the honor to meet Peter at the Annual Workshop on Sea Turtle Conservation and Biology (now known as the Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation) and the pleasure to discuss with him the habit of carrying females to the upper beach to nest and why there was still olive ridley nesting in the Gulf of Fonseca if there had been little to no recruitment for decades.

*Cynthia and Peter at the Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium (WATS I) in San José, Costa Rica, in 1983  
(Photographer unknown; from J. Fretey's collection).*

Although I continued to look up to Dr. Pritchard, not only because of his stature, but out of enormous respect for his first-hand experience with turtles around the world and his immense knowledge, he became a friend and colleague. Over the years we enjoyed many discussions, not only about the olive ridley in the Gulf of Fonseca but also about the potential impact of the Nicaragua legal green turtle fishery. These discussions were always informative, and he was such an inspiration for the hard work we all do.

A few years ago, on my way to Nicaragua, bleary-eyed from only a couple hours of sleep after staying up too late frantically packing and then driving myself in the middle of the night to the Orlando airport, I was suddenly wide-awake when there before me was an image of a very friendly and familiar face holding a red-footed tortoise, my good friend Peter Pritchard!!!! I was more than thrilled to see Peter's face, even if only in a picture!! I looked around to see who I could tell. I wanted to stop all the passersby to let them know that this is Peter Pritchard, he knows all about turtles!!! How COOL is that, to be so famous your picture is on a display case in a major international airport?! It made me feel so good inside after seeing Peter; it took away all the weariness from traveling alone.

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*Peter's poster at Orlando Airport, Florida.*



## Remembering Peter

**Ann Marie Lauritsen**

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Peter had a contagious passion for turtles. One of many memories I have of him comes from a time we spent bent over a box of sea turtle bones at the Chelonian Research Institute. We spent hours sifting, sorting and assembling the skeletons; hours listening to Dr. Pritchard discuss turtle anatomy, marveling at the skeletal architecture, explaining the relationship between the structure and the mechanics employed by the turtle to swim and excavate. Yes, his academic credentials, papers published, books authored certainly made a mark, but it was his genuine passion for turtles, and how invested he was in others that influenced me in turtle conservation.

While traveling to Guyana and Suriname with Dr. Pritchard to attend a sea turtle conference, it was not surprising to see the six-foot-four Brit standing out in the crowd. I was surprised though, with how well he fit in. Whether navigating the unofficial visitor checkpoints in Paramaribo, Suriname, or negotiating the price of an eclectic hand-carved chair at Georgetown's market in Guyana, Peter always seemed at home. Now about that chair. We had some time in Guyana before we headed to Suriname so Peter took me to the bustling marketplace. I had my list, hoping I would be able to find some of my favorite fruits from my time in Trinidad, which included chenet, starfruit and doudouce mangos. Dr. Pritchard's appetite was clearly not limited to food. Spotting this rather large ornately carved chair in a stall, he engaged the vendor, bartering for quite some time. He explained to me how perfect this chair would be to greet each guest as they stepped into the Chelonian Research Institute. I was not so sure but, I was a new graduate student and he was the world-renowned Dr. Pritchard. First of all, the chair was rather large. I was skeptical that we would get it back to Florida in one piece, having to put it in baggage claim and then fit it into a tiny rental car. If only that were the primary cause of my reservation. The craftsman that carved the chair was clearly skilled, incorporating a beautiful botanical motif up the legs and armrests to draw the eye to the focal point on the high chair back, a massive leaf around 10 inches across made up of seven serrated leaflets, you might recognize it as *Cannabis indica*. You can see my dilemma. Should I assume that Dr. Pritchard, this renaissance scientist who casually lists the Latin name of every palm tree we walked past in South America, not recognize a pot leaf? On the other hand, do I trust that this is exactly the piece of furniture the Chelonian Research Institute needs to have next time hosting scientists from all over the world? He bought the chair. I smile when I think about the "conversation piece" greeting visitors at the Institute.

Among his many awards, Dr. Pritchard was named a Hero of the Planet by Time Magazine, Champion of the Wild by the Discovery Channel, and received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Sea Turtle Society. But those of us fortunate enough to spend time with him, knew him as a kind and passionate man who cared about turtles and people alike mixed in with just a few eccentricities.



## Quelques souvenirs de Peter me reviennent en mémoire...

**Jean Lescure**

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Dans les années 1970-1975, la communauté scientifique mondiale est alertée sur les grandes menaces qui pèsent sur les tortues marines. Je me documente sur les tortues marines des Antilles et de la Guyane, où je travaille, et je fais la connaissance de Peter Pritchard ou plutôt de ses travaux. Je lis ses remarquables articles de 1971 et 1972. J'y apprendis que c'est en Guyane française qu'il y a les lieux de ponte les plus importants au monde pour la Tortue luth ! Stupéfaction ! Admiration pour le travail et son auteur, interpellation aussi ! Sans le savoir mais très aimablement, Peter Pritchard nous met, nous les herpétologistes et protecteurs de la Nature français, devant nos responsabilités. C'est ainsi qu'a commencé mon dialogue avec Peter Pritchard. Il a été entamé avec ces lectures et il a continué. J'ai parlé ensuite des travaux de Pritchard au Professeur Jean Dorst, nouveau Directeur du Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle de Paris. Nous avons monté un programme d'investigations, j'ai obtenu les subsides du Muséum de Paris et, en mars 1977, je pars avec Jacques Fretey pour une première mission tortues marines en Guyane. Une belle aventure commence... Le dialogue continue.

Peu à peu, je prends connaissance des autres travaux de Pritchard, ceux sur les tortues des Galapagos, sur les tortues marines, etc. En 1984, paraît «Turtles of Venezuela», un livre majeur; on en a parlé souvent avec Roger Bour. Nous nous rencontrons finalement (pour de vrai) à des assemblées de la SOPTOM; on échange, on discute, on fait plus amplement connaissance.

En 1998, la DIREN (Direction de l'Environnement) de Martinique me demande d'organiser une mission d'expertise tortues marines en Martinique. La mission, qui se compose de Peter Pritchard, Jacques Fretey et de moi-même, a lieu du 6 au 11 juillet 1998 et se déroule dans d'excellentes conditions. Peter Pritchard, alors responsable du groupe tortues marines à l'UICN, francophone et francophile, nous a assurés de tout son savoir et de toute son expérience pour l'accomplissement de cette mission. Ce furent aussi des journées pleines d'échanges, de courtoisie, d'enrichissement, des journées inoubliables.

Quand nous sommes-nous revus ? Je ne sais plus exactement, mais je me rappelle qu'un jour, lors d'une visite de Monsieur et Madame Pritchard chez Roger Bour, celui-ci les a entraînés à Monthéry pour me faire une petite visite à mon domicile. Je me rappelle, comme si c'était hier, que les deux épouses «guyanaïses», Madame Pritchard du Guyana et Madame Lescure de Guyane, ont fait connaissance avec maintes exclamations, sous le regard amusé et flegmatique de Peter. C'est le dernier souvenir que j'ai du grand Peter Pritchard.



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## Connections, Conversations, and the Joy of Turtles

**Kate Mansfield**

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My life is punctuated by the connections I've made and the extraordinary conversations I've had with others. The conversations and connections that stand out as exclamation points are those where I've felt, even for a brief moment, that I've *seen* a glimpse of the other person's true self — no ego, no pretense, but the underlying person. The extraordinary conversations are those where I myself have been *seen*. Sometimes, these conversations are unexpected and short-lived — a random conversation in an airport van shuttle, or a conversation in line to have a driver's license renewed. Sometimes, if you are lucky, you are able to continue a conversation with that person over time, creating whole "sentences" or "paragraphs" of understanding and connection.

I was incredibly lucky to have continued conversations and encounters with Dr. Peter Pritchard in the last 10-15 years. I'd known about Peter and his work for many years before I was able to first spend time with him and his extraordinary wife, Sibille, as part of the US Loggerhead Turtle Expert Working Group in the mid-to-late 2000s. I was newly graduated with a PhD and wasn't sure quite what to expect from Peter. Despite Peter's accomplishments, honors, books and manuscripts written, he *Listened*. To everyone, including an early-career, newly minted PhD like me. Our working group had one of our many meetings in Quintana Roo, Mexico, where we stayed at a beach-front hotel that was conducive to after-hours conversations and stories of past field glory and field failures. One of these evenings a loggerhead emerged in front of the hotel in a failed attempt at nesting. As she returned to the water, Peter led the charge, beer in hand and Sibille laughing, to detain the turtle to check for tags. He dropped down into the sand, on his knees with one knee on each side of the turtle's head. Peter was one of the few researchers tall enough to safely pull this off. Of course, the turtle obeyed. What I remember from that evening was the joy in Peter (and Sibille) and how obvious it was that he loved turtles.

When I interviewed for and was offered my current position at the University of Central Florida, Peter and Sibille were among the first to welcome me and ensure I was introduced to the local community, making easier what could have been a difficult transition taking over another researcher's long-term research program. I was invited to tour and later join the board of the Chelonian Research Institute and was struck by how each piece in Peter's specimen collection has a story tied to it. Peter (and Sibille) spent a lifetime collecting each specimen; each piece has a unique story of how it was collected, what it represents, and the cultural importance of the specimens or the people associated with its collection. These specimens make for powerful conservation stories that connect us with the human side of conservation. And these stories are only available because Peter *Listened*.

As Peter's illness progressed and words became more and more of a challenge for him, he would still occasionally look at me and chime in with a few words that might have seemed out of context but weren't: Quintana Roo and Mexico. Telling me that he remembered. Reminding me of his joy and love for turtles.

Thank you, Peter, for the stories, the joy, and the conversations.



## Saudade

### Neca Marcovaldi

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When I first met Peter at the Western Atlantic Turtle Symposium (WATS I) in San José, Costa Rica, in 1983, he was already Peter Pritchard and we were just starting our first steps to protect and study sea turtles in Brazil. His kindness and gentle way to share his knowledge about sea turtles was amazing. After this I had a chance to “meet” Peter every year at the Sea Turtle Symposium. He was so enthusiastic about our work in Brazil.

Finding Peter has always been for me a journey of enthusiasm, of learning. His tranquility, affection, and patience to talk about the turtles of Brazil and our work have always motivated me and taught me about the "wisdom" of people who are dedicated to what they love and are kind enough to share what they know.

More recently I had the opportunity to visit Peter at his home in Florida. I was received with the same affection as always by him and his dearest wife, Sibille.



*Neca with Peter at his home in Oviedo, Florida*  
(Photo: K. Mansfield).



## A Couple of Nods and A Squeeze

**Dimitris Margaritoulis**

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*(email: [margaritoulis@archelon.gr](mailto:margaritoulis@archelon.gr))*

When Mustapha Aksissou asked me to write something about Peter Pritchard, I hesitated asking myself how much did I know Peter. My initial reaction was to decline as I didn't actually know him much in person. I had first contacted him in the early 80s, soon after the discovery of sea turtle nesting in Zakynthos, asking for information on sea turtles. IUCN's headquarters in Switzerland kindly gave me the postal address of the Florida Audubon Society where Peter was Vice President. I had known his name from his many articles and books as well as from his involvement in the first Marine Turtle Specialist Group presided by Archie Carr. His 895-page monumental "Encyclopedia of Turtles" gave me a lot of knowledge and inspiration to study and conserve marine turtles. He sent me several of his papers and readily shared his vast knowledge of sea turtles. At his wish, I was trying to keep him updated on the sea turtle situation in Greece, and his concept "conservation without confrontation" influenced our efforts to protect sea turtles effectively.

I met him several times at the Sea Turtle Symposia, since I started to attend them in 1989, but our communications were usually restricted to the formal "good mornings" and "how are you". Strangely, we didn't have the opportunity for a proper talk, but I was regularly handing him my articles; he was thanking me politely by nodding his head and looking me in the eyes. I watched several of his talks at the Symposia, usually outside the formal program, covering mostly historical features and stories from his turtle experiences around the world. I was impressed by the depth of his knowledge and enjoyed his sense of humor (definitely very English). At the 20th Symposium in Orlando, Florida, he organized a guided visit for the Symposium participants at the Chelonian Research Institute, founded by him in nearby Oviedo, to see his extraordinary collection of turtles from around the world. Regrettably, I couldn't go as I had to leave, but I will never forgive myself for missing this event.

In 2006, when I organized the 26<sup>th</sup> Symposium in Greece, he was there and I recall one of his rare smiles when we met on Crete. And at the banquet night when I had just finished teaching the next President – Michael Coyne – the Zorba dance, Peter Pritchard stood up, amid the applause, came towards me, looked me in the eye and squeezed gently my arm nodding his head in appreciation. I will never forget this...



## Mi amigo Peter C. H. Pritchard y la conservación de la Tortuga Lora

**René Márquez-M.**  
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Las actividades de investigación, fomento y conservación de tortugas marinas, en México, en particular de la “tortuga lora” *Lepidochelys kempii*, especie considerada en peligro de extinción, forman parte importante de las actividades del Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Biológico Pesqueras, desde su fundación en 1963, y ha merecido gran atención del sector técnico y científico, por su situación poblacional, por tal motivo en 1966 se instaló el primer “campamento tortuguero” para su protección y conservación, en la playa de anidación, ubicada en Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas, como una actividad prioritaria del Programa de Tortugas Marinas.

Cronología de eventos:

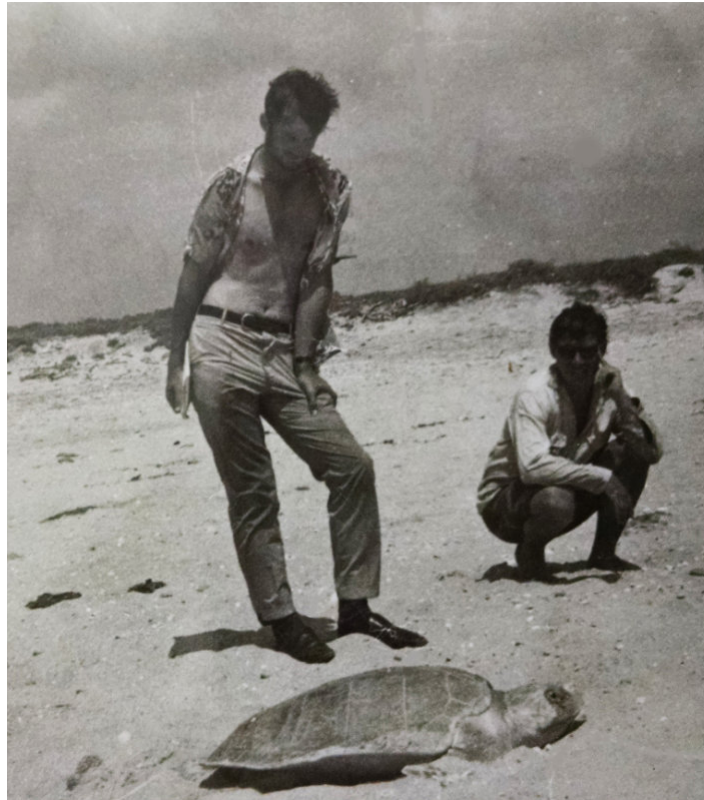
En esos años (1960) la zona de anidación de la tortuga lora, ya era muy conocida en la región, pues de ahí se extraía gran cantidad de huevos de tortuga, para el consumo regional. Desde antes de iniciar nuestras actividades, la playa ya era visitada por el Dr. Henry Hildebrand, con interés científico y por el Sr. Dearl Adams, que quería restaurar la anidación de la especie a lo largo de las playas de Isla Padre, Texas, por lo que cada año trasladaba varias cajas con nidos, con el fin de incubar los huevos y liberar las crías en esa zona.

El Dr. Archie Carr, destacado investigador de las tortugas marinas y promotor de su conservación en el Caribe, mediante la protección de la anidación de la tortuga blanca (*Chelonia mydas*) en la Playa de Tortuguero, en Costa Rica, nos hizo una invitación y en 1964, para conocer la metodología (Márquez, 1966, “La cría artificial de la Tortuga Blanca (*Chelonia m. mydas* Linnaeus), en Tortuguero Costa Rica. Publicación No. 13, INIBP, 28pp.), la cual se adaptó a los trabajos del Programa Nacional de Tortugas Marinas. así mismo el Dr. Carr realizo una visita a Rancho Nuevo en 1967, mostrando interés para apoyar nuestras actividades de investigación y conservación de estas especies.



*René (2da a la izquierda) y Peter (en el centro con una camisa de lunares) en el campamento de Barra Coma en Rancho Nuevo en 1968 (Photo: R. Márquez-M).*

Al mismo tiempo el Dr. Peter C.H. Pritchard (colaborador del Dr. Carr), se interesó en las actividades sobre la tortuga lora (Kemp's Ridley), por lo que a partir del año siguiente (1968) inició sus visitas a Rancho Nuevo, para estudiar a la especie y colaborar en su conservación. Durante su estancia colectó información sobre su biología y continuó estas actividades hasta 1970. Como resultado de estos trabajos, en 1973 publicó la Monografía: "Kemp's Ridley Turtle or Atlantic Ridley" (P.C.Pritchard & René Márquez M., IUCN MONOGRAPH NO. 2: MARINE TURTLE SERIES, 30pp).



*Peter en Rancho Nuevo en 1968 observando el comportamiento de una Lepidochelys kempii hembra (Photo: R. Márquez-M).*

En 1978 el Dr. Pritchard continuó apoyando las actividades del Programa Binacional para la Protección y Conservación de la Tortuga Lora en Rancho Nuevo y al mismo tiempo, de manera oficial, se inició el experimento de "head-start e imprinting" para repoblar la playa de anidación de Isla Padre, Tx., los trabajos consistieron en incubar varios nidos de tortuga en arena de Isla Padre y liberar las crías en esa playa, recuperarlas ya estando en el agua y llevarlas a crecimiento, durante un año, en las instalaciones del National Marine Fisheries Service, en Galveston, Tx., y después liberarlas en lugares seleccionados en la costa de Florida, donde tuvieran mayor posibilidad de sobrevivir, alcanzar la edad adulta y volver a anidar en las playas de Texas, actividad que ha tenido resultados muy favorables para la recuperación de la especie en esta zona.

Al año siguiente (1979) el Dr. Pritchard continuó apoyando estas actividades de conservación de la tortuga lora en Rancho Nuevo, dentro del programa desarrollado por el INP, el NMFS y el FWS.



*Reunión de programación de las actividades binacionales en Brownsville en 1979 con los Drs. Henry Hildebrand, Jack Woody, René Márquez y Peter Pritchard (Photo: R. Márquez-M collection).*

A partir de 1980 estas actividades de apoyo estuvieron a cargo del Dr. Patrick Burchfield y así continúan hasta la fecha, con los cambios y ajustes que han ocurrido en la política de ambos países.

Mi amistad y colaboración con el Dr. Pritchard continuó en los años siguientes y tuvimos oportunidad de intercambiar puntos de vista en reuniones internacionales. En muchas ocasiones recibí sus valiosos consejos para la investigación, estudio y conservación de las tortugas marinas.

El Dr. Pritchard fue un incansable naturalista e investigador que destacó en múltiples actividades y desarrolló un amplio acervo de conocimientos, expuestos en conferencias, publicaciones científicas y trabajos de divulgación, no solo sobre tortugas marinas sino también sobre tortugas terrestres y dulceacuícolas, y otros reptiles, entre estos trabajos destaca la “Encyclopedia of Turtles, publicada en 1979.

Como dije anteriormente, tuve la oportunidad de convivir con el Dr. Pritchard, a quien siempre consideré un valioso ejemplo para los jóvenes que se interesan en la conservación de la naturaleza.

¡Gracias Dr. Peter Pritchard por tu valioso trabajo y amistad!



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## PCHP: A Turtleman of Influence

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*"Surely there are few intelligent persons to whom a live turtle does not appeal."*

*William T. Hornaday, 1904*

Peter Charles Howard Pritchard (1943-2020) was an undisputedly influential man, especially in his field of Chelonian research and conservation (the greatest of all time, in my opinion), but also as an overall conservationist of Nature and cultural diversity. But Peter's most significant area of influence may well have been the impact he had on the countless lives he touched and enriched by his example of passion, panache, optimism, joy, and commitment to turtles. His greatest gift to me was the latter – he was living proof that one could proudly and joyfully be a "turtleman" and turn a childlike, powerful love of turtles into a lifelong career full of adventure and meaningful contributions to science and Nature conservation despite the world possibly considering it an outlandish pursuit.

There have been many excellent summaries published of late that timeline Peter's remarkable life. What follows here is not another obituary, but rather a tribute from one whose life was influenced by Peter. I do not pretend to be an expert in all of Peter's many achievements, nor will I attempt to comprehensively address his game-changing books (all 14 of them!) and countless other publications. I cannot recount his full resume of field experiences in the farthest reaches of land and sea wherever turtles are found. Nor will I list the many well-deserved honors bestowed on him like *Time* magazine's "Hero of the Planet." I can only hope herein to better define Peter for the reader by telling some stories of the meaningful impact he had on my life.

Growing up in the American Midwest in the 1970s, it was not always easy to explain my career aspirations in ways that "normal folk" (aka, non-turtlemen and women) could understand and accept. Professional wildlife jobs were uncommon, and lurked at the edges of the bell curve of "normal" occupations. Not-for-profit wildlife organizations were far fewer then than they are today<sup>1</sup>, and working for one was considered more a "summer job" than a career path. By my late teens, I had developed a lot of snappy answers to the oft-asked question, "when are you going to settle down and get a real job?" There was little encouragement from all but the most compassionate family, professors or classmates, many of whom assumed that one would only study biology as a prelude to a medical degree or for the required science credit. One college advisor told me, "Snap out of it, Mast! You can't chase turtles around the globe forever." And even upon meeting the girl of my dreams in Colombia in my 20s, my (now) wife, Angela, was queried by her mother, who asked, "Rodrigo seems like a nice boy, but what does

he do?” “He’s a biologist,” Angela responded. “He lives in Galápagos and studies sea turtles.” After a pause, her mother replied, “Hmm. How interesting.... But seriously, *what does he do?*” It was not until they visited my office at the World Wildlife Fund much later that the in-laws truly believed my work was something that could pay the rent.

Career-bound youth of today may take for granted that being a professional turtle-person or a conservationist was always a possible, reasonable, and widely applauded vocation, but indeed it was pretty unusual up until not that long ago. Fortunately, people like Peter Pritchard paved the way by his example, and he made the field a little more mainstream for the plethora of wildlife conservation professionals who have followed.

I discovered Peter Pritchard from afar through his books, first Living Turtles of the World (1967), but later *and especially* Encyclopedia of Turtles (1979), a book that most turtle lovers cherish and secretly wish they had been smart and worldly enough to write themselves. I knew that Peter worked with Archie Carr, whose books I also admired, and I wanted to meet them both from an early age and let them know that I was grateful for their inspiration. I first crossed paths with them in November 1979 at the World Conference on Sea Turtle Conservation, but I don’t remember what I may have said to them, and honestly it all seems like a dream now, 41 years later. I was at the time both dumbstruck and star-struck. It was my first-ever conference, I had arrived flustered on a late flight, and I was instantly overwhelmed by both the setting (the US State Department) and the who’s who of fascinating sea turtle men and women from all over the world including Archie and Peter, but others equally iconic – Balazs, Bjorndal, Brongersma, Clifton, Cornelius, Ehrenfeld, Ehrhart, Frazier, Hildebrand, Hughes, Mrosovsky, Meylan, Mortimer, Nietschmann, Ogren, Owens, Reichart, the Richardsons, Ross, Schulz, and Witham – plus hundreds more! At the time I had no idea that such a large community of professional turtle-folk existed, nor that a career in sea turtle conservation was something one could aspire to.

A much more memorable Peter Pritchard experience took place in Mexico in 1981, when I served as a member of the bi-national Kemp’s ridley sea turtle research team. It all began one day when a lanky, outgoing guy about my age appeared at camp from down the long, muddy road connecting Mexican Hwy. 180 to the tiny town of Rancho Nuevo and our fenced-in beachside compound that consisted of one cement building, a few grass huts and palapas, an outhouse, and a handful of tents. Mud up to his knees, he emerged from a brown Ford pickup-turned-camper that had just been extracted from an enormous mud puddle by a farmer’s tractor, and he introduced himself as Thane Wibbels. Thane was soon followed by more trucks full of gear and a camera crew from KUHT TV in Houston, there to make a film called “The Heartbreak Turtle.” Ultimately, Peter – then “Dr. Pritchard” to most of us – arrived in a twin-engine Cessna that was barely able to maneuver the camp’s tiny dirt runway; he was accompanied by Roger Wood, another turtleman of renown who, among other things, described *Stupendemys geographicus*, a giant, extinct freshwater turtle. Several more icons of the Kemp’s ridley recovery effort trickled in over the ensuing days with tents, cots, fishing gear and such, including Andrés Herrera himself who had in 1947 filmed an *arribada*<sup>2</sup> nearby – the famous “Herrera film” – that later helped Archie and others pinpoint Rancho Nuevo as



the Kemp's ridley's main global nesting beach. Once settled-in at "Turtle Camp" Peter, followed by Dearl Adams, Jack Woody, Pat Burchfield, Juan Diaz, Rene Marquez, Andres, and others were one-by-one clipped with a lavalier microphone by Thane, and ushered into a mosquito-net tent in the dunes for on-camera interviews.

My fellow researchers and I<sup>3</sup> listened intently to the interviews from the wings, hanging on every word, proud and awed to be in the presence of such conservation luminaries, the very people whose foresight and valiant commitment in the face of daunting threats and opposition had averted the first man-caused loss of a sea turtle species. Earth had almost seen the Kemp's ridley fade into oblivion in the 1960s, and there we were with most of the people who had prevented it.

All of these people inspired me (and continue to), but none quite as much as Peter, who left an indelible impact, not just as an incredibly affable and unassuming man, but as a "walking encyclopedia" of turtles. His size alone set him apart. But also, his words – with his elegant accent and impeccable turn of phrase, he spoke of his university days at Oxford, his multi-continental travels, and of turtles of all kinds. He knew French and other languages (I was struggling to learn Spanish at the time), and he had endless stories of adventures in amazing places. He kept us all enthralled over meals and around the campfire. And in a small though immeasurably thoughtful act that only someone who has done long-term fieldwork in remote areas would think to prepare for in advance, Peter surprised our field-worn research team with candy bars and bags of peanut M&Ms that he had packed especially for us, a memorable-to-this-day respite from weeks of rice and beans. That time spent with Peter firmly imbued in me the idea that I too might be able to succeed as a career turtleman.

Thereafter Peter and I developed the kind of comfortable camaraderie that could pick-up right where it left off even after a long hiatus, and in the nearly four decades that followed, seldom did more than a year pass between contact either in person, usually at the annual Sea Turtle Symposium (STS), or through correspondence and phone conversations; in my diaries and daily action lists going back to the 1980s are dozens of "PCHP" notations either as reminders to call him, or notes from a conversation. Ultimately our interests and passions converged enormously – over books, travel, conservation, indigenous people, the quaint and sometimes bizarre material culture of humans, and much more. But always turtles, turtle-folk, and turtle conservation.

While I was living and working in Miami for Archie Carr's Western Atlantic Survey in the summer of 1983, my wife, Angela, and I would occasionally drive to Oviedo to see Peter, Sibille, and their boys, and each of these encounters generated unforgettable memories. Once we road-tripped to Tallahassee for an ASIH "Ichths and Herps" meeting, stopping at roadside zoos along the way. Another time we went canoeing in a nearby swamp and visited some gopher tortoise burrows that were being threatened by the construction of a parking lot. And in the mid-1990s, long after I had moved to Washington, DC, I would sometimes pass through Miami en route to or from South America and drive up to say "hi." On one such occasion we sat with the shades drawn in Peter's library, watching slides from one of his recent Galapagos trips when I felt a

drip of liquid trickling down my neck from behind my ear, accompanied by a pain like a jabbing needle. I shrieked and he switched on the lights, took one look at the “wound” and asked where I had been recently. I explained that not long before I had gone to the Mata Atlantica of Brazil looking for black lion tamarins with our mutual friend and fellow turtleman, Russ Mittermeier<sup>4</sup>, after which the puzzlement left Peter’s face, he smiled and announced, “congratulations, I believe you are host to a botfly larva,” then proceeded to enlighten me about the remarkable natural history of *Dermatobia hominis* and the various indigenous methods for extracting them from beneath human flesh. Surprise – one more thing Peter was an expert in!

I have a big, fat PCHP correspondence file dating back to the mid-1980s with missives in both directions and on a half-dozen different letterheads as I moved from non-profit conservation job to job. These letters describe stories of turtle encounters, reports of field projects, and conservation needs in Galapagos, Madagascar, Suriname, Costa Rica, Guyana, Guyana, Guyana (he *loved* Guyana) and dozens of other places. Our letters often ended with a plea from one or the other for a few thousand dollars (or a thank-you for the last grant) to give an award to an aspiring young conservation leader, or to help out a local community project somewhere. And typically they closed with “best regards to Angela,” or “best to Sibille and the boys.”

In one exchange, I shared with Peter that I had been in northern Colombia and photographed a *carranchina* (*Mesoclemmys dahlii*), a Critically Endangered endemic sideneck, telling him that I had learned it was being over-hunted and eaten by locals during *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) in the belief that it was a fish and therefore okay based on church doctrine. In his response he asked if I might help him re-initiate an effort to convince the Pope (John Paul II) to work with Colombian and Venezuelan church authorities to encourage the faithful to refrain from eating turtle and tortoise species by instructing them of the “biologically untenable interpretation that tortoises and turtles are fish rather than meat,” and he attached a letter from then WWF Chair, Sir Peter Scott, to “His Holiness the Pope” that Peter had drafted some years earlier. Again, why did this even surprise me? Of course, Peter *already* knew of this threat to a Critically Endangered turtle, and had already used his ingenuity and connections to try to solve the problem.

Peter’s penchant for collecting is a cliché behavior for many naturalists, myself included, but he took it to new and truly epic levels. His museum in Oviedo of anything and everything turtle-related, living and dead (aka the *Thébaïde* that is the Chelonian Research Institute [CRI]) is the stuff of legends, and I will not deign to describe its magnificence here, other than to touch on one aspect that demonstrates his sense of humor and appreciation for the weird. Among the many things in the collections at CRI, gathered during his countless hours spent on beaches, were baby-doll parts (yes, you heard right – plastic doll heads, limbs, torsos, etc.). I discovered the full ghoulish array of baby-doll parts – some still encrusted with barnacles – in a cardboard box while on a PCHP-led tour; we had a great laugh, and I pledged to help him out by adding to the collection whenever possible. One letter from me to Peter in 1995 (with doll part photo attached) reads, “Dear Peter: I just ran across a photo I had been saving... As you can

see, the specimen is indeed a fine one and though I was unable to collect it (I had no jars, alcohol or forceps at the time), I felt that a photo for your collection might suffice. Best, Rod” His response was, “Dear Rod, Thanks so much for sending me the rare and unusual slide. You know how much I love [things like] that...”

In keeping with our shared intrigue for bizarre turtle-related artifacts, when Peter learned that I was working on a paper about the Herrera’s mud turtle (*Kinosternon herrerae*) with former Rancho Nuevo tent-mate, John Carr<sup>5</sup>, he mailed me an article that included photos of a “band” of stuffed mud turtles (including some *K. herrerae*) that he had purchased in a Mexican souvenir shop. In the photo, several shellacked specimens of this rare animal stood upright playing wooden instruments like tiny chelonian mariachis, some with mouths agape as if singing, and others with miniature sombreros. One can be sure that this grisly diorama is still in the CRI museum in Oviedo.

Peter shared his passion for conservation in ways that made you want to pursue new things with him. We had a conversation in the 1980s about the differences between Kemps and olive ridleys in which we wondered out loud why carapacial scute pattern variations are so rare in adult Kemps, yet so commonplace in olives almost to the point of there being no “normal,” and furthermore why did hatchling Kemps seem to show a higher degree of scute variability than adults? “A more normal scute pattern can’t possibly provide any hydrodynamic advantages,” he said, “so the fact that variation diminishes with age must be a result of something else.” – something that perhaps could help to better conserve Kemps? This conversation ultimately led to my first major research project and scientific publication – *Carapacial scute variation in Kemp’s ridley sea turtle hatchlings and juveniles* (Mast and Carr, 1989) – and was a topic that Peter and I continued to discuss for years after<sup>6</sup>.

And in the late 1980s when I was working on rainforest conservation at Conservation International (CI) alongside people studying the powers of remote imagery to measure Amazonian forest cover, I explained to Peter what I had learned – that forest types (e.g., primary, secondary, plantation, etc.) could be easily determined from satellite photos without having to do costly and complicated ground-truthing. This morphed into a “wouldn’t it be cool if...” conversation in which Peter postulated that perhaps one day we could simply program satellites to photograph certain DNA sequences and thereby make global-scale distribution maps and accurate population determinations of say, hawksbill turtles, thereby providing answers to some of the biggest mysteries dogging sea turtle conservationists then, and to a certain extent even now – precisely where are the turtles and how many are there? This fanciful idea, discussed repeatedly over a decade or more with Peter, came to life in part years later when satellite telemetry became more practical for sea turtles, and when global-scale relational databases also began to appear, like Duke University’s OBIS-SEAMAP. Though we still can’t program satellites to track DNA, we can now envision satellite and other sea turtle biogeography data from a global perspective<sup>7</sup>.

In late 2003, I co-founded a program that quickly became known as SWOT, a not-so-great acronym (though arguably better than “SOWOT”) for “State of the World’s Sea

Turtles” and, of course, Peter was both a part of, and an inspiration for this effort. Our aims were to: 1) build a global-scale database on sea turtle biogeography, 2) grow a “SWOT Team” network of turtle people who would feed and use the database to define priorities and advance conservation, and 3) create a strategy to communicate sea turtle science and conservation in exciting ways among us. The latter of these aims was soon addressed with a magazine, SWOT Report, whose first annual volume came out in 2006.

Peter was an enthusiastic supporter of SWOT since the very start; he co-authored an article with me in SWOT Report Vol. 1 and returned as a regular contributor in several more volumes. I often called him for ideas and assistance, and no one was *ever* happier than Peter to be handed a new volume of SWOT Report each year. Sibille once told me that he kept a stack of back issues on his desk where they were easily accessible, and that he looked at them frequently. SWOT co-founder, Brian Hutchinson, who always mans the SWOT booth at the STS recalls that “Peter always came to the SWOT booth as soon as he could, and he would immediately look through the entire Report in detail, extremely eager to read any new turtle information, even when you would think he already knew it all. And he always made time for young people and treated them as peers. Even when I was 21 years old and knew nothing, Peter would take time to have a conversation with me and talk without limits. He would never rush off from a conversation – didn’t matter who you were.”

I was especially anxious to see Peter in Lima, Peru, at the first-ever STS to be hosted in South America, our favorite continent. Knowledge of Peter’s illness by then had become widely known in our community, and many of us had seen the toll it was taking on his speech and memory, though it never diminished the sparkle in his eyes. I cherished any chance to see that sparkle again, and was pleased to run into Sibille in front of the STS venue as soon as I arrived to Lima. After the requisite hugs and greetings, I asked, “where is he, how is he doing?” and she responded that he was inside seated in the courtyard with the Guayanese crew. As I turned to head inside, she touched my arm and said, “don’t be surprised if he doesn’t remember your name, Rod. He’s having trouble with names,” so I braced myself. Walking into the courtyard, I spotted him seated on a bench silently taking-in the surroundings as workshop participants bustled by him. I made a beeline, caught his eye, and knelt in front of him to greet him, preparing for the moment that I would need to remind him who I was, then he looked at me with that sparkle, smiled, and said one word, “Rod.”

From babyhood on, we humans mimic the people around us. It’s how we learn to walk and talk and adopt all the other behaviors that make us socially and culturally acceptable members of society. As young adults, and indeed throughout life, mentors can provide us with examples of ways to achieve a future image we envision for ourselves. Sometimes we model the lives of faraway heroes we see on TV or read about in books – some of my aspirational heroes as a kid were on TV (like Jacques Cousteau) or in the pages of National Geographic Magazine (Thor Heyerdahl, William Beebe, Sylvia Earle, and others). I chose to follow my heart into wildlife conservation at a young age, yet until knowing Peter, finding mentors who had trod the same trail was

not easy, and a lifelong friendship with such kindred spirit was indeed a rare gift. I've also had the extraordinarily good luck to have many mentors who have become friends and members of my "chosen family," some named herein. Peter was one of the best. And I am certainly not the only one who includes him among the people I have looked up to and thought, "I want to be like that."

Peter Pritchard's lifetime of work on turtles and Nature conservation was an immeasurably valuable contribution to the world. And his influence on other people – as a catalyst and source of inspiration to countless enthusiasts, biologists, and conservationists, myself included, assures that his legacy lives on in all turtlesmen and women.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Peter Pritchard for more than four decades of influence on my life and career, and for being a great and steadfast friend. And to all my other turtle mentor-friends who were part of the turtle web, including (but not at all limited to) Jim and Thelma Richardson, Archie Carr, Fred Berry, Pat Burchfield, Jack Woody, René Marquez, John Carr, Carol Woody, Russ Mittermeier, and the list goes on... And special thanks to Pat, Thane, John, Sibille, Karen, Anders, Brian, and Russ and all who helped me to shake loose forty years of Peter Pritchard memories to produce this article. And as always to Angela, Morrison, and Terrill for everything else and whatever else is in between.

### **Footnotes:**

1. The organization I work for, Oceanic Society (OS), was founded in 1969, the same year that Peter earned his PhD from the University of Florida. At that time, OS was the only ocean conservation non-profit in America! Today there are hundreds in America and countless more worldwide.
2. Mass nesting event characteristic to both Kemps and olive ridley sea turtles
3. There were four of us on the US team that year who lived together in zipper-less tents, showered in paint buckets, and survived repeated bouts of Montezuma's revenge while doing our best to trod the trail blazed by Peter and others to help the Kemp's ridley limp back from a near-permanent knock-down in the 1960's. We all wound up in wildlife professions where we work to this day (John Carr, Laura Tangle, Carol Woody, and myself).
4. Another admirer of Peter Pritchard, mentor of mine, primatologist and freshwater turtlesman of renown, Russ Mittermeier in a 2020 essay said that "Turtles, and the humans who love them, will always be in Peter's debt."
5. John Carr and I had already spotted some mud turtles in streams near Rancho Nuevo when we met Peter there in 1981. We had caught our first specimen or two, and we asked him about it. He pointedly encouraged us to "learn all you can about *K. herrerae*," as he knew how little was known about the species at the time.
6. This paper (Mast and Carr, ,1989) was presented at the First International Symposium on Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Biology, Conservation and Management in Galveston TX (October 1985), after which Peter invited John and his wife, Chris, my wife Angela and me to dinner to celebrate what was a major achievement for John and me at the time.
7. Modern advances in (and steep reductions in the cost of) environmental DNA technology (eDNA), where the recent presence of a species can be detected in a sample of soil or water through large-batch genetic sequencing, are bearing out Peter's conjecture and ushering in a new standard for conducting non-invasive biodiversity surveys around the world.



## Memories of PCHP

**Peter Meylan<sup>1</sup> & Anne Meylan<sup>2</sup>**

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It is said that Aristotle was the last person to know everything that there was to know at the time that they were alive. It seems that Peter Pritchard wanted to be the one person to know everything there was to know about turtles during their lifetime; he seemed to have come close. He started down this road with *Living Turtles of the World* (Pritchard, 1967) and then tried to pack it all into his *Encyclopedia of Turtles* (Pritchard, 1979). For forty more years beyond that he did all he could to increase his knowledge of all aspects of turtles and their biology, all the while making friends and colleagues along the way. The two of us count ourselves very lucky to have gotten to know Peter and Sibille early on in our careers.

The two of us (Anne and Peter M. [PM]) met at the University of Florida as undergraduates at the very same time that Peter and Sibille were leaving Gainesville for Orlando where Peter went to work for Florida Audubon. PCHP had finished his PhD on *Lepidochelys* under the direction of Archie Carr in 1969, and then stayed on a while working for World Wildlife Fund. Anne began to work on her Master's degree with Archie in 1975, so she and PCHP did not overlap; nor did PM., as an undergraduate, then graduate student and curatorial assistant in Herpetology at the Florida Museum of Natural History. But we knew Peter by reputation, through specimens he sent to the museum, and stories from Dr. Carr.

Anne got to know PCHP through Dr. Carr and her work with sea turtles. She was a contributor to WATS I (West Atlantic Turtle Symposium, 1983) and ended up with a set of official photos of country representatives. At that time, Peter was working on a book on Venezuelan turtles (Pritchard and Trebbau, 1984) and represented Venezuela at the meeting (Fig. 1). Sibille represented her native Guyana (Fig. 2). They were a dashing pair!

By the 1970s, PCHP had already amassed an important collection of turtle specimens of global scope in the three-story Pritchard home in Oveido, Florida. Decades before the founding of the Chelonian Research Institute, this material was already available for study. When PM got serious about reconstructing the phylogeny of softshelled turtles (Meylan, 1987), PCHP and Sibille invited me to stay with them and I spent days in the attic of their home going through boxes of softshell turtle bones, with Peter sharing his ideas about the evolution of the turtle shell. This was one of my first opportunities to see some of the amazing African flap-shelled softshells.

Although we in the sea turtle community like to claim PCHP as our own, you don't have to read much of his work before you realize that he wanted to be the renaissance man of ALL turtle biology. Turtle phylogeny studies took PM into paleontology and the earliest meetings of turtle paleontologists attended were additional occasions to learn

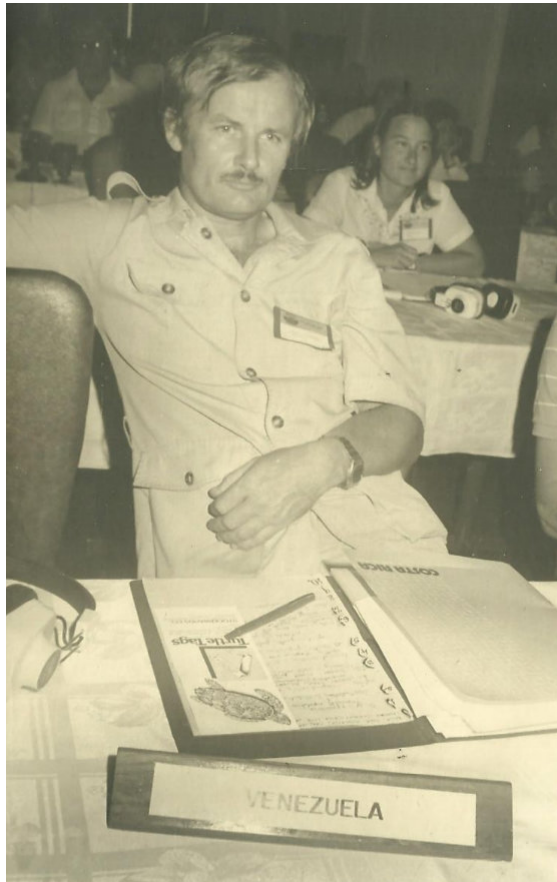


Fig.1. Peter Pritchard, 1983, WATS I (official WATS I photograph).



Fig. 2. Sibille Pritchard, 1983, WATS I (official WATS I photograph).

from PCHP. In October 1983, France Lapparent de Broin (Fig. 3; front row, right) organized the First International Symposium on Fossil Turtles in Paris. PCHP was there; he's in the back row (almost always the tallest in any photo!).

Again in 1987 (Fig. 4), he contributed to another fossil turtle symposium sponsored by Gene Gaffney (front and center, to left of sign) at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York. PCHP is in the second row between John Iverson and Anders Rhodin. For those interested in the history of turtle study in Africa (i.e., Loveridge and Williams, 1957), it should be pointed out that E.E. Williams, from Harvard, is the elderly gentleman at left in the second row (without glasses).

PCHP's encyclopedic knowledge of turtles was much appreciated and utilized by the scientific community. One sees this in his general, introductory treatments of turtles in edited volumes. He contributed a chapter on Taxonomy, evolution and zoogeography to the book *Turtles: Perspectives and Research* (Harless and Morelock, 1979), a chapter on Evolution, phylogeny, and current status to *The Biology of Sea Turtles* (Lutz and Musick, 1996), and, more recently, a chapter on the Evolution and structure of the turtle shell to *Biology of Turtles* (Wyneken, Godfrey and Bels, 2008).

Peter's enthusiasm for life and learning, and for turtles was immediately obvious to anyone who spoke to him. He enjoyed his work with turtles and found it immensely rewarding. We are all lucky to be able to pursue similar trails, if only in some small way. As a continuing tribute to PCHP, we should all strive to appreciate the interesting lives that we get to lead and the wonderful people that we get to meet along the way.



*Fig. 3. First International Symposium on Fossil Turtles Paris, October 1983 (MNHN-Paris photograph).*



*Fig. 4. AMNH Fossil Turtle Symposium 1987 (AMNH-New York photograph).*



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## Turtle Tales Told

**Jeff Miller**

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I did know Peter, but not well. We interacted at conferences, and I visited his collection near Orlando a few times to look at several specimens. He graciously allowed me to ferret through the bottles of pleurodires and cryptodires to find the specimens I wanted to examine. He let me cast hatchlings of several different species, which allowed me to finish the set of emerging sea turtle hatchlings that I made. He was always gracious toward me, curious about what I was doing, and we had several talks during which we shared stories as well as scientific information. I will treasure the image I have of him sitting in his office surrounded by books and artifacts from his adventures.



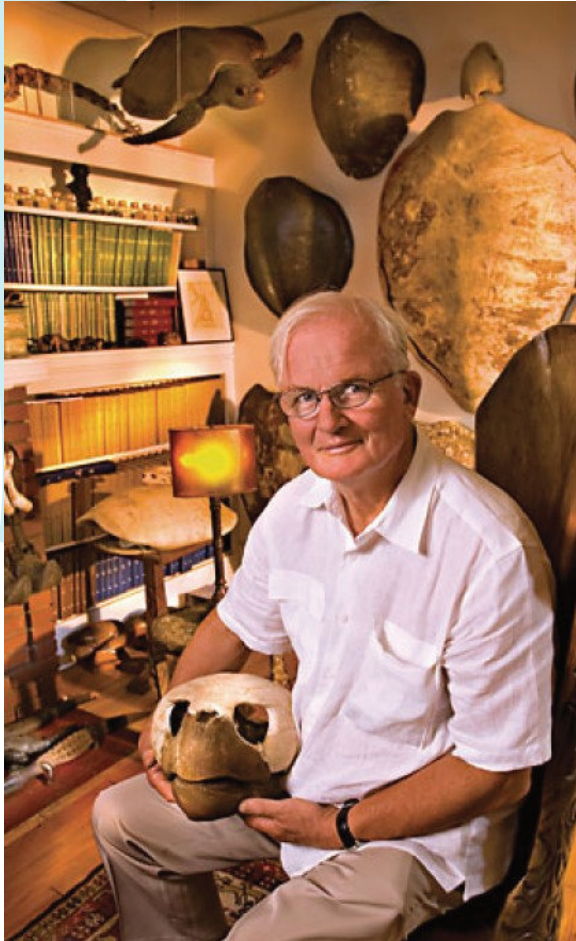
*(Photo: J. Miller)*



## Chelonian Research Institute (CRI): More than just turtles

### Jeanne A. Mortimer

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*Photo: From CRI website; taken by Jeffrey Camp)*

Dr Peter Charles Howard Pritchard was a man of immense intellect and wide-ranging interests.

With the support and assistance of his artistic and talented wife, Sibille Hart Pritchard, along with that of his many colleagues and admirers, Peter was able to build and develop the Chelonian Research Institute into a facility that would preserve his legacy while enabling him to share with others some of the things he loved most in the world, including:

- Natural habitats & global biodiversity;
- Natural history & taxonomy of all species of turtles and tortoises;
- Turtle artwork and artifacts collected during his extensive travels around the globe;
- Plants from the Palm and Cycad groups;
- Humanity in all its forms & aspects. Peter was a very kind person who loved people of all sorts and reveled in the diversity of humankind.



## Chelonian Research Institute



Chelonian Research Institute, located in Oviedo, Florida USA, was founded in 1997 by Dr Peter C H Pritchard to enhance the study of turtles and tortoises of the world.

## Sanctuary for Endangered Florida Habitats & Threatened Species



10 acres of natural Gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*) habitat



Peter & a cycad he imported & planted on the property decades earlier.

The CRI is located on a 10-acre, well forested urban oasis inhabited by a large natural population of the threatened gopher tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*). The species, native to southeastern USA, is seen as a keystone species because it digs burrows that provide shelter for at least 360 animal species.

**Special pond constructed and donated to house the captive Alligator snapping turtles (*Macrochelys temminckii*)**



*Beautiful new pond for the snappers*



*Snappers in their previous quarters*

Several Alligator snapping turtles had been living at the Institute for many decades and needed better housing. In 2017, an early admirer of Peter who had read Peter's book "Turtles of the World" as a young boy constructed and donated new facilities for the Alligator snappers of the CRI. This pool with a waterfall enhanced both the beauty of the grounds of the Institute and quality of life for the turtles.

**Other turtle residents at the Institute**



*Australian Snake-necked turtle (*Chelodina* spp)*

- Over the years, many species of live turtles, including some confiscated by federal authorities have lived at the facilities of the Institute.
- Peter enjoyed introducing this specimen to unsuspecting visitors.

14,500 catalogued specimens: especially skeletons  
270 of the world's 300 turtle species & every known genus of chelonian represented



CRI is the world's third largest turtle & tortoise museum collection  
(3<sup>rd</sup> only to Carnegie Museum and the Smithsonian)

No turtles killed to produce specimens for CRI: all are salvaged materials



*Sea turtle skulls*



*Peter admiring a selection of his sea turtle carapaces*

Selected Chitra skeletons reconstructed and displayed artistically & whimsically: from the ceilings...



Fossils and carapaces hanging from the walls, and giant tortoises standing on the floors...





*Research library: extensive collection of books and research papers*

Turtle art and artifacts from around the world adorn CRI

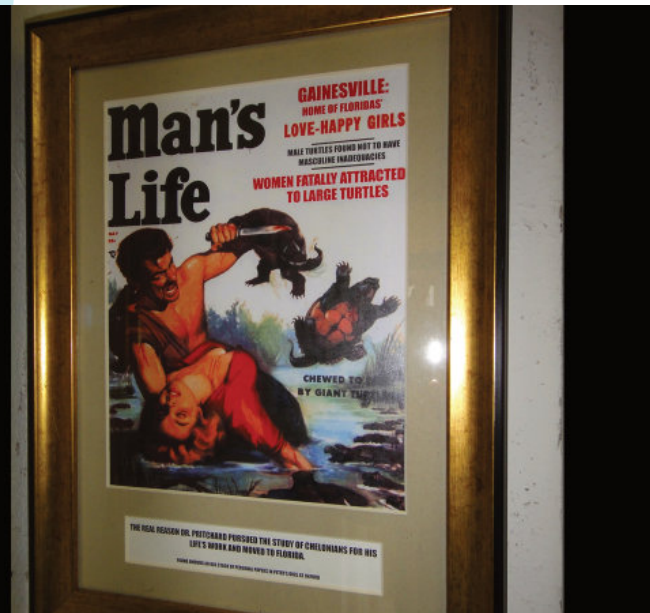




The tasteful décor is attributable in no small part to the artistic flair of Peter's wife, Sibille Hart Pritchard, whom he met in Guyana, South America in the 1960s.



A sense of beauty... and a sense of humor...



## Comfortable accommodations for visitors

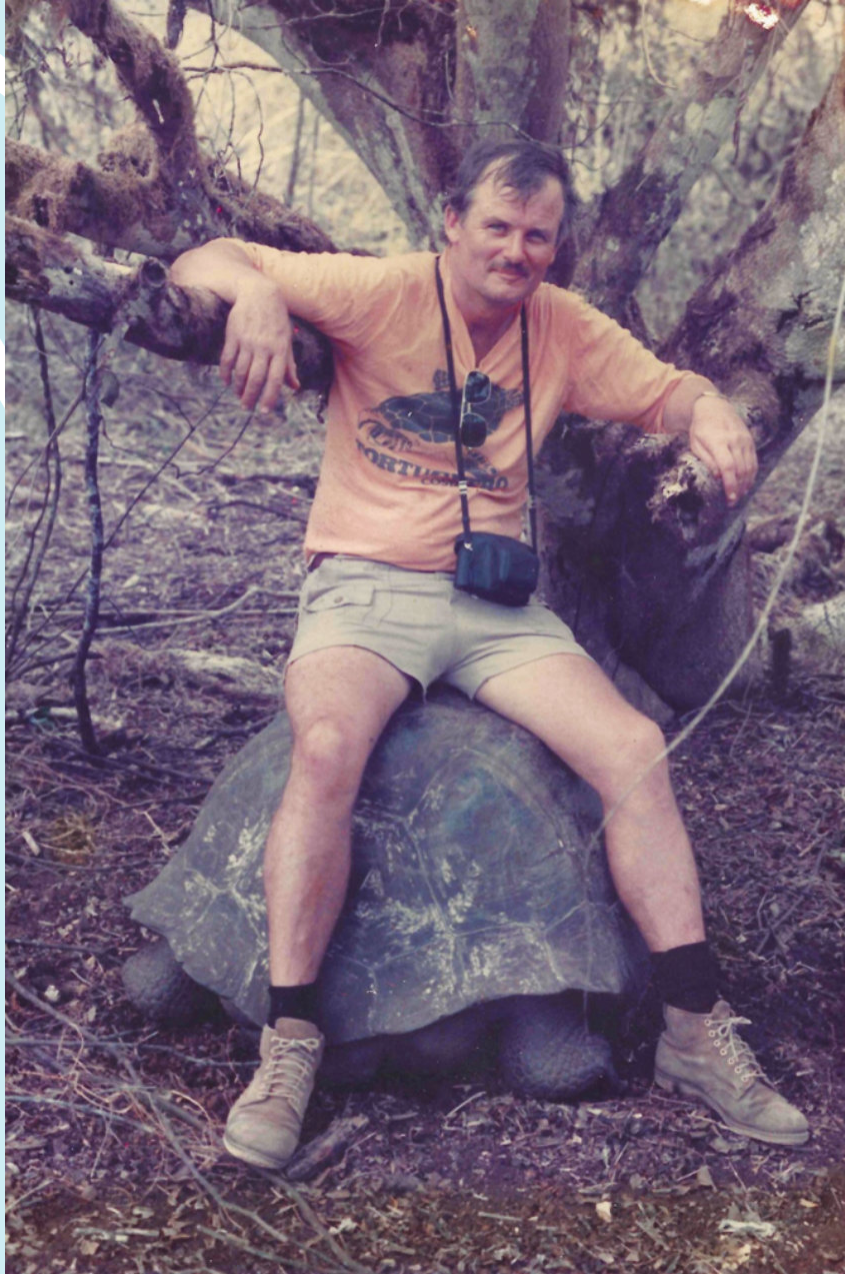


The Institute enabled Peter to indulge his warm and gregarious personality and to host visitors from around the world, who flocked to see him and to study his collection.

He was equally fascinated by both turtles and humans, and never too busy to spend time with friends and colleagues.

*Photos: J. A Mortimer, except where indicated*

*(Photo: PCHP's collection)*



**Dr. Peter Charles Howard Pritchard**

June 26, 1943 – February 25, 2020

Unique...  
An Inspiration...  
Never to be forgotten.



## My Memories of Peter

**Sally R. Murphy**

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It was January 1979 when I first met Peter Pritchard. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) had appointed a marine turtle recovery team for six species, and our South Carolina endangered species section was not notified or involved. Glenn Ulrich, in our Marine Division, was one of the appointees. That made sense because Glenn had worked with green turtles at the Cayman Islands Turtle Farm. My boss said they were having the first meeting in St. Petersburg, Florida, and I was to go down there and see “what they were up to.”

When I got to the NMFS regional office, the meeting was already underway in a packed room. I eased in and made my way to stand at the back. I knew only two people in that whole crowd: Billy Hillestad from Georgia and Glenn. Both were on the team. Team members were discussing who would be elected team leader. After coming to no consensus, they took a coffee break. During the break, Billy came up to me and said he intended to nominate me for team leader. I said, “Have you lost your mind?” I’ve only worked on the beach with loggerheads for two years and I am not even on the team.” He said it didn’t matter. We had a good program in South Carolina.

When the meeting reconvened, Billy gave a flowery speech extolling the virtues of the South Carolina Nongame and Endangered Species Program and put my name in for nomination. Another member of the team, Milton Kaufmann, representing Monitor International, nominated Dr. Peter Pritchard, who at that time worked for Florida Audubon Society. Peter had years of experience with sea turtles, but was not on the team either. I figured Peter would be their unanimous choice. But then they couldn’t decide and they didn’t want co-leaders.

Amazingly, they instructed Peter and me to go out in the hall and figure it out between us. Peter and I looked at each other and shrugged. He said, “I can’t do this, I’m in Guyana six months of the year.” And I said, “I can’t do this, I’m in the field six months of the year.” We then realized that these weren’t the same six months. So we talked about how we could fill in for each other and together we could cover the whole year. We also decided that if the team didn’t like our idea, then they would just have to vote. They accepted it and Peter and I became Co-Leaders the first Marine Turtle Recovery Team.

Back on the jet headed home, it hit me like a ton of bricks and I ordered a martini. I knew nothing about the other five species. Peter discussed various nesting beaches and I didn’t even know which continent they were on. “Another martini please, stewardess.” As we worked together, I found Peter to be good looking and utterly charming in that oh-so-British way.

Being Co-Leaders of the Recovery Team meant that we were also important representatives for sea turtle issues. In 1983, Peter and I were appointed to the “TED Voluntary Use Committee,” a group consisting of shrimper representatives, NGOs, and federal and state governments. Both of us felt that voluntary use would never work; that regulations were needed. However, we agreed that at least the shrimping industry should be given a chance to do the right thing before mandatory regulations were issued. They didn’t. In fact, one of their representatives was a very difficult person to deal with during the meetings and did everything in his power to scuttle the effort.

In 1985, Milton Kauffmann was organizing WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network) and Peter and I both became members of that recovery team. The other members were quite a collection of, shall we say, “characters.” Peter’s firsthand knowledge of the nesting beaches, culture of the peoples in the region, and how their governments functioned were invaluable to our task of writing action plans.

On March 1, 1989, a National Research Council committee was formed and charged with the task of: 1) Reviewing scientific and technical information pertaining to the conservation of sea turtles and the causes and significance of sea turtle mortality, including that caused by commercial trawling; 2) Reviewing information on the effectiveness of current and needed programs to increase turtle populations; and 3) preparing a report to be used by the Secretary of Commerce to assess the effectiveness of and need for regulations requiring the use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) by commercial shrimp trawlers.

The committee was comprised of 10 distinguished scientists, only four of which were sea turtle biologists: Drs. Karen Bjorndal, David Owens, Jim Richardson, and Peter Pritchard. In April 1990, the committee published their report. They wrote: “The committee’s analyses led it to conclude that for juveniles, subadults, and breeders in the coastal waters, the most important human-associated source of mortality is incidental capture in shrimp trawls, which accounts for more deaths than all other human activities combined.”

During all the long meetings and writing assignments of the recovery team, Peter’s stamina held sway. Through the contentious negotiations over TEDs, I never saw him lose his temper or say anything rude. And dealing with the “antics” of the WIDECAST members, he maintained his focus to the task at hand. His immense knowledge was a given, but in any difficult situation, he was always the consummate gentleman and a treasured colleague and friend to me.



*Banquet at the 13th International Sea Turtle Symposium at Hilton Head Island (Photo: T. Murphy).*



## Notes from DWO on PCH Pritchard

**Dave Owens**

*College of Charleston Marine Lab, Charleston, South Carolina, USA  
(email: [OwensD@cofc.edu](mailto:OwensD@cofc.edu))*

Peter Pritchard was my muse, my turtle encyclopedia, and my confidant. I know, I learned much later that he treated everybody, not just me, with such great care and consideration. But he made you feel special and even silly questions seemed so significant.

I first met Peter at the July 1976 Jensen Beach, Florida, sea turtle meeting, the first such meeting I ever attended. Peter gave a brilliant talk on the sea turtles and conservation issues of Micronesia (Pritchard 1978). Because I had spent three years in the Peace Corps in Fiji we had a tremendous conversation on Pacific cultures and sea turtles. The conversation was particularly robust because we were joined by Doc Ehrhart and some of Archie Carr's current and past graduate students. Not to be a name-dropper, but the reader may have heard of Anne Meylan, Karen Bjorndal, and Jeanne Mortimer. For a guy aching to be accepted into the sea turtle research community this was like dying and going to heaven.

A couple of years later when trying to get my first research grant funded as a new professor, Peter sent me a three-page, single-spaced, hand-typed critique of my draft proposal. Peter said I was indeed not crazy to try to study imprinting. His comments were encouraging, very biologically insightful, quite tough on the many dumb ideas, and yet completely upbeat. Thank you Peter!, as we did eventually get the funding.

When I later moaned to him that I was the only reproductive biologist on the planet who had never seen the inside of an adult sea turtle, he immediately sent me to Oaxaca, Mexico, to collaborate with his team of Georgita Ruiz and Angie McGhee, who were stationed there at the infamous ridley slaughter facility where they were documenting for Rene Marquez and Peter the tremendous harvest pressure being put on that arribada population. While it was fundamentally a gross place in 1978, it was completely legal at that time in Mexico. We learned more in a week about turtle anatomy than I had learned in four years of Ph.D. research (Owens 1980).

Not long after the first trip to Oaxaca I was struggling again to find funding to organize a conference for the American Society of Zoologists on sea turtle reproduction and behavior. This was a cool idea and the presenters were all excited because, in addition to talking turtle science until we were blue in the face (this was before ISTS was invented), we were using the opportunity to honor Dr. Carr on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. When both the US Sea Grant and the US National Science Foundation turned us down for funding, I went into desperation mode and called Peter, with only six months until the planned Tampa Bay, Florida, Christmas holiday 1979 meeting. P.C.H. Pritchard to the rescue again! He recommended and co-sponsored with us a quick proposal to Robert Truland's Chelonia Institute, who came through for us and provided both travel funds and publication costs for the conference proceedings. Drs. Carr, Hendrickson, Hirth, Mrosovsky, and several others gave seminal talks, and Peter pulled it all together with a talk and paper at the end of the session on sea turtle conservation: practices and problems (Pritchard 1980).

In the mid and late 1980s, Peter served on the Kemp's ridley recovery team sponsored by the USFWS, NMFS, and the Mexican Instituto Nacional de la Pesca. Many scientists thought, back in 1985, that the Kemp's ridley was by then a lost cause. Why

waste the effort? Not Peter. His persistent optimism and welcomed and distracting stories about his work on ridleys kept us all in the game. A very useful report and a critically important international collaboration was a key result of that team effort (Owens et al. 1992). However, the real game-changer was the next major scientific panel study/report sponsored by the US National Academy of Science. By 1987, in the US, sea turtle conservation was not just controversial, it had become confrontational. Fishermen were blocking major port channels and the US Coast Guard had to be called in to enforce the law. We all wanted to work closely with fishermen and come up with logical compromises. Peter was particularly keen that we should be able to have both viable shrimp and viable turtle populations in the same oceans.



*Peter and President Tee John Mialjevich of the Concerned Shrimpers of America discussing the relative merits of Turtle Excluder Devices on board the R.V. Georgia Bulldog in 1988 (Photo: D. Owens).*



*Peter and Ms. Mialjevich discussing the relative merits of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) on shrimp boats aboard the R.V. Georgia Bulldog in 1988 (Photo: D. Owens).*

In the photos above Peter is on the deck of the R.V. Georgia Bulldog shrimp boat as we demonstrated the ability of Turtle Excluder Devices to both get rid of turtles and capture a high-quality shrimp product. Onboard the boat for the TED demonstration were President Tee John Mialjevich of the Concerned Shrimpers of America and his 13-year-old daughter. After listening to a full day's worth of Peter's stories I was convinced that she had been converted into a turtle lover. At the end of the day we sent her off back to Louisiana to keep working on her Daddy. After nearly three year's effort, the final report of the Panel (Magnuson et al. 1990) pulled together all the data on stranding, shrimp boat onboard observers, and turtle mortalities to produce the most convincing data summary and recommendations to date on the role of poor shrimping practices and the endangered sea turtles. I am convinced this report really made a difference. Soon after the report came out, new U.S. legislation protecting sea turtles was passed.

These are just a few of the P.C.H. Pritchard stories that I can remember. We are so lucky to have had the greatest turtle scholar ever also be a most fantastic guy. He is truly missed.

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*Peter having a deep discussion about commercial tortoiseshell (bekko) and green turtle scutes with Bob Shoop and Carol Ruckdeschel at a sea turtle meeting held in Florida during April 1984 (Photo: D. Owens).*





## Peter in Costa Rica

**Frank V. Paladino**

*Purdue University, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA (email: [paladino@pfw.edu](mailto:paladino@pfw.edu))*

I've known Peter for 35 years, and we first met in a Bar in San Jose Costa Rica called the Key Largo where he tended to hang out when in town.



*Peter, Maria Teresa Koberg, and Frank  
(Photo: F. Paladino).*

Maria Teresa Koberg was the Assistant to Mario Boza who at the time was Vice Minister of the Environment in Costa Rica. We went out to Tamarindo, as well as Playa Grande, where we explored the leatherback population there in 1985. Camping with Peter was an interesting adventure and exploring the Pacific coast with him was a treat. On a dare from Peter I climbed a tree and caught the pictured iguana. I'm standing on the old runway in front of the old Tortuguero turtle station.



*Frank and the iguana (Photo: S. Morreale).*



## Peter Pritchard: A great among the greats

**Nicolas J. Pilcher**

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(email: [npilcher@mrf-asia.org](mailto:npilcher@mrf-asia.org))*

I have several 'Peter' stories and memories, even though by the time I arrived on the sea turtle scene, he was already great among the greats. When I rumbled up to my first International Sea Turtle Symposium (ISTS), meeting Peter was on my bucket list – though I was not aware they weren't referred to as bucket lists back then... I had questions to ask. I needed to meet the man. But I walked among giants and did not know a soul in the place. When I introduced myself, Peter was as welcoming as could be. He regaled me with stories of SE Asian tortoises – species I had never heard of, nor was conversant in. But it mattered little. Peter was, well..., Peter. He sat with me and pointed me in the right direction here and there, and offered encouragement in the friendliest of manners.

Years later, in 2003, I found myself hosting the ISTS in Kuala Lumpur. I had flippantly posted online that as a participant all one had to do was 'walk up to immigration and be welcomed with traditional Malaysian hospitality', or something to that effect. Never did it occur to me that some visitors would need yellow fever vaccinations. And one of Peter's travel companions had been detained at the airport for lack of a valid document. Peter was angry as hell. He tracked me down and let me know in no uncertain terms that this was my doing and I had better rectify it. He cared not for himself, but for his colleague, stuck at an airport in an unfamiliar country. He watched over me as I made phone call after phone call, until I reached the Deputy Minister of Health and explained our predicament. He was released on account of that call and Peter's insistence, and had to report in daily to the Ministry to say he had no symptoms. I cringe at the thought of not solving that one....

A year or so later Peter hosted an young MSc student of mine, took her into his home, and made her welcome in Florida, where as a native of Borneo with limited command of English, she was a turtle out of water. She obviously struck a chord, as she went on to do some work for him on tortoises in China, expanding her reach and experience. Peter guided her with patience and fatherly care.

At every ISTS we bumped into each other, Peter was always welcoming and found time for a quick chat. He knew everyone by name, and gave a bit of his time to all those who sought his counsel. I was one of those young, needy people once, and am certain that my role in the sea turtle science and conservation community benefitted immensely from his wisdom and guidance and friendship.



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### Honoring the Legacy of Peter C.H. Pritchard

**Anders G.J. Rhodin<sup>1</sup>, Jeffrey A. Seminoff<sup>2</sup>, Russell A. Mittermeier<sup>3</sup>, & Eric V. Goode<sup>4</sup>**

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*Peter C.H. Pritchard and an adult male Western Santa Cruz Giant Tortoise, *Chelonoidis porteri*, in La Reserva, Santa Cruz, Galápagos Islands, Ecuador, 1982 (© A. G.J. Rhodin).*

*“Many express surprise that a career based on seeking to discover, observe and understand the shelled reptiles could have any breadth or depth; but I can assure such doubters that my life and travels have been joyous and far-reaching. For it is only travel with a theme that takes one to the remote corners of the world where the voyager, simply because he is a rare species, is embraced as a visitor from the outside world, with home hospitality to be offered, with stories to tell and hear, and meals, libations, gifts, and friendship to share.”*

*Peter C.H. Pritchard  
Tales from the Thébaïde: Reflections of a Turtleman.*

You never forget the first time you meet one of your heroes. Sometimes it's a movie star, sometimes a rock star or prominent politician or world leader, but for us one of them was a turtle man: the one and only Peter C.H. Pritchard. As arguably the world's most famous turtle conservationist and biologist, he has forever left an indelible mark on each of us and helped inspire our careers and passions.

In this issue of *Chelonian Conservation and Biology* (CCB), we honor his memory and lasting legacy. He was an iconic giant in our community—one of the founding fathers of turtle and tortoise conservation, who passed away at his home in Oviedo, Florida, on 25 February 2020 at the age of 76 after a long and debilitating illness. We are deeply saddened to say goodbye to Peter, who, along with John Behler, was one of the initial editors joining Rhodin when he founded CCB in 1993. He was always a close colleague and trusted friend to us at both Chelonian Research Foundation and Turtle Conservancy, and a hero and longtime inspiration to all of us. The entire CCB Editorial Team and many authors of papers in this issue here express their lasting respects for his contributions and broad influence.

Peter was one of the world's foremost experts on the history, biology, and conservation of the world's turtles and tortoises, as well as their cultural and ecological significance. For many, his books and articles were foundational resources for several generations of enthusiasts, scientists, and conservationists. Throughout his prolific career, he generously shared his knowledge and passion with many people. He founded the Chelonian Research Institute in Oviedo, Florida, which houses one of the world's most comprehensive turtle and tortoise research collections of its kind, inviting researchers and students from around the world to visit and study.

A pioneering conservationist, he raised awareness at a time when there were very few conservation initiatives for freshwater turtles and tortoises, and spent over five decades working to protect them. Peter encouraged people around the world to care for turtles, and inspired generations of conservationists. His contributions to the world of conservation will live on for as long as there are turtles and people who love them.

Many of us in the greater turtle conservation and biology community were deeply inspired by him, and he most generously shared of himself and his passion for turtles with all of us. He introduced us to the wonder of turtle diversity and natural history through his seminal 1967 book *Living Turtles of the World*, followed by his even more impactful 1979 book, the *Encyclopedia of Turtles* and many other major books and articles over his lifetime. For many of us he was not only a catalyzing inspiration and much-admired role model, but also a trusted mentor and close friend and energetic travel companion to many remote and wild places on Earth, always in enthusiastic and passionate pursuit of fascinating turtles or tortoises. He loved the natural world and the people in it, always celebrating the diversity of turtles and other animal life, as well as the people he met and befriended. He treated everyone as equals and saw in all the potentials of friendship, camaraderie, and collegiality. He was a true Renaissance man with broad interests in humanity, the natural world, and art in its many forms.

Peter Charles Howard Pritchard was born in Hertfordshire, England in 1943. He was the son of Jack Pritchard, a Rhodes Scholar medical doctor of Australian origins who was Chair of the Anatomy Department at Queen's University in the United Kingdom. He was the great-grandson of Henry Edmunds, one of Thomas Edison's assistants, the first salesman of the light bulb, and also the man who famously introduced Charles Royce to Henry Rolls, of the Rolls Royce luxury car and high-powered engine fame. Peter's family moved to Belfast, Northern Ireland, when he was 9, and at age 13 he attended the local Campbell College. Peter's higher academic career started not in biology, but

instead in chemistry, when he was admitted to Oxford University in 1961, where he earned a B.A. (with Honors) and an M.A. in chemistry and biochemistry.

During his time at Oxford his interests became increasingly focused on biology, perhaps stemming from his first trip to the United States in 1962, when he explored the swamps outside Atlanta, Georgia, and eventually made his way to New York City. In 1964 he made his first visit to British Guiana (now Guyana), where he met his future wife, the Guyanan journalist Sibille Hart, and afterward returned to New York and New Jersey, where he met with Herb Axelrod, the famous aquarium man and publisher at T.F.H. publishers. By that time Herb had already agreed to publish Peter's first book, *Living Turtles of the World*, which came out in 1967.

By 1965 Peter had relocated to Florida from the UK to begin his Ph.D. studies at the University of Florida as a student of the famous turtle man Archie Carr, where he completed his dissertation on the systematics and reproductive cycles of the ridley sea turtle genus *Lepidochelys*. After graduation, Peter worked at World Wildlife Fund, then, in 1973, became an officer of the Florida Audubon Society, where he eventually ascended to acting President. He was the second Chair (1985–87) of the short-lived IUCN/SSC Freshwater Chelonian Specialist Group, succeeding Ed Moll, and then he and Ian Swingland Co-Chaired the newly combined IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (1987–90), before being succeeded by John Behler (1990–2005), who was first joined and eventually succeeded by Rhodin (2000–2012) and then Peter Paul van Dijk and Brian Horne (2012–2016), and since 2017, Craig Stanford.

Peter's globetrotting turtle adventures started soon after he went to Oxford, and by the time *Living Turtles of the World* was published he had been to South America on three occasions as well as the Middle East. Since then he traveled to over 100 countries and saw almost all species of turtles in the wild. Collectively these experiences helped Peter gain an unrivaled knowledge of all things turtle. Combined with his penchant for scientific scribing and story telling, this resulted in a prolific publication list. For many of us, *Living Turtles of the World* (1967) was our first book on turtles, for others it was *Encyclopedia of Turtles* (1979). But there was so much more: *Turtles of Venezuela* (1984, with Pedro Trebbau), *The Alligator Snapping Turtle: Biology and Conservation* (1989), *The Galápagos Tortoises: Nomenclatural and Survival Status* (1996), *The Pinta Tortoise: Globalization and the Extinction of Island Species* (2005), *Cleopatra the Turtle Girl: Travels and Adventures with Turtles in Guyana* (2006), *Rafetus: The Curve of Extinction* (2012), and his autobiographical *Tales from the Thébaïde: Reflections of a Turtleman* (2007).

In 1998, Peter founded the Chelonian Research Institute in Oviedo, Florida—near Orlando—which today is an incredible scientific research resource and collection repository with about 18,000 preserved (dry and wet) turtle specimens, extensive library and media (slides and videos), and a plethora of turtle ephemera, art, and artifacts. Plans are underway to relocate this comprehensive collection to the Turtle Conservancy's campus at Twin Peaks, Ojai, California, where it will continue to be curated and serve as a centerpiece of their turtle and tortoise conservation and research center, further cementing and preserving Peter Pritchard's lasting legacy.

Through his turtle exploits and travels, Peter also gained a level of notoriety and fame that is rare in the turtle world. Peter was honored with the scientific names of three turtles: *Chelodina pritchardi* (Pritchard's Snake-necked Turtle from New Guinea described by Rhodin in 1994), *Podocnemis pritchardi* (a fossil turtle from the Miocene of Colombia described by Roger Wood in 1997), and *Mauremys pritchardi* (a taxonomically invalid Asian hybrid described by William McCord in 1997). He was

recognized as “Champion of the Wild” by the Discovery Television Channel and as “Hero of the Planet” by Time Magazine and “Floridian of the Year” by the Orlando Sentinel, both in 2000. He received the prestigious Behler Turtle Conservation Award in 2008, awarded by the IUCN/SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and the Turtle Survival Alliance. He was further honored with the International Sea Turtle Society’s Lifetime Achievement Award in 2011 and received the Turtle Conservancy’s Conservation Achievement Award in 2014.

Even with his luminary status, Peter was a kind and gentle soul, friendly to everyone, and always with turtle tales to share. He will be sorely missed by many—especially the conservationists and cheloniophiles among us—and most acutely by his wife Sibille and family, as well as his many close friends and collaborating colleagues in the global chelonian conservation and biology community. He was always “Mr. Turtle” to most of us—and we deeply mourn his passing. For many, he was simply the greatest turtle man that ever lived. He was a hero and popularizer of turtles and their diversity and a passionate advocate for their conservation, and he helped all of us realize his vision by inspiring several generations of turtle aficionados.

Peter’s passing is a tragic loss to the turtle world and beyond, but we trust and know that his enthusiasm and inspiration will persist through those following in his footsteps. His legacy shall live on and Chelonian Research Foundation and the Turtle Conservancy and the entire Editorial Team of CCB will do their part to ensure that it does. For those of us who knew him the longest and closest, we bid thee a fond farewell, Peter, and thank you for being you, and for guiding us along the way.



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**In Honor of Peter C.H. Pritchard**

**Anders G.J. Rhodin**

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From the beginning, the images flow,  
of your passion for turtles, your desire to know,  
delving and digging, defining, discovering,  
describing the details—and turtles promoting.

From Britain to America, from the cold to the warmth,  
you left your home country for Florida's shores,  
the first book you published, *Living Turtles of the World*,  
promoted your knowledge—your passions unfurled.

Sharing your knowledge with students and colleagues  
among them, myself, inspired by your guidance,  
mentored and guided by a colleague, a friend,  
the diversity of turtles I began to comprehend.

From your home in Oviedo, your work flourished widely,  
the Encyclopedia of Turtles, and saving Kemp's Ridley,  
writing and traveling, popularizing and promoting—  
Alligator Snappers, Leatherbacks, Galápagos tortoises—  
and Rafetus softshells, their tragic decline describing.

Your museum and Chelonian Research Institute created,  
and named Florida's Man of the Year, honor abounded,  
then the Behler Award, further lauded in your sphere,  
in resounding acclamation by your chelonian peers.

But the passage of time unfolds, unrelenting, unforgiving,  
impacting our age, and our years ever mounting;  
but time is our friend, not our foe—  
each day is a gift, not a woe—  
may our time and days continue to grow.

Now, as always, the images flow,  
of your passion for turtles, your desire to know,  
delving and digging, defining, discovering,  
describing the details—and turtles promoting.

Thank you, Peter—Mr. Turtle—my friend,  
for all you have done and all you have been—  
a mentor, a colleague, a guide—  
and always—a friend.



## **Peter Pritchard**

### **Peter Richardson**

*Marine Conservation Society, United Kingdom  
(email: [Peter.Richardson@mcsuk.org](mailto:Peter.Richardson@mcsuk.org))*

Dr. Peter Pritchard was a giant in his field and an important influence for me, but I will always remember him for his kindness and generosity.

We first met back in the mid-1990s when Peter visited Sri Lanka with his partner and soul mate, Sibille, to present at an international reptile Symposium. Sue and I were young conservationists, at the beginning of our careers, working with our friends and colleagues at the local Turtle Conservation Project (TCP).

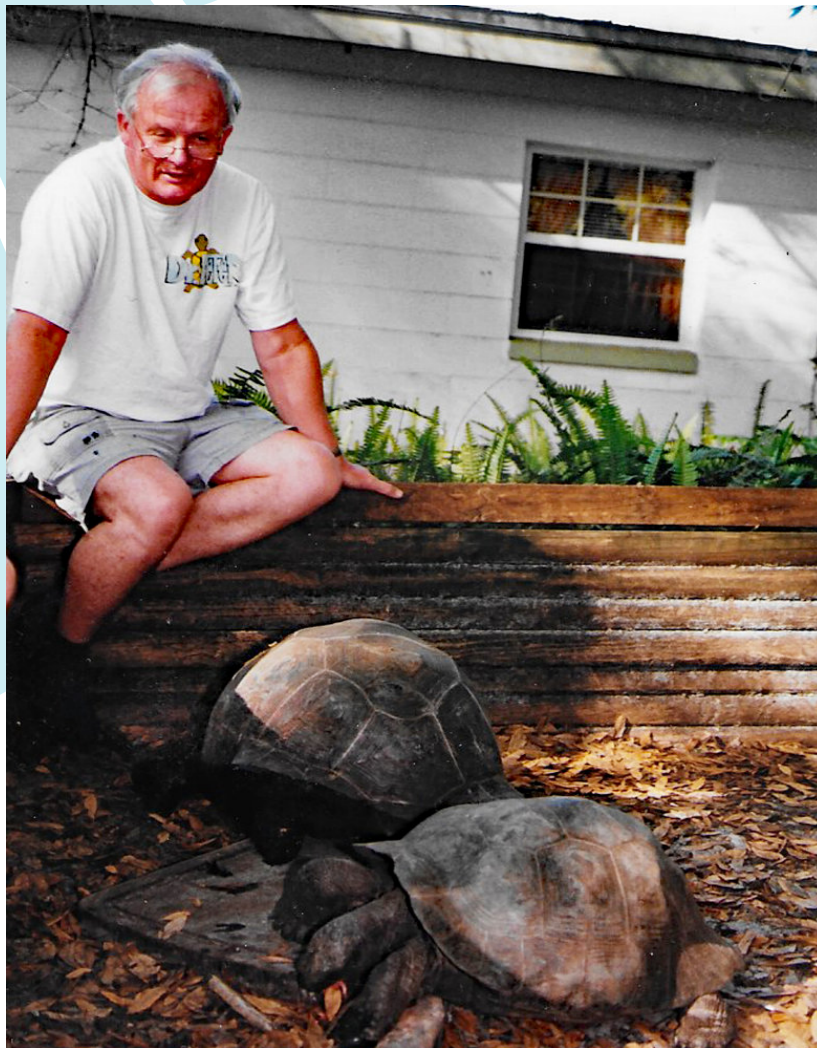
After the conference, Peter and Sibille headed down to Rekawa, an undeveloped and remote rural coastal village where the TCP had set up a community-based conservation and research programme at Sri Lanka's largest green turtle rookery. As part of the project, we were training local youth to run guided nature walks for potential tourism ventures, and while in Rekawa, Peter and Sibille agreed to be our guinea pigs, the first foreign guests to be guided around the village. Our young guides were nervous and shy, intimidated at first by the towering and jovial Englishman in his white linen suit, and Sibille, his ebullient and colourful wife. Peter and Sibille were, of course, kind and gracious, encouraging and patient, clearly enjoying the sun-dappled village lanes and gentle descriptions of local flowers and butterflies, langurs, and lizards, as well as the wonderful Rekawa lagoon and spectacular turtle beach. The walk went on for longer than expected, so many questions, but by the end of the trip, the whole group was happily laughing together. Our young guides had visibly grown in confidence, delighted to have shared their beautiful environment with these exotic, worldly outsiders who genuinely cared.

We kept in touch, and the following year I headed to Florida to present at the Sea Turtle Symposium in Orlando with the TCP's Thushan Kapurusinghe and Damitha Hewavitharana. As a small NGO, we had struggled to find funds for accommodation, but thankfully Peter and Sibille generously offered to host us at their Oviedo house. After a long flight, we stepped out of arrivals to be greeted by Peter smiling, again in his white linen suit, who excitedly escorted us to an awaiting vintage Rolls Royce and he drove us to his home. The Roller was a surprise, but what a home! For a young turtle nerd it was Aladdin's Cave, a wall-to-wall natural heritage museum and international art gallery. Peter and Sibille patiently humoured our many questions about the abundance of treasures gathered during their extensive travels around the world, as well as the various turtles, tortoises, and terrapins living in the gardens.

For the duration of the Symposium, Peter gladly taxied us to and from the venue in his outrageous motor, even abstaining on banquet night when I over-indulged, ensuring I got home safe, albeit slightly worse for wear. Thushan, Damitha, and I stayed on for a few days after the Symposium to explore Florida, using the Pritchard's home as a base and borrowing one of their cars to drive into the wilderness – we experienced some incredible nature, a truly unforgettable experience, only possible because of the Pritchards' kindness and generosity.



Our paths crossed every now and then in subsequent years, after Sue and I left Sri Lanka and pursued careers in conservation elsewhere. We usually met at the turtle Symposia, including the Crete conference in 2006 when Peter handed Sue her Best Student Paper award. I last met Peter at the New Orleans Symposium in 2014, where I bumped into him carefully perusing the posters, always curious, always ready to learn about his beloved turtles, always ready to support those at the start of their journey. Peter and Sibille helped me at the start of my journey, and for that I will always be grateful – thank you.



*(Photo: P. Richardson)*



## A Tribute to Peter Pritchard.

**James Perran Ross**

*Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, USA (email: [pross@ufl.edu](mailto:pross@ufl.edu))*

I first met Peter Pritchard in early 1972 when we were graduate students at the University of Florida. He had just returned from fieldwork in Guyana and shared an old house near a pond with a couple of eccentric roommates, a large and reputedly savage Macaw parrot, and several live turtles. When he learned of my recent arrival from Western Australia, he immediately inquired about the possibility of obtaining live specimens of Australian turtles for his collection. Unfortunately, regulations then and now restricted exports and I couldn't provide the snake necked tortoise, *Chelodina oblonga*, that he coveted. But the macaw turned out to be bribable with cheese crackers, and Peter and I became friends and remained so until his recent death. Our interests also converged around marine turtles, in which we were both inspired by Archie Carr. Peter's knowledge of turtles was comprehensive, but his enclosure security was less so and a number of his exotic specimens escaped and made their way to the nearby pond, where they may remain to this day. Fortunately, they were single specimens of each species and unable to breed. Peter was tall, quintessentially English, with an accent to match, mysteriously self-supporting (speculation included an English lordship, a remittance man, and Wall street wizard- none true to my knowledge), charming, erudite, and a great raconteur; he seemed the renaissance man to we lesser students.

'Our careers continued to cross, as IUCN Specialist group members, sea turtle conservation commentators, and aficionados of remote places and unusual people. Peter was not only a theorist but a staunch foot soldier in the fight for turtle conservation. He engaged with Cayman turtle farm owners at a time when the rest of us abhorred them. He also initiated discussions with Antonio Suarez, mastermind of the Mexican Olive Ridley slaughter, and arranged for him to attend the World Conference on Sea Turtle Conservation in Washington DC in 1979. Unfortunately, Don Suarez was wanted by US authorities and a posse of federal agents turned up at the meeting to arrest him. Bound by his concepts of honor and hospitality, Peter whisked Suarez out the back door of the auditorium, drove him to a private airport and arranged a charter flight out of the country. Whether these pragmatic and civilized overtures of Peter's were influential I cannot say, but both issues were finally resolved in favor of sea turtle conservation.

I watched in awe as Peter produced the Encyclopedia of Turtles, numerous reports and papers, and finally established his museum in Oviedo, Florida, where his lifetime of specimens, mementos, and knowledge is archived. It is a remarkable and eclectic collection and a much clearer comment on the man than any I can make. What impresses me most is not specifically the turtle specimens, although those are unique and extensive, but the wide variety of other 'turtle stuff'. Carvings, images, artifacts, traps, harpoons and decoys, photos, a startling array of turtle based pornography, and a tremendous amount of material about the people who live with and know turtles. This in my view is the deeper Peter Pritchard, not just an expert on turtle taxonomy, systematics, ecology, and conservation, but a man deeply interested in the relationship between turtles and people in which he participated in a deeply emotional way. He was also engagingly idiosyncratic, shown by his quite serious and well-maintained collections of single flip flops (rubber sandals) and armless dolls, all retrieved beachcombing the world's turtle beaches. We had several deep, although I confess alcoholically fueled, discussions on why left-footed sandals greatly outnumber right-

footed and why dolls arms fall off but their heads remain – matters of deep interest and philosophy. As a closing anecdote, at the International Sea Turtle Symposium in Mexico, a rubbing from the gravestone of Richard Kemp, from whom the turtle is named, was offered at the auction. Peter wanted it desperately for his new museum and knowing this, I kept outbidding him, to his obvious annoyance. We bid the thing up to an outrageous price – several hundred dollars for a piece of wax paper, which I won. As always he was graceful in defeat and ecstatic when I presented it back to him for the museum, where it remains. The last time I saw him, he was happily feeding lettuce to his captive red-footed and gopher turtles. Always gracious, witty, urbane, thoughtful, immensely knowledgeable, but also filled with a childlike wonder at the marvelous creatures he loved so well. We will not see his like again. Vale Peter.



## Peter Pritchard's Contribution Towards the Conservation of Sea Turtles in Mexico

**Georgita Ruiz**

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An International Wildlife Magazine article on sea turtles by Peter Pritchard where he described the different species and their world status in 1978, when I was just graduating from veterinary school, led me to my first field job with sea turtles, which led me to the beginning of a long quest for their conservation in México. In the article, the section on the critically endangered Kemp's ridley described how an amateur film by Andrés Herrera in 1947 showed, what was estimated to be, nearly 40,000 Kemp's ridleys nesting on the same day at Rancho Nuevo Beach in the state of Tamaulipas, in the Gulf of Mexico, and how that nesting population had dwindled to a few hundred during the mid and late 70s.

It took 16 years after the historic film of the Kemp's ridley synchronized mass nesting (known as "arribada") in 1947 before Archie Carr (1963) and Henry Hildebrand (1963) published articles on the event and made the news public to the sea turtle specialists.

Three years later, in 1966, René Márquez from the National Institute of Fisheries of the Ministry of Fisheries in Mexico, began field nest protection efforts on a 25-kilometer stretch of beach in Rancho Nuevo to protect them from losses to predation and human poaching, which had, no doubt, contributed to the drastic drop recorded, from 6,000 to less than 1,000 nests over the following 12 years (Márquez *et al.* 1999).

This set the scene for a small group of concerned individuals from various institutions including people like Archie Carr from the University of Florida under whom Peter had studied, Peter Pritchard himself from Florida Audubon Society, Jack Woody from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, René Marquez from the Fisheries Institute in Mexico, Patrick Burchfield from the Gladys Porter Zoo, amongst many other concerned individuals and institutions such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), to negotiate with the various authorities of USA and Mexico, to establish a Binational Program for the Conservation of the Kemp's ridley sea turtles. Meanwhile, as a result of in-country lobbying efforts, the Mexican Government officially declared a Wildlife Refuge for the protection of the Kemp's ridley Sea Turtle and its nests on a 25-kilometer stretch of beach in Rancho Nuevo, Tamaulipas. The bi-national Mexico-US Kemp's ridley sea turtle conservation project began the following Spring of 1978 with a well-equipped field crew of professionals from Mexico and the USA to protect the nesting population and its nests, which continues to this day.

Peter Pritchard was appointed the field coordinator during the first few years of the binational project. Having been Archie Carr's student, he was well aware of the situation of the Kemp's ridley and had cultivated a friendship with René Márquez with whom, having overcome the logistical challenge of getting there, he had visited the beach. After I had read his article and sent my resume applying for the field position, Dr. Pritchard's letter of approval was the beginning of a joint struggle, with many others, towards the conservation of sea turtles.

A few days after we had set up our tents in Rancho Nuevo and started the work, Dr. Pritchard arrived in camp together with his wife Sibille and their two young sons, Sebastian (8 years old) and Dominique (3 years old). Peter's tall figure was impressive enough and contrasted with his very petite wife from British Guiana.

His magnetic gift of eloquence combined with his Oxford accent made him a joy to listen to, and we spent many hours at camp talking about sea turtles their conservation in Mexico. His knowledge, perception, and understanding of the conservation needs for these and other species were most encouraging to me especially since I had only seen sea turtles while gathering blood samples for my thesis in the slaughterhouse on the coast of Oaxaca, where everyone seemed to think there was nothing wrong with such an operation.

As time would tell, this binational effort was the beginning of one of the few true success stories where the population tendency of a species is reverted from heading towards abysmal and irreversible extinction to the trend towards its recovery. The 790 nests collected during the 1979 season was the highest number of nests protected for the next decade of uninterrupted efforts to recover the species and which did not appear to begin to show results until 1988 where an 18% increase in the number of nests was seen over the next ten years.

This was also a result of expanding the protected beach area and a consequence of efforts made to reduce the incidental capture of sea turtles by shrimp trawlers through the implementation of sea turtle excluder devices in the Gulf of Mexico. After a couple of decades of these constant yet costly efforts, the number of nests finally surpassed 10,000 between 2003-05. Few conservation efforts can boast of such a “success story” as this one, however, as Peter would say, it does not mean that the battle has been won, and it must continue.

Peter described Mexico's relationship with sea turtles as somewhat "schizophrenic", because on the east coast it was participating in outstanding conservation to recover the Kemp's ridley sea turtle, while on the Pacific Coast, at the same time in the decade of the '70s, legal quotas of up to 80,000 turtles were issued each year with devastating effects on the Pacific green turtle (*Chelonia mydas agassizii*) populations nesting in Michoacán and almost extermination of nesting populations of olive ridley in the states of Sinaloa, Nayarit, Jalisco, Guerrero; the same management strategy was also applied to the last, abundant olive ridley populations left in the state of Oaxaca.

The reason why this population had held out longer than the others was because it was the last place made accessible by the coastal highway, which was just being built in Oaxaca. However, the legal slaughter had already begun in the legal slaughterhouse in San Agustínillo with 500 to 1000 turtles/day, of which 85% were gravid females. Historic official records, according to Márquez *et al.* (1982), acknowledge the most intense sea turtle exploitation period occurred during the decade of the '60s with up to 800,000 turtles legally sacrificed in 1968.

When the Oaxaca slaughterhouse was inaugurated in 1977, an article in *Outsider Magazine* called “The Shame of Escobilla” by Tim Cahill described the arribada of turtles and the political event with the bloody scenes of the slaughterhouse, which turned out to be a true embarrassment for Mexico, thus resulting in the prohibition of anyone outside the government to visit the slaughterhouse on the coast or the beach of Escobilla without written official permission.

A few months after the field season of 1979 in Rancho Nuevo, Peter called me up one day, in Mexico City, to invite me to participate, right away, in a meeting with Antonio Suárez, owner of the company “*Pesquería Industria de Oaxaca (PIOSA)*”, whose objective was to exploit sea turtles in Oaxaca, mainly, but not solely, for exporting the hides. The meeting had been arranged with a group of sea turtle specialists including, Archie Carr (University of Florida), Peter Pritchard (Florida Audubon Society), George

Balas (Hawaii), David Erhenfeld (Rutgers University of New Jersey), Jack Woody (US Fish and Wildlife Service, who had been supporting many sea turtle and other wildlife projects in Mexico), Laura Tangly (editor of a wildlife magazine), and a professional moderator and translator, Carlos Nagel. I arrived at the meeting room in the Geneve Hotel while the film on PIOSA's operation was being projected. It focused on the idea that it was undertaking an "integral management of sea turtles," including repopulation with hatchlings from artificially incubated eggs.



*Slaughtered olive ridleys at PIOSA  
(Photo: P. Pritchard).*



*Collection and cleaning of the eggs from the  
oviducts of the slaughtered olive ridleys at PIOSA  
(Photo: J. Fretey).*

The next day we all flew to Oaxaca and then to the coast for the next few days to see the nesting beach, the slaughterhouse in San Agustínillo, the hatchery in Mazunte, and we even set out to observe individuals and mating pairs of olive ridleys at sea. Mr. Suarez, with his heavy Spanish accent, was a wonderful host, and we spent many hours of moderated discussions on the subject of sea turtles, their management and conservation. On the beach and in the water, we saw abundant numbers of olive ridley turtles, but very few Pacific green turtles, which were also being slaughtered.

Mr. Suarez insisted that there were plenty of turtles and that, with the repopulation effort of incubating hatchlings from eggs that came from the ovaries of gravid females in the slaughterhouse, it was a conservation measure to replace those turtles extracted from the wild population, so therefore, it was a sustainable activity. The group of specialists, on the other hand, stated the fact that much was still unknown about the population dynamics of sea turtles, and that this was the last and only numerous population of olive ridley turtles left in Mexico and that there was a real probability that it would follow the same destiny of near extermination as other populations to the north, which had been subject to the same over exploitation and that information was lacking on where the balance point was that would guarantee a healthy population over time.

Suarez insisted that for the first time turtles were being exploited in a much more efficient and less wasteful way than before when they were caught at sea, stripped of their skin, and the semi dead turtles or carcasses were thrown overboard to rot. He said that his operation was the first to collect the eggs from the gravid females and hatch them in Styrofoam boxes with sand. At the time, it was not yet confirmed that the incubation temperature of these boxes was conducive to the production of mostly males, plus the fact that the hatching success rate of these boxes was about 13%,

which was not enough to repopulate and guarantee "sustainability". Two of the significant agreements, products of these meetings, were that there be no more slaughtering of Pacific green turtles, since the information presented by Kim Clifton indicated a drastic reduction in the nesting population in Michoacan, and secondly that Antonio Suarez would present a paper about PIOSA's activities, at the World International Sea Turtle Conservation Symposium in Washington, DC in 1980, and he agreed.

It was at this conference that after his very long presentation and even longer with the non-simultaneous translation, which left no time for questions, Mr. Suarez was approached by environmental law enforcement authorities of the USA and taken for interrogation to clarify the exportation from Mexico to the United States of a shipment of meat of olive ridley whose DNA matched that of turtles slaughtered in his operation in Oaxaca; a protected species by law in Mexico that had been mislabeled as *Dermemys mawii*, which had no official protection status at the time. After such an awkward incident, Mr. Suarez sold his company to the Mexican government, which meant that there was no longer one person with whom to negotiate conservation measures, but that such negotiations would have to take place directly with the Mexican government, making it much more difficult than having one person accountable.

It was not until 1988 when members of the field crew of NGO Pronatura could actually count the numbers of turtles being slaughtered in San Agustinillo, which demonstrated that the quotas now lowered to 26,000 turtles a year were not being abided by and in fact, over 35,000 turtles a year were being slaughtered in Oaxaca.

This led to the organization of a big international campaign where many individuals and organizations like Todd Steiner from Earth Island Institute, Yuriria Blanco from Greenpeace, managed to get sympathizing individuals from many different countries to write letters to the Mexican President and government offices, expressing concern and requesting reconsideration of the sea turtle management strategy in Mexico to guarantee more effective protection for these species. Sacks full of letters from citizens from all over the USA and other countries flowed into the Ministry of Tourism, threatening that unless Mexico adopted a policy to protect sea turtles from over-exploitation, they would abstain from visiting the country, thus affecting the tourist industry. One of the most embarrassing situations for the President, Carlos Salinas De Gortari, was when he arrived in Great Britain to negotiate the foreign debt of Mexico with Margaret Thatcher and was met at the airport by a group of Greenpeace people dressed as sea turtles with signs accusing Mexico of killing sea turtles.

Peter Pritchard managed to raise some letters of high political impact from members of the British Parliament and Princes of some European countries amongst others, which did make an impact on the Mexican President. At the same time, the US Government was recommending that the Mexican government implement the use of sea turtle excluder devices (TEDs) on the Mexican shrimp trawler fleet if they did not want to face the Lacey Act, where the USA would have to boycott importation of Mexican shrimp into the United States, arguing that it would be unfair competition with their own shrimping fleet that was obliged to use the TED.

All of these actions culminated in the Decree of 31<sup>st</sup> May 1990, which declared the definite and permanent ban on sea turtles. Shortly after that, the Mexican government was willing to sign CITES (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species), which regulates trade of endangered and threatened species internationally.

Peter Pritchard, was no doubt a key player in such an important and timely battle for the conservation of sea turtles, for which we can all be grateful today.

Thank you Peter for having loved and fought for sea turtles in our life time.

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## Sea Turtle Champion Extraordinaire

**Barbara Schroeder**

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I first met Peter while an undergraduate student at the University of Central Florida. It must have been around 1977. I was working as a student research assistant to Lew Ehrhart and Peter was working with the Florida Audubon Society and lived in Oviedo, Florida, close to the University. Though I don't remember the details of my first meeting with Peter, over 40 years ago now, I'm sure I was completely tongue-tied and unsure of what to say to someone of his stature within the sea turtle community, of which I was a complete neophyte. What I do remember from those early years of knowing him was his enthusiasm, humor, kindness, and depth of knowledge of turtles of all species, not just sea turtles. One of the greatest regrets of my 'turtle life' is missing out on an opportunity to join Peter and the very first team from the U.S. that traveled to Rancho Nuevo, Mexico, in 1978 to participate in the first bi-national effort to conserve the Kemp's ridley. I was asked to join the team, but needed to take a course to graduate early and so declined the invitation – a mistake I've often thought about and regretted as I know I would have gained so much from the chance to work directly with Peter and the rest of the Rancho Nuevo team that first year. Fortunately, I had the opportunity in later years to work with Peter on critically important sea turtle conservation issues in Florida, most notably the implementation of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) to stop the drowning of thousands of turtles annually in shrimp trawlers. In the late 1980s to early 1990s, Peter was instrumental in helping convince the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission (then the state governing body for commercial and recreational fisheries) and ultimately the Florida Governor and Cabinet to enact the first-ever year-round TED requirements in the United States. I was working for the Florida Department of Natural Resources at the time and trying to push forward this critically needed conservation measure, Peter joined that effort and travelled to various Marine Fisheries Commission meetings around the state as well as testified before the Governor and Cabinet when they took up the debate about the TED rule. I knew once Peter confirmed he would attend and testify with us that we would cross the finish line and finally have the TED protections in place that turtles needed in Florida. The federal government eventually followed suit with a rule expanding the year-round requirement to federal waters and other states. When Peter spoke people listened – he always said just the right things, in just the right way, and delivered it all in a convincing and authoritative, but kind manner. I always thought his accent and good humor were part of the secret weapon! I so enjoyed catching up with him at annual meetings or periodic get-togethers with the University of Central Florida sea turtle project alumni. His wife Sibille is a joy and welcomed me readily into their circle of turtle friends. I feel so lucky to have known Peter and worked with him over the years to conserve sea turtles and I am quite certain that he is watching over us and cheering us on in his indomitable way. His life's work lives on in all of us.



## I Got to Meet and Work with My Hero, Peter C.H. Pritchard

**Jeffrey A. Seminoff**

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Peter was waiting for us at the truck when we arrived. As always, he had a welcoming smile, friendly demeanor, and enthusiastic curiosity about what we had in our catch bags. My friend Boyd Lyon (who has also passed) and I had just made our return from the morning's exploration of a very wet and buggy riparian drainage in northern Baja California, Mexico, in search of western pond turtles (*Actinemys marmorata*). We were about a quarter-mile from camp when Boyd and I ran into each other, both of us independently thinking we had the first turtle of the trip. However, we soon learned that we each had a turtle. "Oh well" we lamented aloud, "at least maybe we caught a turtle before Peter!"

This was our first trip together, and Peter, Boyd, and I had five days to explore northern Baja. We had a marvelous time cruising dusty desert roads, poking around for any and all things turtle, and thoroughly enjoying the journey. On more than one occasion I had to remind myself that this wasn't a dream, it was real life, and I was on the road with one of my heroes...

By the time I was 8 years old, I had developed an insatiable interest in all things herpetology, and especially turtles. My first pets were three silver-dollar-sized painted turtles that I caught early one summer near my childhood home in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois, USA. Moe, Larry, and Curly were delightful pets, gobbling up all the tadpoles I put in their tank and quickly growing in size and confidence. I'll never forget that late summer day, with tears streaming down my face, when my parents made me release the turtle trio back into the pond. There was always next year, and in the meantime, I had my reptile books to hold me through. As my childhood progressed, my herpetology library grew, but always among my most cherished (and tattered!) books was Pritchard's *Encyclopedia of Turtles*, right next to my Peterson's Guide to Reptiles and Amphibians. At 895 pages and covering hundreds of species, this was/is truly an *Encyclopedia* of turtles, and it's fair to say Peter's book was my Turtle Bible.

Fast-forward 25 years, and here I was, hanging out in Baja with my buddy Boyd and our mutual turtle icon, the famous Peter Pritchard! We traded jokes, explored unknown horizons, and 'turtled' to our heart's content. It was such a comfort to be around those guys and I found Peter to be a bit of an enigma: How could a man so accomplished and renowned in the turtle world be so kind and welcoming to everyone he meets? An author of so many turtle books, with story upon story to tell, and always with a knack for making us feel like we belonged. Peter's egalitarian approach to life was so refreshing, and for me, as a young scientist, served as a blueprint for how to treat people with interest, respect, and patience. He was as good as it gets.

I had entered the turtle scene in 1992, right about the time that the black turtle taxonomic debate was underway. Dueling perspectives about the species status of the East Pacific green turtle, also known as the black turtle, or *tortuga prieta*, with Pritchard — along with scientists from Michoacán, Mexico — calling it *Chelonia agassizii* while colleagues like Brian Bowen and Steve Karl cited genetic evidence, which supported their claim that it was nothing more than a dark green turtle, *Chelonia mydas*. As a 20-

something graduate student studying black turtles in Mexico at the time, I was keenly interested in the debate and amused at the sometimes-contentious dialogue that I saw play out in scientific literature and *in vivo* at the Annual Sea Turtle Symposia. All parties comported themselves well enough, and I found Peter to be a wealth of information about black turtles that at the time were little known to most of the turtle world. He was a master storyteller, sharing natural history facts and personal 'stories from the field' while many of us listened intently as if he were pulling gems from a treasure chest.



*Peter C.H. Pritchard (right) and the late Boyd N. Lyon (left) showing off western pond turtles (Actinemys marmorata) in northern Baja California, Mexico (Photo: J. Seminoff).*

Peter had this disarming, matter-of-fact way of stating his case. And during the black turtle discourse, he spoke based on vast experience. For more than half a century, Peter globetrotted around the world learning about turtles, and in the 70s and 80s he frequented the Pacific coast of Mexico, a stronghold for the species. This endowed him with a unique perspective and knowledge about black turtles — and the related human dimensions — that made his writing distinctive and captivating, and most of all, convincing! [If you're interested in the topic you should read Peter's 1999 Conservation Biology article "Status of the Black Turtle." I find myself mimicking his writing style on occasion, and maybe even a little bit so in this tribute!

Peter's passing is a reminder that the world's turtle luminaries are not immortal, even if we wish they were. As they say, 'we stand on the shoulders of giants' while we build upon previous discoveries, and Peter C.H. Pritchard was a true Giant in the turtle world.

Strangely however, even with all his accomplishments and accolades, my most striking memories about Peter relate to his kindness. He was just such a friendly character. And as we've all seen, this is a trait common to many of our turtle colleagues. So if you ever have a chance to meet someone you professionally admire and are a bit frightened at the thought of approaching them, please don't be. Maybe you'll get to know your hero too!

Oh, and remember our Baja trip? When Boyd and I finally made it back to the truck, there Peter was, huge grin on his face and showcasing not one, but two pond turtles in his hands! It was an unforgettable day...

Rest in Peace, Peter (and Boyd).



## Inspiration Across Generations

**Erin E. Seney**

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I must admit to not knowing Peter all that well, and most of my direct interactions with him were in recent years, but he was truly an inspiration to me. I was beside myself as a PhD student at a Kemp's ridley recovery meeting when he asked for a copy of a report I had brought, and remembering him on the dance floor, decked out in a suit, at my first Sea Turtle Symposium in 2001 will always bring a smile to my face. I am so glad my son got to meet "Dr. Peter," even if only as a baby and toddler and will always cherish those memories.



*My son's first time meeting Peter in July 2016  
and one of my favorites (Photo: K. Phillips,).*



## Peter Pritchard is My Darling

### Çisem Sezgin

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Anyone who works with turtles should know about Peter Pritchard. I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to spend time with him and his family. It was such a gift to be able to spend time at the Chelonian Research Institute (CRI) with Peter and discover his large collection of turtles.



I met Peter for the first time at the Symposium in New Orleans in 2014. Up until that point, he was just someone I knew from his articles and the work that I read about online. This is a photo of him from that first visit. It was to be the beginning of a very special friendship. It was clear to me at that time how many people loved him.

In 2015, my supervisor, Yakup Kaska, was President of the International Sea Turtle Symposium in Turkey. I was so happy when I saw Peter at the Symposium – that was very important for me, so I started to call him “my darling” and he liked it very much. After that I started to call him “my darling”. Whenever I called him that, he had a big smile on his face. Peter had a very beautiful smile and his eyes would laugh. I met Sibille in Turkey and she’s a lovely woman. After the Symposium, they invited me to the CRI.

*When I met with him in New Orleans in 2014.*

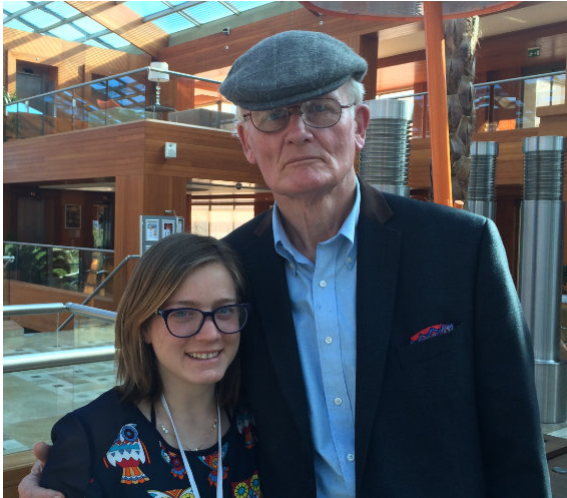


*He was resting in the lobby - he was pretending to sleep - his son, Cameron Pritchard.*



*Gala dinner at the Symposium in Turkey.*

A year later, the Sea Turtle Symposium was in Peru and we met there again. At that time, Peter, Chuck, Sibille, and I spent time together. We went shopping, for dinner, etc. He was like my close friend. They invited me to the CRI and they said I would love it there very much.



*Before he left the Symposium hotel in Turkey.*



*Before I was selected as the queen in Peru. Peter and Sibille supported me.*



*A dinner in Peru with David Fabius and Chuck Schaffer.*

I took several photos of us and I promised Sibille that I would send them all our photos. When I turned back to Turkey, I sent them all the photos. We kept the connection with each other and then we decided on the dates when I would visit the CRI.



*Gala dinner at the Symposium in Peru.*

I went to Orlando in June 2016. When I came out of the airport, Peter and Sibille were waiting for me. I was so surprised! He had his big smile on his face again. I had had a long flight and so I slept. When I woke up, Sibille told me he was waiting for me. He was so excited to show me the CRI. I was very excited to see the CRI too.

The Institute is a wonderful place and anyone working or studying with turtles is never bored there. The Institute is so special and has so many different collections – more than 3,000 turtles, books, stamps, photos from around the world, etc. He liked to collect things special to him.

When I was there, we had good times at the CRI, at home, or outside. I have special friends from there, Zack and Chelsea. They are excellent people at the CRI. They helped me a lot too.

Peter and I fed all the turtles at the Institute every morning. He liked to watch the Galapagos tortoises, Alligator snapping or snapping turtles, or the long neck turtles. The Institute had about 20, maybe more, live turtles. He wanted to see all of them and he



*First day at the Institute with Peter.*

liked to talk about turtles everyday. He liked to show and tell me about his amazing photo collection from around the world. He had visited so many places around the world. He had lots of books about turtles in different languages. I found a Turkish book in his collection, can you believe that. I was surprised he had two copies of a book in Turkish and he gave me one of them as a gift (The Reptiles of Turkey, Part I, M.Başoğlu and I.Baran 1977). He suggested many books for me to read. I couldn't read all of them, of course.

When I was there, they had a plan to go to the TSA (Turtle Survival Alliance) Symposium in New Orleans and I went with them too. Sibille, Peter, Chuck, and I went together. We were together again. It was an interesting Symposium for me. I had been to sea turtle conferences and Symposia before, but TSA was the first time for me. I liked it. People who



*From Peter's birthday with Chelsea Piner and Zack Burke.*

care about turtles, tortoises, and terrapins are together there. I also saw some familiar people from sea turtle Symposia. I think Peter liked New Orleans because he liked oysters and dancing.

I stayed with him and Sibille for about two months and I will never forget how very happy I was with them. I was never bored when I was with him because there was always something to do to help turtles or he found something to talk about.



*We celebrated his birthday together. It was very nice party. He was a real gentleman.*

One day, we planned to clean all the terrapin tanks and pools in the CRI. I scratched the Alligator turtle shell because their shells are so dark, almost black. Zack helped me with it. Peter was with us and he was so angry with me because turtles were getting stressed, so I quickly finished cleaning the pools/tanks and turtles too. That day, it was the first time he was angry with me. He was worried about the turtles.

I completed writing my thesis there and when I returned to Turkey. I graduated with my Master's degree.

I tried to call him on important days such as his birthday, or on days important to me because I wanted to know that he was with me. I have a new friend – Romeo De Freitas. I never met him, but he called me when he was in Orlando with Peter using Facetime. Sometimes he shared with me Peter's photos and health situation. So I kept in contact with Peter because of him. We talked about special things such as family.





*He liked cakes and he was waiting to eat my birthday cake.*

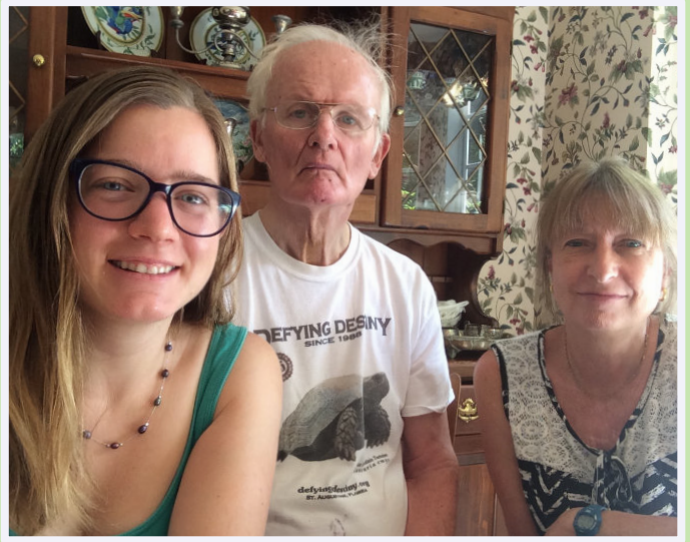


*Cleaning time for Alligator snapping turtles and their pool.*

I wanted to invite him and Sibille to my wedding. We were too late for that. I couldn't invite anyone, even my family, because of COVID-19. But I called Sibille on Facetime and she was with me that day. They are like my family. I called him "my darling" all the time, and I'm so happy that when I called him he remembered me every time.

*Photo credits: Ç. Sezgin.*





## Peter Pritchard: An Example of Kindness is Deeply Remembered

**Shi Haitao**

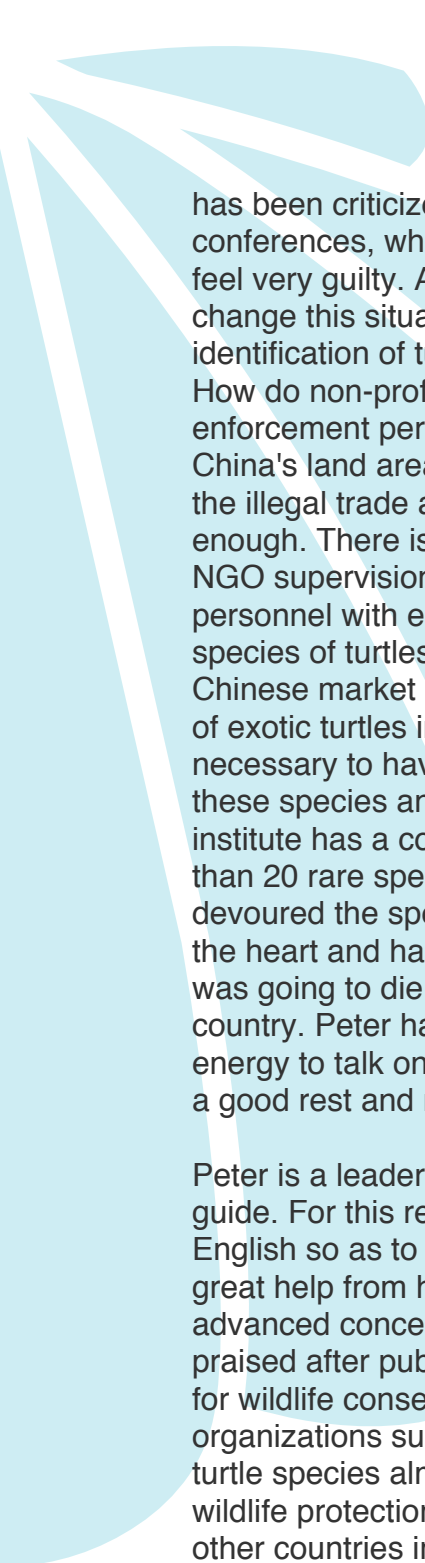
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Peter Pritchard is a great turtle scientist, conservationist, educator, and collector. He is my professional example. In my mind, he is a generous and kind elder. In the process of getting along with him, I deeply felt that his personality could broaden people's minds, improve people's realm, purify people's souls. He was the elder I looked up to most and a role model for me to follow. His knowledge makes me admire him, his spirit makes me admire him, his moral character is worth my lifelong study. There may be greater elders than him, but I have not met them.

On July 25-29, 2007, Peter and I participated in the 5th Annual Symposium on the Conservation and Biology of Tortoises and Freshwater Turtles held in Atlanta, Georgia. Peter warmly invited me to visit his turtle institute. After the meeting, Peter drove me nine hours to his home in Orlando, Florida. As soon as I got home, he enthusiastically prepared a barbecue for me. Then he took me to a turtle research institute across the street from his home. This is a three-story building, and I was shocked when I entered the institute – this is a turtle world. Various ecological and skeletal specimens of turtles fill the room, some on floors and tables, some hanging on walls, and some hanging in the air. In addition to the actual specimens, there are turtle handicrafts collected from hundreds of countries he has visited. These handicrafts represent different countries and cultures, with diverse shapes, colors, materials, and techniques. The layout of this institute is so full of beautiful things that it makes me marvel at them all. Since then, I have also begun to pay attention to collecting turtle artifacts, and felt different cultures in them, and recalled unforgettable experiences, which became an emotional sustenance and spiritual wealth for me.

While Peter patiently and meticulously explained his research collection to me, his wife, Sibille, helped tidy up the cozy bedroom on the top floor. When they told me that I would be staying here at night, it was a real surprise. How can an outsider be allowed to live in a treasure like this? This is Mr. Peter's life's work. Why is he so comfortable with me? What generosity and trust this must be! I felt uneasy at once. Peter kept introducing me to his collection until late at night. When we left, I noticed that one of the doors wouldn't close properly and wouldn't lock. Peter said it didn't matter, "I have never locked the doors". What? How is that possible? Are there no thieves? When he had gone, I shut the door with all my might and strength and locked it from the inside because I was worried about what I would say in case something was lost. So I stayed at his museum for more than 20 days, turning out the lights every day, carefully locking every door every night before going to bed, and making sure to keep an eye on his treasures and not betray his trust in me.

At that time, I was working on the "Identification Manual for Traded Turtles in China". China is considered to be the country with the most serious illegal trade in turtles and is even considered to be the "graveyard for turtles in the world". For this reason, China



has been criticized by international media and condemned by many international conferences, which has seriously damaged the image of my motherland and made me feel very guilty. At the same time, it stimulated my sense of responsibility and mission to change this situation. The key to preventing illegal trade is law enforcement, but the identification of turtles is a very professional job and there are many species of turtles. How do non-professional law enforcement personnel or even non-turtle experts help law enforcement personnel to identify species easily? This is a huge challenge! Moreover, China's land area is vast, the border long, with a lot of bordering countries – stopping the illegal trade and smuggling with a handful of law enforcement personnel is not enough. There is a need for general public awareness and participation, protection with NGO supervision and propulsion, and reference books for the non-professional personnel with easy to identify external morphological characteristics. There are 35 species of turtles in China and 357 species in the world. The species appearing in the Chinese market mainly come from all over the world. I found that there were 95 species of exotic turtles in the Chinese market at that time. To compile such a guide, it is necessary to have a thorough understanding of the morphological characteristics of these species and take good photos for easy identification. As it happens, Peter's institute has a collection of nearly 90 percent of the world's turtle specimens, with more than 20 rare species of live turtles. It was perfect for me to finish the book. So I devoured the specimens and took pictures every day. Once I suddenly felt very sick in the heart and had to stop working. At that moment, I really had an ominous feeling that I was going to die and thought about how much trouble it would be if I died in a foreign country. Peter happened to be looking for me at that time, and I told him that I had no energy to talk one word. Solicitously, he poured me a cup of coffee, advised me to have a good rest and not to work too hard, and then quietly left me alone to rest.

Peter is a leader in the field of turtles. I had so many questions to ask him to finish this guide. For this reason, I specially translated the Chinese version of the first draft into English so as to facilitate discussion with him. The book was published a year later with great help from him, and he is the third co-author. Due to the novel method and advanced concept illustrated with pictures, this simple and practical book was highly praised after publication and played an important role in law enforcement and training for wildlife conservation. As a result, more and more foreign scholars and conservation organizations suggested that I translate it into English. They felt that China's trade in turtle species almost represented the world's trade in turtle species, and given that wildlife protection is borderless, if such a very practical book were only in Chinese, then other countries in the world that do not know Chinese could not use it. To this end, I spent a long time translating it. But how could it be translated into standard English? I thought of Peter again. When I asked him to help me revise my English, he readily agreed without saying a word and helped me revise it twice.

Peter and his wife were very friendly and warm-hearted. They tried their best to arrange a variety of activities for me during my stay at their home. Because of the hard work, Peter and his wife, Sibille, arranged a number of trips for me. On two occasions, they spent two full days with me visiting Universal Studios and Disneyland, leaving in the morning and returning in the evening. I had never seen such a charming place before.



*With Peter and Sibille at Universal Studios  
(Photo: Shi Haitao).*

States, so Peter accompanied me to the Wekiba River, paddled a canoe, and spent the day researching. Later, he helped me contact a professor at Florida State University and arranged for me to go to investigate the Santa Fe River for one day. Turtle breeding in China is very popular and has been imported from the United States. I really wanted to know about American turtle breeding. Peter took me to visit a large turtle farm and let me feel the real situation of turtle farming in the United States. Peter also took me to the beach to see the loggerhead turtle research base, and arranged for me a lecture on sea turtle research and conservation by Professor Llewellyn Ehrhart from the University of



*With Peter and a green sea turtle at the center for  
sea turtle research and conservation at the  
University of Central Florida (Photo: L. Ehrhart).*

It opened my eyes. I immersed myself in it and had a lot of fun. They participated in most activities and accompanied me to experience them personally. Some of the events, like roller coasters and crazy Mice, were my projects, where they helped by holding my bag while I enjoyed my thrilling experience. I will never forget the kindness and patience with which these two gracious elders accompanied me.

I was eager to learn about the diversity, habitat, and conservation of turtles in the natural environment of the United States, so Peter accompanied me to the Wekiba River, paddled a canoe, and spent the day researching. Later, he helped me contact a professor at Florida State University and arranged for me to go to investigate the Santa Fe River for one day. Turtle breeding in China is very popular and has been imported from the United States. I really wanted to know about American turtle breeding. Peter took me to visit a large turtle farm and let me feel the real situation of turtle farming in the United States. Peter also took me to the beach to see the loggerhead turtle research base, and arranged for me a lecture on sea turtle research and conservation by Professor Llewellyn Ehrhart from the University of Central Florida, and to watch the whole process of a loggerhead laying eggs.

Peter and his wife not only did this for me, but they did it for others as well. During my stay at his home, several scholars from around the world came to visit, such as Tomas Diagne from Senegal and Shailendra Singh from India. They all had the same feelings and comments about Peter and his wife as I did. It is really commendable and admirable to be praised by people from different countries in the world.



With Peter, Sibille, Tomas Diagne from Senegal and Shailendra Singh from India (Photo: **Shi Haitao**).

Peter has been concerned about the conservation and research of the critically endangered Chinese giant softshell turtle, *Rafetus swinhoei*, and wanted to visit China to see the specimen and learn about the two captive individuals in Suzhou Zoo. In September 2011, I accompanied him and his wife to Fudan University, Shanghai Science and Technology Museum, Suzhou Institute of Science and Technology, Suzhou Zoo, and other places in Shanghai, where we jointly carried out taxonomic research on this species. After that, they were invited to our school and gave two academic reports to the faculty of Health and Science, visited my research base on red-reared turtles in Wanquan River, Qionghai, Hainan Island, and participated in the turtle release ceremony held in Sanya, the southernmost Hainan Island. Peter's profound knowledge and broad mind left a deep impression on the teachers and students of my research group.



Peter came to Haishi to talk to the teachers and students of our research group (Photo: **Shi Haitao**).



## **Peter Pritchard: Scientist, Conservationist and Friend**

**James R. Spotila**

*Betz Chair Professor of Environmental Science Emeritus, Drexel University, USA  
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Peter Pritchard had an enormous impact on turtle biology and conservation. I had the pleasure of working with him in saving leatherback turtles at Playa Grande in Costa Rica, in jousting with him over scientific ideas at scientific meetings, in collaborating with him on publications, and in working with him on turtle conservation. He was always a consummate professional and always a gentleman. We became not only colleagues, but friends.

I first interacted with him when we worked together with Frank Paladino to save Playa Grande as part of a national park to protect that most important nesting beach for leatherback turtles. He had called Playa Grande to the attention of the scientific world as one of the greatest nesting beaches for that species. He worked with Maria Teresa Koberg of Costa Rica to obtain protection for the beach. He highlighted its importance in a video entitled "For All Time" that galvanized protection efforts. Fortunately, Mario Boza, the founder of the National Parks of Costa Rica was Vice Minister of the Environment at that time and a friend of Maria Teresa. Together they obtained the protection of Playa Grande and adjacent beaches through a Presidential decree! Frank and I continued that effort and with the help of President Clinton we convinced the Costa Rican Congress to make the Park permanent in law as Parque Marino Nacional Las Baulas de Guanacaste. Peter, Frank, Mario, Maria Teresa, and I continued to work for many years to consolidate the Park. Although Peter and Maria Teresa have passed on, we are still working with Costa Rican colleagues like Mario Boza to improve the Park. During those years Peter and I did not always see eye to eye in what approach to use in the conservation effort, but we always respected each other's position and worked together to get the job done. Our mutual respect led to true friendship.

I remember when I first gave a talk at a sea turtle meeting calling attention to the impending extinction of leatherback turtles that Peter took exception to my dire prediction. We had a friendly exchange of differences in public and in private and continued to discuss and share ideas about the topic. That is the way science should be done. Present the data, discuss it and let the data tell the story. We would still be discussing, some might say arguing, over ideas, but only so that we could find the right answer. We always held each other in the highest personal regard and Peter was always a kind and forthright person in our interactions. I miss his insights now that he has left us. Such a fine gentleman!

It was a pleasure to collaborate with Peter on publications. He contributed book chapters and articles on leatherbacks and was an excellent person to work with on those projects. He wrote clearly, had a broad knowledge of the literature, and wrote in a most accessible manner. He made the job of editing a volume a pleasure. I could use him on some projects today!!

Finally, we worked together on several conservation initiatives for both sea turtles and freshwater turtles. Who knew more than Peter about turtles? No One! Who cared more for their conservation? No One! He brought all of his knowledge and all of his passion to the problem of conserving turtles around the world. He was the lynchpin in many projects, both in the field and in the meeting room. It was an honor to work with him and I hope that I was able to add some part to his efforts both in Costa Rica and in the United States.

My life was graced by learning from such a great scientist, by working with such a committed conservationist, and by getting to know and become friends with such a fine gentleman. Peter Pritchard was a model for those who come after him.





## Taking a Break While on Travel in Tropical Guyana

**Kelly Stewart**

*The Ocean Foundation, Washington, DC &  
Affiliate at Marine Mammal and Turtle Division, Southwest Fisheries Science Center,  
NOAA-NMFS, La Jolla, California, USA (email: [kelly.stewart@noaa.gov](mailto:kelly.stewart@noaa.gov))*

I will truly miss Peter's vast knowledge, his writing, his ways of making mundane things hilarious, and his friendship.



*Enjoying cold drinks on a refueling trip to Mabaruma, Guyana, from Shell Beach on 2 April, 2014 (Photo: S. Ceriani).*



## Tribute to Peter

**Linh Uong**

*University of North Georgia, Dahlonega, Georgia, USA*

*(email: [linh.uong@ung.edu](mailto:linh.uong@ung.edu))*

I was a graduate student at the University of Central Florida (UCF) when I first met Peter, and one of my earliest recollections of Peter was at the Sea Turtle Symposium at Hilton Head Island. I was at the social with Doc (Dr. Lew Ehrhart) and the UCF turtle crew that evening, and it happened to be my birthday – and there was the renowned Dr. Peter Pritchard, in his signature white linen suit, toast in hand, singing Happy Birthday to me. So began my adventures with Peter.

Half of my adventures during those years were with Karen Frutchey, a fellow UCF student. Peter referred to us (with a twinkle in his eye) as the munchkins and more than once, Karen and I found ourselves sharing the passenger seat of his Pontiac Fiero. Sometimes it was just to make a quick run down to the Publix to pick up sodas and appetizers for visiting researchers. Other times, we were in the more luxurious Rolls, making our way to a meeting or driving across the back roads of Florida (because Peter loved to take the scenic route).

Shifting through my memories of Peter, I realized that he was always there at notable times in my life:

Like when we went on a month-long trek to Southeast Asia to look for giant softshell turtles, *Rafetus swinhoei* in Vietnam and *Chitra chitra* in Java. It was 1997, and it was the first time I'd returned to Vietnam since I was a child, when I left with my family during the fall of Saigon. As the plane neared Hanoi, I could see the Red River below – it looked a little blurry – and I realized it was tears as Peter held my hand.

And when Peter wore one of his turtle ties for my wedding at the Chelonian Research Institute.

And when I asked Peter if I could use the office next to his at the Institute for a week to complete my capstone exam for library school (another Masters). It was the same office, about four years before, where I had briefly worked as Peter's program assistant. There was a lull in visitors that summer, so I knew it would be a quiet spot with the tortoises outside for company and the pavilion hidden back beyond the orange groves next door if I needed an even quieter spot "to contemplate on life" as Peter would say.

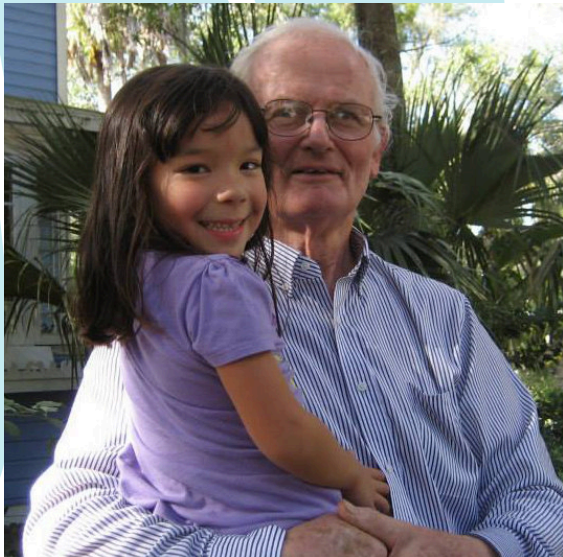
And lastly, when my husband and I took our daughter to visit Peter and Sibille for the first time. She couldn't walk yet, but she had the chance to meet all the turtles and tortoises, including Bernice and Moses. These are some of my favorite photos of Peter, Mackenzie, and the turtles.



*Bernice and Mackenzie (age 1) in 2009  
(Photo: L. Uong).*



*G. sulcata, Peter, and Mackenzie in 2012  
(Photo: L. Uong).*



*Peter and Mackenzie (age 5) in 2013  
(Photo: L. Uong).*

Peter was a world-renowned biologist, travelling all over the world and hob-knobbing with folks from all walks of life because he just liked people. But it was Oviedo where he always returned, to his home with Sibille. He always said that it was wonderful to travel and even better if you had a job that gave you that opportunity – but even better than that was a place to return home to, a place where friends come calling, and where you could take a walk back to a certain hidden pavilion to sit and contemplate for a moment.

Another place, not-so-hidden, that I'm sure Peter must've come across, lies along the Lake Wales Ridge in Central Florida, the Singing Tower at Bok Tower Gardens. Many years ago, I happened to be moseying along there, stopped by, and came across this quote from Edward Bok, whose grandmother had told him, "Make you the world a bit better or more beautiful because you have lived in it." Mr. Bok and his grandmother would have agreed that Peter had made the world a bit better.

Archie had his angels, and Peter had his posse, his posse of students, colleagues, friends, strangers who became steadfast friends, and children who followed him around wherever he travelled. He was a friend, colleague, and mentor to many, and will be remembered by all. We will miss you, Peter.



**Sir Peter Pritchard**

**Lily Venizelos**

*MEDASSET-Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles, Athens, Greece  
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I met Peter Pritchard 30 years ago at the first International Sea Turtle Symposium I ever attended, at Hilton Head Island. I was a newcomer to the whole Symposium thing and had not the slightest idea who the tall, handsome man who was peering with interest at my name tag might be. He, on the other hand, seemed charmingly delighted to have discovered a fellow European and, for some reason never really explained, addressed me in French! It was the start of a long-distance friendship, which I have always felt most fortunate to have enjoyed. I suspect that what drew us together is that we're both fighters and we enjoyed telling each other of our various battles even though by the time we met he was based firmly in the US and I was working on the other side of the Atlantic. I was frank with him about the lack of recognition he was accorded in the country of his birth and rashly promised that I would one day get him the Honour from the Queen that he so richly deserved. It became a running joke between us over the years. He would greet me with a cheery shout of, "Hey Lily, how's my knighthood coming along?" I was never able to deliver of course, but he didn't mind a bit. If I had succeeded it would have spoiled the joke... and Peter always valued a good joke.



## Overnight at the Chelonian Research Institute – Remembering Peter Pritchard

**Rom Whitaker**

*Centre for Herpetology/Madras Crocodile Bank, India  
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When Peter visited India in the 1980s, we were delighted that he visited the Madras Crocodile Bank so we could proudly show him what we were up to with our olive ridley sea turtle hatchery and the work we had started with freshwater turtles, including some of the really hard-pressed, critically endangered species like the Northern River Terrapin (*Batagur baska*) and Red-crowned Roof Turtle (*Batagur kachuga*).

Back in 2006, Janaki Lenin and I had the wonderful experience of spending a day and a night at Peter's Chelonian Research Institute. That short visit was such a treat, like staying at a museum filled with thousands of specimens, books and artifacts, a whole world of turtles in one building. And how great to wake up the next morning, wander out in the back and encounter a wild gopher tortoise basking in the early sun on the edge of its burrow. A little later in the day we encountered another tortoise wandering through the parking lot!

Spending time and chatting with Peter and his wonderful wife, Sibille, is a memory we deeply treasure. The champion of turtles is sorely missed!



*Photos on following page: R. Whitaker and J. Lenin.*





*A flair for the dramatic!*



*A glimpse of Peter's office.*



*Peter explaining details of his massive collection of turtle shells.*



*Janaki inside the Chelonian Institute.*



*Finding a gopher tortoise living behind the Chelonian Institute.*



*Parking lot gopher tortoise.*



*Peter and Rom at the Hindu temple in Orlando, Florida*

## Bye My Friend!

**Michael White**

*Tongareva Atoll, Northern Cook Islands*  
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Peter and I met several times over the last 25 years, usually at the International Sea Turtle Symposia, including those in Florida. We always found time to have long conversations. Peter proved to be very important for my later work with sea turtles in Oceania because he was the first person to survey the Pacific as a region in the late-1960s. *'Marine turtles in the South Pacific'* can be found in *The Biology and Conservation of Sea Turtles* (Ed. Karen Bjorndal).

We knew so little in those days. Research in Oceania is always challenging because transportation links to very remote atolls often do not exist. This ocean covers a third of the planet: some islands haven't been surveyed for over 50 years. Peter's insights were most helpful, so I'm not sad at his passing because all our memories are fond ones. Bye my friend!



## My Memories of the Perpetual Peter Pritchard

**Blair Witherington**

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(email: [blawitherington@inwater.org](mailto:blawitherington@inwater.org))

Peter Pritchard once shared with me, “You’ve got to write down your thoughts, otherwise, no one will remember them.” This aside was at a celebration of another man’s legacy, Archie Carr, from whom one can clearly see Peter’s philosophical inheritance. It is a conferral of continuing curiosity, and it is a great treasure.

Compounding and sharing intellectual treasure seemed to be Peter’s mission in life. His keen attention to fostering legacies advanced this magnanimous purpose. After all, discoveries and discoverers are inextricably bound. We are innately drawn to human stories, and when protagonists share with us their revelation, a following generation of discoverers and storytellers is inspired. As a central strand in this web of discovery, Peter Pritchard presents a model for an influential life. His endowment of discoveries benefits that continuity of curiosity and continues to contribute wisdom applied to the persistence of the planet’s most compelling creatures, along with the diversity life they touch... to include, us.

My first exchange with Peter was when I was new to the world of sea turtle biology and conservation. Like almost everyone with an interest in turtles, I had read PCH Pritchard’s *Encyclopedia of Turtles*. As I write this, I pause to reach out to that volume on the shelf and leaf through its pages. The flutter wafts a smell common to books of this vintage, but somehow, the odor sparks only memories of turtle anticipation — that feeling I had as a student, imagining experiences firsthand with the enduring creatures that Dr. Pritchard described so vividly. My expectation of Peter Pritchard was that he would be a monumental figure — David Livingstone, David Attenborough, and James Bond enveloped within a single carapace. I was not disappointed.

Yet, for a turtle superman, I found that Peter was remarkably easy to talk to. He seemed to recognize value in every conversation, even when the awkward neophyte he brought into his thoughts was too reticent to contribute much. As a student attending Symposia with Peter, I, with the other attendees, marveled at Peter’s presentations, which were much like his conversations. His ability to engage an audience from the podium was especially admirable for those of us who need props. Peter didn’t. Almost invariably, he would arrive at the microphone with only a few sheets of paper and no slides to present. And because he seldom looked at those notes, I assume their purpose was merely as a robe is to modesty.

Whatever the size of the audience, Peter’s conversations featured profound ideas illustrated by compelling personal stories. Of course, the stories frequently involved turtles, but he put these animals into illustrations of larger concepts, like relationships we have to the natural world, and among cultures ranging from Arawak to ancient Norse. Yet, to describe Peter as loquacious would not be accurate. He seemed to know



exactly when and where a concise thought should be presented. The kindest of these I recall was immediately after a keynote address I gave that featured thoughts on Asian philosophy. I was not at all sure how it went, until Peter caught me afterward to say, “I very much enjoyed your speech.” I still delight in that comfort.

My most recent conversation with Peter Pritchard was on a visit to his Chelonian Research Institute. I was on a mission to photograph sea turtle rhamphothecae. There is no better place to fulfill such an obscure charge. On this occasion, sitting down to converse with Peter didn’t include much talk. As we pored over an oversize book illustrating wildlife of the Galapagos, there was mutual delight. It was easy to sense the meaning of Peter’s gestures referencing familiarity with each bird and reptile, knowing that no words could ever truly describe the depth of his understanding of that place. At that moment, the feeling was far greater than the detail. And that sentiment came through with clarity.

Thankfully, Peter Pritchard did not leave us with a finality to our experiences with him. He both persists and provides lessons on how we might do the same. Peter’s endurance is as an open and inviting cabinet of curiosities, in the figurative and literal sense. He continues to inspire, through tangible objects of science, through the echo of the written word, and through the exponential nature of mentoring. Peter Pritchard left an expanding legacy that is self-perpetuating, one that is fulfilling, positively consequential, and filled with joy. And we are ever so grateful.



*Gathering on the 25th anniversary of Archie Carr's passing, at the refuge nesting beach named in his honor. Peter is surrounded by Doc Ehrhart, Simona Ceriani, Blair and Dawn Witherington, Jeanne Mortimer, Sibille Pritchard, David Godfrey, and others (Photo: J. Hochella).*



**In Appreciation of Peter C. H. Pritchard:  
Scholar, Friend, Adventurer, Humorist, and Bon Vivant**

**Jeanette Wyneken**

*Department of Biological Sciences, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida, USA  
(email: [jwyneken@fau.edu](mailto:jwyneken@fau.edu))*

Anyone interested in turtles knows the name Peter Pritchard. For many of us, his authoritative book *Turtles of the World*, followed by the *Encyclopedia of Turtles*, were the entryways into the diversity of these animals. His photos in black and white taught us to understand shapes and patterns. Color photos were few at that time, so the few were treats that provided us with an appreciation of both the animals and some of their intriguing locations. It was amazing and inspiring to realize that his books were written so early in his career.

My first face-to-face contact with Peter Pritchard was at a herpetological meeting in the early 1980s. I soon found that our paths would cross at many meetings of sea turtle biologists, herpetologists, and expert working groups. He also became one of the most sought upon keynote speakers. He introduced me to the conservation philosophy of engaging those who knew turtles best, the hunters and fishers, in protecting them and their nests. While this approach now is used widely, 3-4 decades ago it was a novel approach in turtle conservation. Within a few years, Peter recruited me to be the President/host of the Annual Sea Turtle Symposium (now the International Sea Turtle Society). Even though I was early in my career, it was hard to say no to such an important request from P.C. H. Pritchard. That experience led me to learn a great deal about the scientific community and the camaraderie of my fellow “*cheloniaphiles!*” I was able to convince Peter, already known as an outstanding orator, to give an evening talk at that Symposium; the topic was his choice. Of course, he packed the room holding more than 500 people. He chose to read to us from his mentor’s book, *A Naturalist in Florida*. (Peter was one of Archie Carr's Ph.D. students.) Instead of reading to us about turtles, we were rapt by Archie Carr's wonderful prose through Peter's wonderful oration of the description of a spider climbing its silk.

By the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I learned of Peter’s extensive collection of preserved and skeletal turtles. (I wish I’d known about that when I was a graduate student!) I had started writing the *Anatomy of Sea Turtles* and so made several visits, first to the attic of his historic home to photograph skulls and carapaces, then later to the Chelonian Research Institute across the street where every turtle genus was represented. That was a magical place for *cheloniaphiles*. In addition to the shelves of skulls, and carapaces, and other bones found nowhere else (e.g., the articulated tail vertebrae of male sea turtles, the plastron of a leatherback, the braincase of a hawksbill), there was the encyclopedic knowledge of Peter Pritchard. A quick question became a rich lesson. On my first visit, he pointed out that old hawksbills often lose the overlapping of their scutes, and that the lateral carapacial fontanelles of juveniles fill with plural bone as they mature in some species, whereas other species retain the fontanelles for life. On another visit, we discussed the relatively great width of ridley turtles. Peter ushered me to his

boardroom to see the ridley carapaces on the wall. (Of course, every formal boardroom has an ontogenetic series of carapaces on the wall!) There, he pointed out that the increased width was accounted for by widening peripheral bones. Peter's eye for pattern and change was invaluable as I wrote.

After the *Anatomy of Sea Turtles* was complete, Peter reviewed it, found a few errors and gently identified them. (Oh no! I thought I had caught them all! Thankfully, they were very few.) Again, his careful eye and encyclopedic knowledge made the book better. While our paths crossed less often as I became more involved with teaching and training students, each visit reminded me of how incredibly great Peter was at telling a good story that left the listener better informed as well as entertained.

I will not be alone in missing P. C. H. Pritchard, his stories, his seemingly endless knowledge of turtles, his great pleasure with all things turtle, his appreciation of diverse people, places, and the opportunities to learn more in the most delightful or, at least, adventurous ways. For many of us, the instinct to call Peter to answer a big picture question ...or ones of turtle minutia, to provide scientific and cultural perspective, or simply to talk about turtles, leaves a gap that no one can fill. We gained much from Peter's life, and his legacy remains in our libraries and with our fond memories.



## To Peter With Love

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There are moments when a casual decision can alter the course of one's life. It was one such afternoon in the Summer of 1993 at a metro station in Paris. I was supposed to return to the Museum of Natural History in Paris to meet with Jean Lescure to discuss leatherbacks in French Guiana and my leatherback project in the Nicobar Islands. I dithered at the top of the metro stairs as I considered postponing the visit, and then propelled by an unknown hand, continued on to the Museum. On arrival, Jean Lescure and I were informed that Peter Pritchard was in the museum library. Of course we went bounding down the stairs to meet this extraordinary turtle personality. Although I was very new to the turtle world, Peter recognized me immediately as the person whose survey report on the sea turtles of the remote Nicobar Islands he had recently read. And with his characteristic warmth and large heartedness he invited me to use his home in Oviedo, Florida, as a base to explore potential graduate schools. This kind offer was the catalyst that launched me into graduate school at the Archie Carr Center for Sea Turtle Research at the University of Florida (UF) and defined my career.

Through my years as a graduate student at UF, I also spent many happy hours with Peter learning about turtles, discussing a diversity of topics, and meeting interesting people from all walks of life whether at his home or while travelling with him and/or Sibille to Guyana, Paris, Corsica, India, Costa Rica, Greece, Senegal, Austria, and beyond. The memories and laughter from these trips fill my mind and heart – they range from Peter peacefully reading poetry, shirtless, on Shell Beach, Guyana (while the rest of us swatted, scratched, and swore at the merciless onslaught of mosquitoes) to singing along happily with “Nostalgie” radio while driving through France.

In 2017, at the very last International Sea Turtle Symposium that Peter attended, I was invited to do a keynote tribute. To summarize this giant, multi-volume Pritchard-pedia personality, I turned for assistance to the sea turtle community, and wrote to about 60 people for adjectives/nouns that summed up for them Peter's personality, achievements, and contributions. And what a warm and wonderful response the sea turtle community provided! All the adjectives and nouns were put through a word cloud program, which essentially gives greater prominence to words that appear more frequently, and voilà the result (> 150 words!):



Many people commented also on his debonair, suave, utterly charming, quiet-with-a-presence, and James Bond-like personality. So here is a trailer to what might have been his James Bond film: <https://vimeo.com/213057752> (password: peter)

One adjective to describe Peter stood out in particular, “Sibille” – his lovely wife, a *tour de force* and an honorary turtle biologist! Despite saying “this man is nuts,” she has been the force behind Peter and has participated in his turtle adventures, adding her very own touch of class and charm wherever she goes.

Finally, I wondered how the turtles would describe Peter, and found this wonderful quote in an online magazine ([growingbolder.com](http://growingbolder.com)), “And if turtles could vote, he’d be named the greatest man who ever lived.”

Peter called me his “daughter of biology” since I wasn’t a “biological daughter.” And like a good father, he was always there for major milestones in my life: he drove from Oviedo to Gainesville for my PhD graduation; he flew to Vienna, Austria, to be the best man at my wedding...

Peter your “daughter of biology” will be forever grateful for your helping hand, for teaching me to enjoy science, literature, art, turtles, and all the curiosities of life with regular helpings of candy and desserts, and for teaching me to take a balanced and realistic approach to people and conservation.



*Manjula and Peter in Costa Rica, 2004  
(Photo: M. Tiwari).*



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