

## **JØRGEN HYLLEBERG IN MEMORIAM**

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Jørgen Hylleberg Kristensen was born on October 28, 1935 in Vejgård close to the centre of Aalborg in Denmark. The father was Niels Peter Hylleberg Kristensen (1907–1964) and mother was Gerda Marie Kristensen, born Svensson (1907–1962). He passed away on September 29, 2019 after a short period of illness. His younger sister is Lone.

In 2004, Jørgen Hylleberg published a book in Danish, primarily about his father who was a journalist and member of the Danish Parliament. However, much information is included about many other relatives and there are also a few pages where he wrote about himself. Much of his short autobiography is included in this text.

He had limited success in elementary school. There were simply a thousand things that were more exciting than doing homework. To raise pocket money, it was necessary to take small jobs. He started early by bringing milk out in the morning or delivering newspapers. Later he was a bicycle courier for the “Brothers in Aalborg” (men’s wear) and tailor Carlsen (women’s clothing). He worked as an all-rounder in a butcher shop and as a clerk at Gardener Pedersen. Additionally, he wrote small newspaper articles about North Jutland's bird life, but it was of course necessary to have a more permanent way of life. When he turned 18 in the fall of 1953, he was enrolled as a soldier. It was in the “Days of the Cold War”, so there was not much discussion about it. He was ordered to become a sergeant and had to serve King and Fatherland for 2 years. It was a long time, but had the advantage that he found out about himself and decided to become a teacher in primary school. Consequently, he applied to Ranum State Seminary in northern Jutland and was admitted. There he met Karen Juul Dybvad Kristensen, born Olesen, and they got married at the end of 1956.

Jørgen’s interest in science became more and more obvious, and Karen's uncle Jens Juul, who was a biology teacher at the seminary, strongly convinced him to go on and get a university education. However, there was a problem. He did not have a high school diploma, so it was necessary

to take one. He therefore spent every night for 2 years at Aarhus Academy in order to pass the degree. During the day he taught at lower level at the same academy. When the entry requirements were fulfilled, he started studying at Aarhus University. After 2 years he had passed the necessary exams in geography, geology, botany and zoology. However, the education could only be completed in Copenhagen, so the family moved to Birkerød north of Copenhagen. After 2 years, he finished the basic education and had to start on the final thesis. The choice was marine biology and he got professor Gunnar Thorson at the Marine Laboratory in Elsinore as a supervisor. In 1966–1967 he was so lucky that the Nordic College of Marine Biology announced a vacant scholarship. The condition was to study in another Nordic country. Jørgen Hylleberg got the scholarship and decided to study at Kristineberg Zoological Station in Sweden (Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences), where professor Bertil Swedmark was the leader. It was a happy year for the whole family, and academically it was outstanding.

He returned to Elsinore, wrote the thesis and passed the final M.Sc. exam in 1969. But the newly graduated marine biologist could not get a position in Copenhagen or the surrounding area, so when Tom Fenchel from Elsinore was called to become a professor in Aarhus in 1970, he asked if Jørgen Hylleberg wanted to follow as his assistant teacher (amanuensis). It was accepted with the greatest enthusiasm! So, the little family, now extended with the third child, moved to Mondrupvej 15 in Viby near Aarhus, where they have lived ever since. This hospitable house has been visited by innumerable friends, among them numerous marine biologists. Jørgen’s wife Karen has always supported him in all possible ways and the three children - Tine, Kaare and Rune - often participated, in Denmark as well as in Thailand.

Jørgen Hylleberg became an associate professor in 1972 and was a visiting researcher in the United States for a year from 1973. The biggest upheaval came in 1979 when he was hired by Danida as a consultant at the Phuket Marine Biological Center

in Thailand. For the first 2 years, the whole family lived in Phuket. That contact continued right up until 2004, when the last activity ended: the Danida-sponsored "Tropical Marine Mollusc Programme" (TMMP). In 1995 he defended a dissertation and became a Doctor of Philosophy at University of Gothenburg, Sweden. The official disputation occurred at Kristineberg Marine Biological Station, where he had been a scholarship holder nearly 30 years earlier.

During the time as an associate professor, he wrote four textbooks in Danish, and one in English, the last one together with H. Riis-Vestergaard. The books were used in marine ecology education, which he started at Aarhus University in 1972. Numerous compendia were also written.

Jørgen Hylleberg and professor Tom Fenchel founded the Marine Biological Station in Rønbjerg at Limfjorden in 1972. The idea came from Jørgen Hylleberg because he knew the area and proposed its location. Together, with the administration of the municipality of Løgstør they decided that it should be built where it is now. The station has a saltwater system, several laboratories and facilities for teaching and accommodation. It is used for research and education, primarily in marine biology at Aarhus University.

The marine biological activities in Thailand have a long pre-history. Professor C.G. Johannes Petersen (1860–1928) studied marine bottom-living animals in the seas around Denmark and found that several species occurred together, and often in certain proportions. These patterns in animal occurrence were called bottom communities. One of Petersen's students was professor Gunnar Thorson (1906–1971) in Helsingør. He continued his teacher's work and extended it to other areas around the world. One interesting result of his studies was that he found what he called parallel bottom communities. For example, the animal communities at a certain depth and sediment type in Denmark and on the American coast could contain similar species and in similar proportions. The species in the distant areas were usually different, but they often belonged to the same genus, which means that they were close relatives with similar biology. Mapping such patterns in nature could reveal underlying more important factors.

Thailand and Denmark have had very good and close relations since 1621. These close contacts gave professor Gunnar Thorson and his colleagues

Professor Bent Muus and Kurt Ockelmann the opportunity to visit Thailand through the Fifth Thai-Danish Expedition to the Andaman Sea in 1966. Thorson was eager to extend his studies of bottom animals in order to find further parallel bottom communities. Two things struck him after some time. First of all did he not find any communities of the types he expected, because there was such an enormous and varied biodiversity. Secondly, he found that most species were undescribed or impossible to identify, also among the bigger animals such as fish, molluscs, crustaceans, and echinoderms. These results motivated him and his colleagues to work for the establishments of a marine biological station in Thailand. Phuket Marine Biological Center was established in 1968 as a joint Thai-Danish activity. The Danish ambassador Gunnar Seidenfaden, who was also a productive botanist, played a key role, and professor Gunnar Thorson with his colleagues played another from the Danish side. The Center has expanded and developed very much since then.

A key person since 1979 has been the last one of professor Thorson's students - Jørgen Hylleberg. He was scientific advisor for a long period of years and the driving force behind the establishment of the Reference Collection at Phuket Marine Biological Center. This is one of the very few well-organized biodiversity collections in the whole region. The Government of Thailand has selected the Reference Collection as one of the corner-stones in biodiversity research in the country, and its staff members represent Thailand during international conferences about protection of biodiversity. Several of the scientific staff members are former students from Aarhus University. Jørgen Hylleberg has, since then, been the *Spiritus Rector* and encouraged very much of the important work done at this center. The work in SE Asia led Jørgen Hylleberg, supported by Aarhus University, to establish The International M.Sc. and Ph.D. Programmes in Marine Sciences at University of Aarhus as well as the Tropical Marine Mollusc Programme. Both of them were sponsored by Danida. He understood the importance of linking higher academic education and research projects to each other and he realised his vision. The research project, the Mollusc Programme, was also used as a means to identify young talented scientists with a good potential for MSc and PhD studies. It also gave the newly graduated Masters of Science a possibility to continue to do research, get intellectual

*Jørgen Hylleberg in memoriam*

stimulation, national and international contacts, some resources to do research, and possibility to publish, later after returning home. This is otherwise very difficult for most young scientists in SE-Asian countries. It always takes time to build up a qualified competence. The Tropical Marine Mollusc Programme has served as the necessary follow-up for many of the former M.Sc. students and motivated them to improve from year to year. Jørgen Hylleberg had the visions and pointed out a productive way that deserves followers.

Jørgen Hyllebergs visions, hard work and the success of the M.Sc. Programme motivated Aarhus University to establish a new department of marine ecology in some buildings bought at Finlandsgade 14 in Aarhus. A new professor and several scientific staff members were employed. It resulted in a strong institution with a lot of education and research activities.

Jørgen Hylleberg's establishment of "TMMP" as well as the education in marine ecology for Asian students at Aarhus University have been awarded various honors: in 1990 he was awarded the Royal Order of the "Commander of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand". In 2002 the Queen of Denmark decorated him with the order "Knight of Dannebrog" (Dannebrog is the official name of the Danish flag), and in 2004 he received a medal of merit from the Ministry of Fisheries in Vietnam. In 2005 he retired at the age of 70 years.

He was a very much appreciated friend, husband, family father and extremely competent biologist who always encouraged and helped students and research colleagues. His extensive scientific credentials should not be commented on here but appear from the bibliography below. Those of us who had the privilege of meeting and cooperating with him feel gratitude and will always remember and miss him.

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*Received: 12 October 2020*



Establishment of the Thai-Danish Foundation for Phuket Marine Biological Center, 1990



On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Phuket Marine Biological Center, 1993