

Eternity and the Horseshoe Crab
By Sam Berliner III

Last night, as I stood on the sea wall at the beach and wondered at the suck of the Sound and the color and organisms that, accelerated by the incredible heat, multiplied to form a "red tide", there came the great grand-daddy of all horseshoe crabs.

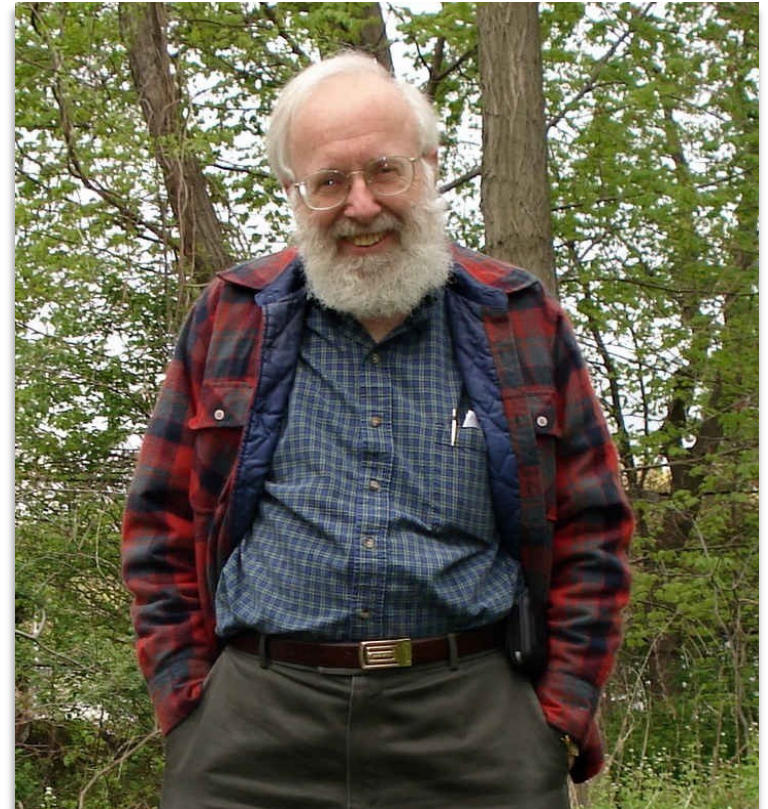
Floating along listlessly, propelled hither and yon by the waves, he was the biggest specimen I ever recall seeing; so big that he had a mantle of good-sized barnacles, some fifty to a hundred of them, which in no way diminished his appearance, but rather emphasized it. There was a hole in his carapace, rough shaped, about the size of a nickel, and the seawater squirted in and out with each wave. The littoral drift carried him along slowly and the waves pulled him back and forth. His enormity in shape and age pulled at me and I toyed with the idea of lifting him from the water. Would he desiccate properly before rotting? What would I do with such a giant, anyway? Had he died long since of the blow that holed his back or had the red tide done him in? Had he, perhaps, died of sheer old age, which well he might have done? So many unanswered and unanswerable questions, as in all of life!

So, I stood there, still unmoving, and thought of time, of the immense span which this once-living fossil represented, of the great changes which have been wrought in his own lifetime, and, of course, of the changes sweeping over me, here and now.

And, as I pondered weightily on such matters, he slowly turned away and sculled gently but powerfully against the tide into deep water. Perhaps he was aware of me, looming above him and decided that, since I made no move, I was not alive and, therefore, not worth the attempt at communication after all.—*Sea Cliff, Long Island, New York, 23 July 1980*

The foregoing was given publicly first as a reading for a service presented by the author at the North Shore Unitarian Universalist Church in Plandome, Long Island, New York, on 10 August 1980 and again at the Muttontown Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Muttontown, Long Island, on 17 January 1988. It was also published in the 1985/86 issue of *OUTGROWTH*, a literary journal from Plandome Press

Visit www.sbiii.com for more of Sam's writings



A Service in Celebration of the Life of
Samuel "Sam" Berliner, III

February 15, 1934 ~ December 29, 2020

The Winchester Unitarian Society
October 17, 2021

