OBITUARY

TERRY LAMON YATES: 1950–2007

Life is short, the art long, opportunity fleeting,
experience treacherous, judgment difficult.

— Hippocrates (Greek, ca. 460–370 BC)

On 11 December 2007, the science of mammalogy lost one of its most valued and influential leaders. Terry Lamon Yates succumbed to complications of treatments for an aggressive form of brain cancer after a brief but courageous fight. He was born on 17 March 1950, in Mayfield, Kentucky, the oldest son of Ellen Wanda Byrd and William Hanley Yates. Terry’s only sibling was a brother, Johnny. He is survived by his wife Nancy Fennell, his 2 sons Brian Christopher and Michael Ryan, and daughter-in-law Laura Manchéno Maciá.

Over the last 30 years, Terry, usually accompanied by Nancy, his bride of 36 years, attended all but 1 of the annual meetings of the American Society of Mammalogists (ASM). It was not uncommon to hear comments about how well Nancy and Terry enjoyed each other’s company. Their relationship was special. Terry and Nancy 1st met when she was a junior in high school, and he was a freshman at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. Terry convinced Nancy, who lived in Houston, to attend Murray State, and they later married on 7 August 1971, when Terry was a senior and Nancy was a sophomore. Terry raised the money to buy Nancy’s engagement ring by returning soft drink bottles collected from dorm trash cans, road sides, and other places, and by running a trapline before class. Their oldest son, Brian, was born in Lubbock, Texas, on the night Terry passed his oral comprehensive exams for his Ph.D. Michael was born in New Mexico after Terry was a faculty member at the University of New Mexico.

Terry’s education as a biologist began with his bachelor’s degree from Murray State University in 1972. Terry then completed his master’s degree in biology from Texas A&M University in 1975, studying North American moles under the guidance of David J. Schmidly. He later received his doctorate in biology from Texas Tech University in 1978, studying systematics of moles of the family Talpidae under the direction of Robert J. Baker. Dr. Yates spent his entire professional career, 1978 until his death, in the employment of the University of New Mexico. Terry was hired at the University of New Mexico when James Findley was departmental chair. The formal job description for Terry’s new position was to teach anatomy and physiology for nursing and pharmacy students. Hiring Terry to teach this course embraced Findley’s philosophy that if you want a job done right, hire a mammalogist.

Terry Yates was the Vice President for Research and Economic Development at the University of New Mexico at the time of his death. Among other accomplishments, his efforts led to the $10 million renovation of facilities for the Museum of Southwestern Biology. Terry also was no stranger to Washington, D.C. He led a number of efforts on behalf of mammalogists, including 2 stints as Program Director at the National Science Foundation and as President of the National Collections Alliance.