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Frank M. Beer (1903-1991)

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FRANK M. BEER (1903–1991)

Frank M. Beer was born in Silverton, Oregon, December 5, 1903 and died in Woodburn, Oregon, December 15, 1991. He is survived by his son, Frank S. of Aspen Colorado and one grandchild; brothers Earl of Brooks and Marvin of Canby, Oregon. He and five brothers were raised in the Willamette Valley. He graduated from Hubbard High School in 1922, then worked at various jobs in agriculture, logging and railroad to earn money for college. He received his BS, University of Oregon, 1929 and his MS, University of Washington, 1939. He married Vesta Scholl, June 1929, at Hubbard and they moved to Aberdeen, Idaho where he taught science and coached sports. The next year he taught at Castle Rock, Washington and coached a state championship basketball team. It was about this time that his passion for beetles emerged. He then taught high school in Oregon, at Grants Pass and Salem. Frank started work at Oregon State University in 1947, and in 1949 took a full time faculty position, General Science Department. He retired as Professor Emeritus, 1969. He was a member of the National Scientific Honor Society, the Coleopterists Society (charter member) and the Oregon Entomological Society.

During his years of avid beetle-chasing, which included travels over much of the U.S. and Mexico, Frank amassed an impressively well-curated, large comprehensive, specialized collection. He had the uncanny ability to ferret out Buprestidae in their host plants, to discover unknown hosts by chopping out or rearing adults. He continued this endeavor well into his eighties, exploring the serene landscapes surrounding his home in Yuma, Arizona, bringing back his booty and carefully preparing it—this and working in his vegetable garden until failing eyesight, advancing arthritis and other health problems prevailed. To quote a letter from his son, kindly provided to me by W. F. Barr: “He was a tough old guy—80+ years old, wandering through the deserts and mountains of Arizona—collecting beetles, sleeping in the back of his pickup truck, eating a handful of

granola for breakfast . . .” In his last letter to me, dated February 24, 1989, Frank told of problems with osteoarthritis, his considerable loss of mobility and failing eyesight. Ever optimistic, however, he said, “. . . as the weather warms . . . I’ll try and spend much more of my time out . . . looking for tiger beetles . . . Will I be able to see these critters, and if I can will I be able to net them?”

In 1986 Frank donated his collection to the William F. Barr Entomological Museum, University of Idaho, Moscow, along with extensive field notes. It was facilitated by his sister-in-law, Dorothy Hole; longtime friend and fellow “buprestophile,” William F. Barr; and the museum collection manager, Frank Merickel. According to the latter, the Beer Collection consists of about 8,770 Buprestidae, 2,980 Cicindelidae and 1,305 Carabidae: Cychrini (almost entirely *Scaphinotus*). Between 1940 and 1974, Frank authored or co-authored nine publications on Buprestidae. Perhaps his most notable work, “The Coleoptera of Washington: Buprestidae,” was published with Melville H. Hatch, in which much of his artwork appears. He was an accomplished scientific illustrator. In 1971 he described the remarkable Oregon Cascades-endemic carabid, *Scaphinotus hatchi* Beer.

Frank was one of the nicest and most generous people I have known, a true gentleman. Should anything go wrong or otherwise frustrate him, his strongest reaction was to say, “Oh, pshaw!”—I can still hear that favorite expression of his. He always was free with information on collecting localities, techniques, and with duplicate specimens. I spent many an enjoyable hour of visitation and beetle talk (and drooling over his collection) in “The Bug Room” at his home in Corvallis.

After retirement the Beers spent cooler months in Yuma, and they traveled widely together. Again from Frank’s letter, relating to their trip to Mexico in 1971: “. . . I met a lad along Cihuatlán River [Jalisco] with a gun . . . gave him my net and got him interested in catching some tigers for me. The winter there was nice but I found practically no bups.” After Vesta died in 1979, he took permanent residence in Yuma until failing health necessitated his return to be near family in Oregon. To wax anecdotally: during one of his visits, I asked how a native Oregonian such as he could stand the oppressive heat of hottest Arizona, especially sans air conditioner in either home or vehicle. He said the secret was to spend as little time as possible in air conditioned public places—to keep acclimatized; and while at home, especially during the tedious hours of beetle work, to sit in his underwear, taking advantage of a fan and cross ventilation.

Friends, fellow coleopterists, all who knew him miss him. Frank, we wish you well in your quest for that “Great Buprestid in the Sky”!

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NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The nominations committee (Dan Young, chair; Dave Kavanaugh; Ed Riley) has lined up the following slate of candidates for the Councilor slots that will be vacated this year:

Fred Andrews
Shawn Clark
Jeff Huether
John Jackman
Mike Thomas