

Dr. James Franklin Scudday

by Dr. A. Michael Powell

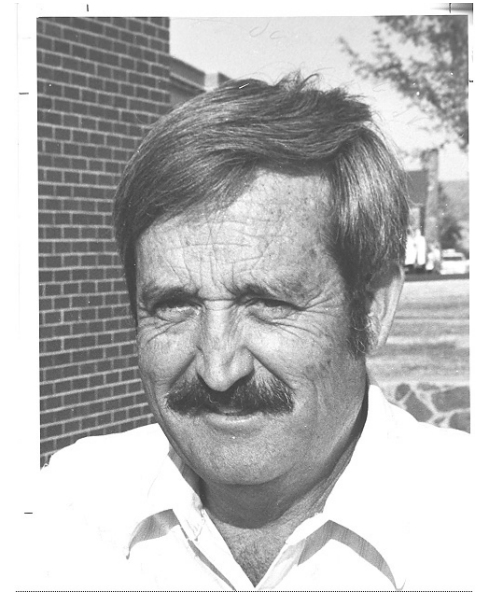
Dr. James (Jim) Franklin Scudday passed away 24 Sep 2009 in Alpine, Texas, at the age of 80, after an extended illness. Jim was a cofounder of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (CDRI), and had been associated with the organization since its inception. He was a member of the Board of Directors, served as its Vice President from 1974 to 1986, its President for nine years (1986 to 1995), and after 1995 again as Vice President for several years.

Jim Scudday was born 16 Sep 1929 in Alpine, where he first attended public schools, before moving to Fort Stockton; he graduated from Fort Stockton High School in 1948. One of Jim's closest friends in high school was Clayton W. Williams, a long-time Board member and ardent supporter of the CDRI. Jim earned a B. S. degree in Biology (1952) at Sul Ross State University, a Master of Natural Science degree (1962) at the University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho, and a Ph. D. degree in Wildlife Science (1971) at Texas A&M University, College Station. He served for two years (1954-56) in the U. S. Army.

Jim began his teaching career in Texas public schools, first at Fort Stockton High School (1952-1954), and then at Andrews High School (1956-1962). He joined the Sul Ross faculty as Instructor of Biology in 1962, advanced through the academic ranks, and was

promoted to full Professor in 1976. Jim taught at Sul Ross for 31 years before retiring in 1995 (two years of that 33 year span were spent in residence at College Station). Upon retirement Jim was named Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Biology, highest honor for retired teachers, by the Texas State University System Board of Regents.

In 1964 Jim and I began to discuss the development of a research organization featuring the Chihuahuan Desert region, at that time one of the least explored biotic provinces in North America. During the next 10 years additional colleagues were brought into the discussion, and a full fledged concept was developed. In 1974, thanks to impetus provided by Dr. Grainger Hunt, the CDRI was incorporated. Along with Dr. Scudday (vertebrate biology), cofounders of the institute were Dr. Hunt (population genetics, zoology), Dr. A. Michael Powell (plant



biology), Dr. Art Link (geology), and Dr. Dwight Deal (geology). Over the years Jim Scudday has given significant administrative and biological direction to the CDRI. Not to be overlooked, however, is another lasting, pragmatic, albeit indirect contribution. At present the CDRI Permanent Endowment Fund exceeds one million dollars, largely because donors believed in the CDRI and respected Jim Scudday.

Jim was a dedicated teacher of biology at Sul Ross State University. His classes were always full. Classroom presentations, emphasizing integrated, relevant information, were consistently interesting to students, causing them to anticipate the next session. Jim taught a wide array of undergraduate and graduate courses, including general zoology, comparative vertebrate anatomy, herpetology, mammalogy, ornithology, ichthyology, and animal systematics. These courses and more were taught

with a high level of expertise, attesting to his extensive knowledge in all areas of vertebrate biology. He was a certified wildlife biologist. Jim thoroughly enjoyed spending weekends in the field with students, frequently accompanied by his wife, Fern. In spite of heavy teaching loads, Jim still found time to carry out significant research, publish in scientific journals, and to prepare numerous comprehensive vertebrate surveys for the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and National Park Service. He was highly respected by his colleagues in the Department of Biology, and by other faculty members and administrators at Sul Ross. During his tenure at Sul Ross he directed well over 100 students in graduate programs and thesis projects. Over the years an impressive number of these students have maintained contact with Jim, never failing to express appreciation for what he had done for them as a teacher and as a friend. Jim was largely responsible or building a vertebrate collection of over 16,000 specimens at Sul Ross, one of the finest such research and teaching collections in the southwest. In 1998 it was officially named the James F. Scudday Vertebrate Collection by the Board of Regents, Texas State University System.

Jim is survived by his wife of 59 years, LaFerne Nance Scudday (Alpine); brother, Walter (Bud) Scudday (Georgetown; wife Susie); daughter, Sharon Scudday Foley (Littleton, Colorado), two grandchildren, Ryan (Colorado; wife Lizzy), Kathleen (Troy, New York); daughter, Marsha Scudday Nickell (Jackson, Wyoming; husband Scott),

grandson Garrett; son, Jim Scudday (Stinnett, Texas; wife Tina), two grandchildren, Dusty and Cheyanne; nephews Dr. Bohn D. Allen (Arlington, Texas; wife Ann) and Col. Jack (Don) McNamara (Alpine; wife Bonnie); and numerous other nephews and nieces.

Jim Scudday was widely regarded as an extraordinarily gifted and knowledgeable natural history biologist. I am proud that he was a special friend and colleague for 47 years.

Mike Powell,
Herbarium, Department of Biology,
Sul Ross State University.

Some family information was taken from an earlier preparation by Sharon Foley.

In Memorium

Jim's family requested that gifts made to the CDRI in Jim's memory be used to construct a stone bench in the memorial grove.

This bench, surrounded by the trees and landscape that Jim loved will be an ideal memorial for an extraordinary man.

If you would like to make a gift in Jim's memory, please send to the James F. Scudday Memorial Fund, Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute, P.O. Box 905, Fort Davis, TX 79734.



▲ Mike Powell (left), Hal Flanders (center), and Jim Scudday (right) accept an award in honor of the CDRI's Chihuahuan Desert film series.