

LOUIS M. HERMAN / 1930-2016

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Researcher's work led to deeper

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Louis M. Herman, a renowned marine mammal researcher who made significant breakthroughs in the study of dolphin cognition and humpback whale behavior, died Aug. 3 in Honolulu of bile duct cancer. He was 86.

"In the marine mammal field, he was a trailblazer, a larger-than-life and one-of-a-kind figure, who changed

our understanding of dolphins and whales. But perhaps most importantly, he had a profound impact on the lives of so many people — students, interns, volunteers — because of their exposure to all that he created," said his daughter, Elia Herman.

Born in Queens in New York City, Herman earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology at the City College of New York.

An avid swimmer, Herman worked as a lifeguard at Rockaway Beach during college summers. His love of beaches and swimming led him to Hawaii.

Years before he moved to the islands, Herman enlisted in the Air Force and served as an intelligence officer during the Korean War. He earned a doctorate in psychology from Pennsylvania State University in 1961.

Herman and his wife, Hannah Schattner Herman, moved to Hawaii in 1966 when he accepted a job as associate professor in experimental psychology at the University of Hawaii. A project with a group of graduate students on dolphin intelligence at Sea Life Park sparked Herman's long career of researching bottlenose dolphins and humpback whales.

In 1969, he established the Kewalo Basin Marine Mammal Laboratory, where he led students in groundbreaking research on dolphin cognition and sensory perception. His research also encompassed humpback whale behavior.



Louis M. Herman hugged a humpback whale during his search on dolphin cognition in 1985.

He conducted aerial surveys of the population at a time when little was known about the presence of humpback whales in Hawaii waters, said his daughter.

Herman had the ability to make connections that others were unable to pick up on.

"He was a creative thinker," said his wife. "His approach to things was very unique and creative."

In 1985, one of Herman's creative ideas helped save a humpback whale named Humphrey that had wandered into California's Sacramento River. A recording made by Herman of humpback whales feeding in Alaska was used to lure Humphrey back to the ocean.

When Herman and his researchers had played the feeding sounds to whales in Hawaii waters, the mammals turned around and swam toward the sound, a sound

understanding of dolphins



COURTESY OF ELIA HERMAN

Phoenix, one of the dolphins in his groundbreaking re-
son, at Kewalo Basin Marine Mammal Laboratory in

similar to a trumpet.

Throughout his career, Herman authored and co-authored more than 160 scientific reports.

"He was incredibly prolific," said Elia Herman. He also mentored dozens of graduate students, many of whom have become leaders in marine mammal science.

Adam Pack, professor and chairman of the departments of psychology and biology at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, first worked with Herman at Kewalo Basin as an intern.

"When I came to the lab and he greeted me and showed me the scientific studies, it was like a new world opened up for me," said Pack. "Lou is a giant in the field of marine mammal science, the likes (of) which we will never see again."

He also was an incredible teacher and loyal friend, he said.

"He had an immeasurable impact on my life," he added.

Herman and Pack founded the Dolphin Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the research and conservation of dolphin and whale populations.

Herman achieved worldwide recognition for his breakthroughs. In 2008, "his work was listed among the top 100 pioneering accomplishments" at UH in the 100-year history of the institution, according to his daughter.

Although he retired from UH in 2006, Herman continued his research.

Herman's work was interrupted in May 1977, when two former caretakers at Kewalo Basin removed two Atlantic bottlenose dolphins, Puka and Kea, and released them into the wild.

Herman had spent eight

years teaching the dolphins to respond to simple orders like "fetch the ball" and "touch the ring." All that work was lost with their release.

Herman said he was sure the two females died because they lacked the experience to survive in the wild.

The two former workers, Ken LeVasseur and Steven Sipman, later were convicted of first-degree theft.

Elia Herman said her father will be best remembered for his wit and curiosity, and for being a supportive husband and father. "He has definitely been my mentor, my soccer and swimming coach, my friend."

Herman's wife of almost 55 years said he embraced life.

"We were best friends of course," she said. "We were really a team."

Herman is also survived by numerous nephews and nieces; and great- and great-great nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. Aug. 26 at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl.

In lieu of flowers, Herman's family requests donations be made to The Dolphin Institute, in care of Adam Pack, 1178 North Kumuwaina Place, Hilo, HI 96720.

The organization plans to set up a Louis M. Herman Scholarship Fund that will support student research into the cognition and behavior of dolphins and whales.