



**Thomas C. Cheng**  
**November 5, 1930- November 28, 2000**

Thomas C. Cheng, a well-known and well-respected international authority in the fields of parasitology, molluscan biology, and shellfish diseases died on November 28, 2000, Charleston, South Carolina. He was 70 years old. Tom was born on November 5, 1930 at Nanking, China. Tom's family moved to the United States when he was six years old to live in Chicago, Illinois. They spoke very little English but arrived without any problems and soon he attended the local public schools. In 1943, he was enrolled at Greenbrier Military School, Lewisburg, West Virginia and graduated in the spring of 1947. He then attended Wayne State University at Detroit, Michigan and graduated in 1952 with an A.B. degree in Biology. While at Wayne State, he was initiated to the excitement of studying parasitic animals by Professor Dominc L. DeGiusti. He then joined the U.S. Army as a commissioned officer from 1952 to 1956 and worked in the clinical diagnostic laboratory performing parasitology, serology and bacteriology serving overseas in the Korean conflict. These experiences triggered a greater interest in parasites, and upon discharge from military service he enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Virginia and received a M.S. degree in Biology in 1956. Tom continued his graduate studies at the University of Virginia in the area of parasitology and worked under the co-direction of Professor Bruce Dodson Reynolds and Professor Horton Holcome Hobbs, Jr. on the systematics, morphology and life history of the trematode family Brachycoeliidae. Tom stated on numerous occasions that both Professors Reynolds and Hobbs encouraged and guided him during his first attempts at an original investigation. He was awarded the Ph.D. in 1958. In 1958, Tom accepted his first faculty position at the University of Maryland, Baltimore Md as an instructor-assistant professor. After one year, he joined the department of Biology at Lafayette College, Easton, Pa. During the six years at Lafayette College he taught parasitology, microbiology, general biology, physiology and invertebrate zoology. In addition to his teaching duties, he formulated and wrote his first book entitled "The Biology of Animal Parasites". It was well received and became a popular textbook for an introductory course in parasitology. In 1964, he was awarded a National Institutes of Health Fellowship and traveled to the Pacific Biomedical Research Center at the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii where he worked as a visiting scientist on the modes of infection of *Achatina fulica* by the larvae of *Angiostrongylus cantonensis*. After this one-year

fellowship, Tom returned to the U.S. mainland and was appointed Chief of the Immunology and Parasitology section at the U.S. Public Health Service Northeast Marine Health Sciences Laboratory at Narragansett, Rhode Island. It was here that he conceived and started one of his most significant scholarly accomplishments “Marine Molluscs as Hosts for Symbioses with a Review of Known Parasites of Commercially Important Species” that was published in the 5<sup>th</sup> volume of *Advances in Marine Biology*. He then returned to the University of Hawaii to join the Department of Zoology. After five years at the University of Hawaii, Tom returned to Pennsylvania and created and directed the Institute for Pathobiology at Lehigh University for 12 years. This twelve-year period was his most productive in research and teaching. He attracted many bright and energetic graduate students and post docs world-wide. It was an exciting time for all and the pace in the laboratory was fast and demanding. A normal day began by 8:30 am and finished well into the night, sometimes past midnight with only 2-3 hours for supper and to see the family. Only Saturday afternoons and Sundays were free if the work load allowed. Despite the demanding schedule and high expectations, it was an exciting time. Both at the University of Hawaii and at Lehigh University, he would often end the grueling day with “lets go out for a beer” and hosting the entire lab at a local establishment. Tom was very proactive with his students. When possible, he took his students to as many parasitological meetings and functions as possible. In 1980, Tom took on a new challenge and joined the Medical University at South Carolina at Charleston, South Carolina to create the MarineBiomedical Research Program. He served as Director of this program until his retirement in 1993. In addition to his duties as the Director of the Marine Biomedical Research Program, he accepted the position as Acting Chairman of the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy at the Medical University for 18 months. It was during this time that he was recognized by the scientific community for his significant contributions to the advancement of molluscan immunology and host parasite interactions. He received numerous awards including a Senior Fulbright Scholar, Directeur de Recherche Award, and the Montpellier Medal, and was very active in lecturing and chairing many national and international meetings and congresses. Tom retired in 1993, but still remained active in molluscan diseases and immunology until the end. During his 7 years of retirement, he still continued to write research grants and work at the bench on clam and oyster diseases. Once diagnosed with terminal esophageal cancer, he continued to work daily for several hours until the fatigue and pain overcame him, forcing him to retreat to his home for rest. Tom Cheng was a gifted teacher and a bright and energetic scientist who influenced many young individuals to work in the area of parasitology and molluscan immunology. He published over 350 scientific papers, 22 books and served as Editor of the *Journal of Invertebrate Pathology* for 23 years and 20 years as Co-editor of *Experimental Parasitology*. He directed 23 graduate students and 10 post-doctoral fellows. Tom Cheng made his mark in the field of pathobiology and did significant work to help the nation’s shellfish industry. He will be missed, but his contributions to science will continue through his scholarly works and his students.

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