

## Memories

### Stanley (Stan) A. Kuczaj II

(1950-2016)



On 14 April 2016, the scientific community lost Dr. Stan Kuczaj, professor at the University of Southern Mississippi and Director of the Marine Mammal Behavior and Cognition Laboratory. He was a beloved teacher, researcher, friend, mentor, and colleague. By age 65, this well-liked, respected professor had achieved world-renowned status in multiple disciplines—comparative psychology, behavioral sciences, and developmental psychology. His tremendous success in these areas resulted in a legacy of more than 50 master's- and doctoral-level students working in a variety of fields; he also had hundreds of collaborators from around the world. Stan significantly contributed to and influenced the current direction of these fields and had many plans and research projects still to accomplish.

Stan was born on 20 October 1950 in Jersey Shore, Pennsylvania, and was given a childhood nickname of “Sonny.” He was the oldest of four children, including two sisters and a brother. His family ultimately landed in Irving, Texas. Truly a success story, Stan earned his GED to attend the University of Texas at Austin where he earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and graduated Magna Cum Laude.

Stan attended the University of Minnesota and, working with Dr. Michael Maratsos, earned a Ph.D. in Child Psychology in 1976. His dissertation was titled *-ing, -s, and -ed: A Study of the Acquisition of Certain Verb Inflections* and was a study that investigated his son's language development (age 0 to 5). This study was notable at the time and is still referred to as an important longitudinal study today. In 1976, he joined the Department of Psychology at Southern Methodist University, where he quickly rose to serve as Chair from 1982 to 1986. Stan came to national prominence pursuing fundamental and universal questions about language, thought, and their development in young children, focusing as narrowly as documenting individual case studies and as broadly as defining cross-cultural commonalities. This latter aspect, perhaps, led naturally to questions about the intertwined roles of language and thought in shaping the mind of our species, and served as the leaping off point for the examination of similar influences at play in the lives of other species. In 1986, Stan was awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to work at Oxford University as a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Experimental Psychology; and in 1989, he served as a Visiting Professor at the University of Hawaii's Kewalo Basin Marine Mammal Laboratory, collaborating with Dr. Louis Herman in studies on dolphin cognition, language learning, and communication. Stan concluded his tenure at SMU in 1995, having mentored graduate students in both the fields of child development and marine mammalogy, at times blending the two in unique and novel ways.

With a vision to deepen his involvement in marine mammal science, Stan accepted the position

of Chair in the Department of Psychology at the University of Southern Mississippi and founded the Marine Mammal Behavior and Cognition Laboratory in 1996. His work expanded from studying bottlenose dolphins and sea lions at Marine Life Oceanarium to wild dolphins in the Mississippi Sound; wild rough-toothed dolphins off of Utila, Honduras; sperm whales in the Gulf of Mexico; and, eventually, many other species of animals such as Asian elephants at Busch Gardens in Tampa, Florida.

Stan always returned to his loves of language and development. His training in developmental psychology and longitudinal, observational studies set the stage for the majority of his work with marine and terrestrial mammals. He conducted many cognitive and behavioral studies with marine mammals involving the development of calves and their mothers, the development of play, the types of social interactions among different-aged animals, the intricacies of environmental enrichment, the establishment and differences in personality, the importance of contact during social interactions, and the role of emotion in animal behavior. His work in acoustics explored the development of echolocation in dolphin calves, the characteristics of sperm whale codas, the role of individual whistles in mother-calf reunions under experimental conditions, the use of sounds during a cooperative task, and the creation of a two-way system for communication.

Stan had numerous fruitful collaborations. Some of his past and more recent collaborators include Sea World, Busch Gardens, Living Seas at Epcot, Marine Life Oceanarium, Institute for Marine Mammal Studies (IMMS), Gulf World Marine Park, Dolphins Plus Oceanside and Bayside, Six Flags Discovery Kingdom in Vallejo, California, U.S. Navy Marine Mammal Program, Dolphin Communication Project, Wild Dolphin Project, Roatan Institute for Marine Science (RIMS), Behavioral Biology Division of the San Diego Zoo Safari Park, as well as researchers from Japan, Mexico, South America, and France. Notable recent projects include collaborations with RIMS and Dolphins Plus, studying communication and creativity. Throughout his career, Stan received more than \$1,300,000 in external funding for his research through federal-funded and private foundation grants.

Stan was an AAAS Fellow, an APA Fellow, an APS Charter Fellow, a Founding Member of the Comparative Cognition Society, a Fellow of the Explorers Club of New York, and a Fellow of the Psychonomics Society. He served as editor of (and founded) *Animal Behavior and Cognition*, the *International Journal of Comparative Psychology*, associate editor of *First Language*, and associate

editor of the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*. Additionally, he was a member of the Executive Committees of the International Society for the Study of Child Language and the International Society for Comparative Psychology; a member of the Standards Plenary Group of the Animal Bioacoustics section of the Acoustical Society of America; and a member of the Scientific Committees of the Dolphin Communication Project, European Association for Aquatic Mammals, Marine Mammal Conservancy, and Wild Dolphin Project. He was a member of a number of scientific societies, including the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Acoustical Society of America, the Comparative Cognition Society, European Cetacean Society, European Association for Aquatic Animals, International Marine Animal Trainers' Association, International Society for Comparative Psychology, Society for Comparative Psychology, and the Society for Marine Mammalogy.

A prolific scholar, Stan was extremely well published. He had approximately 150 publications and 200 professional presentations, and was frequently invited to present keynote addresses at conferences and invited colloquia at other universities. His research has been featured in five documentaries (one for NOVA, two for the BBC, one for French television, and one for Japanese television) as well as *National Geographic* and *National Geographic Kids* print issues. Stan's passion for encouraging practitioners to broaden the scientific understanding of animal behavior and cognition was substantiated by founding the peer-reviewed, open access journal *Animal Behavior and Cognition*, which focused on publishing scholarly work that includes, but is not limited to, behavioral ecology and genetics, communication, development, emotion, learning, memory, parental care, perception, personality, cognition, and social interactions.

Stan was a free spirit who always mixed work with fun. Some of his favorite stories were of travel and adventure such as when he went to Nepal as a young professor to conduct research with another professor and was stood up. He ended up living in Nepal for a time and even hiked to the base camp



of Mt. Everest. At one point in his life, he owned a bar in New Mexico for fun; and he even traveled in a two-man submarine down 2,000 ft to the ocean floor. The self-proclaimed former hippie owned two Volkswagen buses while in graduate school—one without any heat—in Minnesota! His more recent research travels and adventures were often accompanied by both graduate and undergraduate students to places such as Honduras, the Bahamas, France, and South Africa.

He is best remembered for his brilliant mind paired with an enthusiasm and excitement for studying animals. Stan would be the first to let out a cheer after having a great encounter with wild dolphins where his research team collected video footage of interesting social behaviors. He is also remembered for his kindness and generosity. Stan always went above and beyond to help out others, especially in times of distress such as when the gulf coast of Mississippi was struck by a hurricane.

Stan also loved to joke and have fun; his sense of humor was wickedly funny and quite creative! Stan was as quick to make fun of his own heritage as to jab at the hapless Texas A&M Aggies (even if one of his former graduate students was an alumni). He was an avid sports fan, often rooting for the Dallas Stars, the San Antonio Spurs, the Dallas Cowboys, and all things University of Texas (Go Longhorns!). He loved to watch movies and was willing to try anything once. Roller coasters, skydiving, and SCUBA diving were some of his all-time favorite activities. He ate anything and

everything, from hot dogs with relish, chili, cheese, and all the other good stuff to puffer fish and Peeps! Sushi was one of his favorites along with a good beer, and he would never pass up the opportunity to eat ice cream! While indulging, Stan would often hum and dance around the room to validate a good meal. He prided himself on making the best mojitos and margaritas with fresh lime. He loved jazz and blues music, and was even known to sing along at karaoke and dance from time to time! His mischievous smile often preceded a joke that led to a full laugh around the table.

Stan was the proud father of two sons and grandfather of three grandsons and one granddaughter. He was so proud of all of his “children”—children, grandchildren, his students, and his students’ children. Stan was preceded in death by his son (Ben), his parents (Stan Sr. and Rose), and his brother (Keith). He is survived by his son, Abe, four grandchildren, two sisters (Karen and Faith) and their families, and his Dallas cousins. Stan’s scientific legacy to the developmental and comparative communities includes both his own significant body of work and a dedicated corps of past students, all of us eager to collaborate, share resources and insights, and pursue challenging topics in human and animal cognition with rigor, candor, and the spirit of intellectual adventure passed on to us by our mentor. His wake was large and powerful enough to carry us this far, and we will be riding it far into the future. Stan was truly “our man,” a one-of-a-kind person who will be missed greatly.

