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IN MEMORIAM: BENJAMIN FRANKLIN MCCAMEY

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Benjamin Franklin McCamey, 88, passed away on 25 December 2007 in Atlanta. Known to all simply as Frank, he lived and worked in Georgia for more than 30 years before his death. He was a life member and former president of GOS.

Frank was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. His interest in birds and nature developed early in his life. Like so many of his generation, he was an active Boy Scout and his father would often let Frank explore in the woods while he was fishing nearby. When Frank was a senior in high school, a teacher encouraged him to apply for a university education. He was accepted at Yale University, where he completed his bachelor's degree and then earned a master's degree in forestry, followed by a Ph.D. in ornithology from the University of Connecticut, where he served as a professor of forestry and wildlife management from 1948 to 1962.

Frank then left academia to begin what would become his life's work with nature centers and sanctuaries. For some 10 years he served with numerous environmental education organizations, including Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, the Cincinnati Nature Center, and the Seven Ponds Nature Center in Michigan. Much earlier, he held posts with the Boy Scouts, the Boston Museum of Science, and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Early in the 1970s, Frank and his wife, Ginny, moved to Atlanta, where he was associated with the late John Ripley Forbes and the Natural Science for Youth Foundation (NSYF). Frank was instrumental in helping to establish 29 nature centers throughout the United States. Among them are Georgia nature centers we now treasure, including the Elachee Nature Center, Chattahoochee Nature Center, Reynolds Nature Preserve, Sandy Creek Nature Center, and Atlanta Outdoor Activity Center. What a wonderful legacy he left us!

Although he was busy with his NSYF work, Frank made time to be very active with GOS, Atlanta Audubon Society, Georgia Botanical Society, and others. He was also one of the founders of the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia. It was fortunate indeed for GOS that Frank took an immediate interest in the society and the executive committee. He was an officer from 1977 to 1985, including serving as president from 1979 to 1983. During this time GOS was essentially on the brink of insolvency. Frank reenergized the executive committee with his leadership and helped to develop a course of action to successfully achieve financial stability. Even after his years as an officer, Frank rarely missed a meeting of the executive committee until his health began to fail.

Frank received the Earle R. Greene Memorial Award in 1988 for his service to GOS, appropriately enough at a meeting hosted in part by the Elachee Nature Center in Gainesville. In 2005, he was awarded the Dr. Eugene Odum Outstanding Lifetime Service Award by the Environmental Education Alliance. He is survived by his wife and his daughter, Eleanor Lund, as well as a sister, Helen McGoldrick, 2 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren.

Glimpses

Frank encountered Ginny for the first time while hiking in Connecticut. He must have decided immediately that she was the one, for after just 3 dates she accepted his marriage proposal. Thanks, Ginny, for sharing Frank with so many of us over the years.

During World War II, Frank was a meteorologist in the Army Air Corps and for a time he, Roger Tory Peterson, and George M. Sutton were assigned to the same unit. Ginny remembers that they enjoyed many evenings of conversation and discussion at the kitchen table. After the war ended, Frank volunteered for a tour of duty in Greenland and likely was the only person there who delighted in being outside exploring nature.

Carol Lambert remembers how helpful Frank was to her during the development of the Wetlands Center, and he gave her voluminous materials to use. That would have been easy for Frank, because he was well known for keeping everything.

Frank and the Cincinnati Warbler? The story is too long to relate here, but Frank's discovery of what turned out to be a hybridization of 2 warbler species eventually linked him in the ornithological literature to 2 of history's ornithological giants: Elliott Coues and George Sutton. You can find the whole story at: www.cincinnatibirds.com/history/CincinnatiWarbler.php

Finally, Frank had that great gift to lead by example, by suggestion and by persuasion, as well as the gift of listening to others. As can be seen in the photograph that accompanies this memorial, he most often was smiling. He loved people.

Acknowledgments

I thank Ginny McCamey, Georgann Schmalz, and Carol Lambert for their important contributions to this memorial.



Frank McCamey on Hawk Mountain. Photo courtesy of Ginny McCamey.