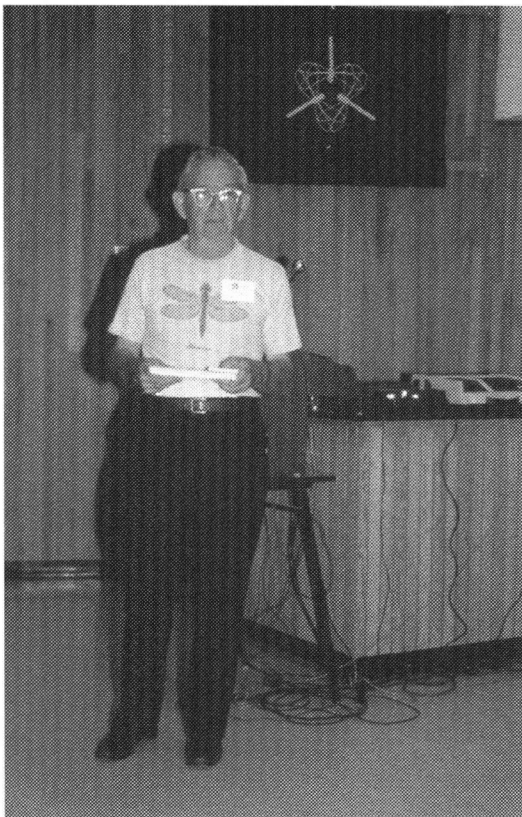


OBITUARY

MINTER JACKSON WESTFALL, Jr

A short biography of Prof. Minter J. Westfall, Jr (28 Jan. 1916 - 20 July 2003), teacher, entomologist, and a leading odonatologist of his time, is presented. His odonatological bibliography post-1985 follows (1986-2000; 15 titles).

An extremely sad moment befell the odonatological world this past summer, a moment that all those who study dragonflies were hoping would be postponed for a long time. Minter Jackson Westfall, Jr died peacefully at his home in Gainesville, Georgia on July 20, 2003, at the age of 87. With Minter's passing, a chapter in the history of odontology is closed. He will be revered along with the likes of other great 20th century odonatologists before him, such as Calvert, Walker, Williamson, Montgomery and Lieftinck, to name just a few. He touched the lives and careers of nearly all members of SIO (*Societas Internationalis Odonatologica*), but his reach went to all corners of the globe as he corresponded with and assisted nearly the entire world dragonfly community; in short, he was a cornerstone and anchor for the science of odontology. His strength faded only in the last couple of



Dr M.J. Westfall, delivering a paper at the 7th International Symposium of Odonatology, Calgary, Canada, 14-21 August 1983.
— [Photo M. Kiauta]

years. The last time most of us close to him greeted him was at Cades Cove, Tennessee, when at the age of 85 he came to help inventory the Odonata of the Smoky Mountains National Park. To say Minter was devoted to dragonfly study is an understatement, but he was even more devoted to his family and his Christian faith. He is survived by his son David, daughters Carol and Holly, and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. I speak for all of SIO in offering condolences to each of them.

Minter's dear wife, Margaret, passed away three years ago (see *Argia* 12[1]: 4-5; 2000]. Their son David said that in his words, his father was "ready to go join Margaret." Through their years together, they graced many national and international symposia on Odonata and traveled on collecting trips to many parts of the world. They made lasting friendships wherever they went because they got involved with and cared about people. Throughout his career, from his first publication on Odonata at age 25 (1941, Notes on Florida Odonata, *Ent. News* 52: 15-18, 31-34) until his last in 2000 (*Dragonflies of North America*, revised edition), Minter was respected and renowned by hundreds of odonatologists. For those who did not get the chance to meet him, his books, papers, and letters nourished all.

I previously touched on much of Minter's biography (*Odonatologica* 15: 5-17; 1986) when SIO celebrated his 70th birthday. Here I will briefly recount some of the salient moments in his life story for those who have not had opportunity to read the previous biography. Minter was a natural teacher, beginning at a very early age teaching nature study to boy scouts in North Carolina, all the while slipping in facts about dragonflies. One of his favorite stories came from this happy time. He had told the scouts about the primitive-looking dragonfly, *Tachopteryx thoreyi*, and whoever caught one would earn extra credit. One day they were hiking a trail when a fine male landed on one boy's cap. Minter yelled the boy's name and said, "On your head, a *Tachopteryx*!" He then told how he could just see the boy's mind working. All of a sudden, the boy plopped his net down over his head and trapped the *Tachopteryx*! Another favorite of his was Jerrell Daigle's famous saga concerning a Wisconsin black bear (*Argia* 14[1]: 15; 2002): "I was running down the road, with Dr Westfall right on my heels; we were trying to net a slow flying *Somatochlora kennedyi* overhead, when I happened to glance back over my shoulder and laid saucer eyes upon an upcoming black bear loping along right towards us! If the episode were ever to be made into a motion picture called Ungentle Ben our ensuing conversation might be used for the script, and went something like: (me) "Minter! Look out! Bear!, Bear!", (Dr Westfall) "Where? Where?", (me) "There, There! Right behind us!", (Dr Westfall) "Oh! Oh!", (me) "Run! Run!", We did about 100 yards in what was probably Olympic class time, and — when we looked back (fortunately for the bear) he had decided he couldn't stand any more of our dialogue and turned off into the bushes and trotted away". By the way, about midway through this adventure, Jerrell thought he could easily escape being eaten by outpacing an old man, but Minter passed him!

Early on, Minter was greatly influenced by Edward M. Davis and James G. Needham, both of whom steered him toward dragonfly study. He completed his Ph.D. at Cornell

in 1947 and found a teaching position at the University of Florida. His career in Zoology there spanned 38 years. Throughout that time, he gave undivided attention to every student who sought help, biology major or not, however long it took. At times his devotion to students took valuable time from his research on Odonata. At other times, he was responding to letters from around the world posing difficult questions on odonate taxonomy. He still had to find time for attending staff meetings, counseling graduate students, refereeing papers, and preparing the newsletter *Selysia*. All in all he authored or coauthored approximately 60 refereed journal papers and book chapters on dragonflies, plus he contributed many notes concerning Odonata and odonatologists in society newsletters. In hindsight, I think his greatest professional contributions were (1) the help he gave to others who were interested in studying dragonflies (he was so generous with his knowledge and time, it often meant delaying work on his own papers), and (2) his use of larvae to clarify taxonomic relationships. I find his papers on the neotropical fauna invaluable and wish he had published more.

Minter introduced 17 new taxa of Odonata to science, namely the genus *Elasmothemis* (1988), and 15 species and one subspecies: *Enallagma davis* (1943), *Libellula needhami* (1943), *Macromia margarita* (1947), *Celithemis bertha leonora* (1952), *Gomphus* (*Gomphurus*) *septima* (1956), *Philogenia leonora* (1956, and *Philogenia zeteki* (1956, with R. B. Cumming), *Telebasis byersi* (1957), *Protoneura viridis* (1964), *Gomphus* (*Gomphurus*) *ozarkensis* (1975), *Protoneura sanguinipes* (1987), *Micrathyria divergens*, *M. dunklei*, *M. occipita*, and *M. pseudeximia* (1992), and lastly, *Erythrodiplax bromeliicola* (2000). One of Minter's favorite subjects for study was the larval stage. He reared and described too many taxa to list here, but most notable were his papers on larval Gomphidae and Zygoptera. When he discovered the larva of *Elasmothemis canacrioides*, which was so different from the larvae of *Dythemis*, it convinced him that the group deserved generic rank. Indeed, many of Minter's concepts on generic definitions were partly based on his broad knowledge of larval anatomy.

In the early 1980s, along with Bastiaan Kiauta, Minter was instrumental in establishing the International Odonata Research Institute (IORI), which eventually was based in Gainesville, Florida. He also served SIO by acting as the society's U. S. National Representative, Associate Editor of *Odonatologica*, and serving on numerous councils. He attended every SIO International Symposium from Karlsruhe (Germany) in 1973 up to Osaka (Japan) in 1993. After his retirement in April 1985 from the University of Florida, as Professor Emeritus, Minter took an office at the Florida State Collection of Arthropods (FSCA, housed near the University of Florida in Gainesville), pursuing his interests in dragonfly systematics. However, for five years after retiring, he still taught Biology half time at the University. In 1987, Minter stepped down as Editor of *Selysia*, the newsletter of SIO, after 17 years of devoted service, mainly so he could devote more time to finishing his damselfly book and other publications. When he left the FSCA in 1996 to move close to his son David in Gainesville, Georgia, Minter left a file drawer with several unfinished manuscripts and drawings on temperate and tropical Odonata larvae. He also turned over the direction of the IORI to Bill Mauffray, who maintains

that position today.

Minter was elected President of SIO in 1983, serving in this capacity through 1985. Earlier, in 1979, he had been awarded the Membership of Honor in S.I.O. with a rousing tribute during the international meeting in Ste Thérèse, Canada. In 1986 the same society paid tribute to him on his 70th birthday by devoting an entire issue of the journal *Odonatologica* to him. Scientific contributions to that issue included studies on the taxonomic, ecological, behavioral, life history, and physiological nature of Odonata, a vivid conveyance of the breadth of his influence. Also in 1986 Minter was granted Emeritus Membership in the Entomological Society of America. Less than a year ago (see *Argia* 14[3]: 4; 2002), Minter was bestowed an Honorary Membership in the Dragonfly Society of the Americas, proposed by one of his students, Sidney W. Dunkle. Many other honors and tributes were conferred upon him over the years.

The respect and admiration other odonatologists had for Minter Westfall is evidenced by the ten taxa that have been named for him: *Metaleptobasis westfalli* Cumming (1954), *Enallagma westfalli* Donnelly (1964), *Hetaerina westfalli* Rácenis (1968), *Ophiogomphus westfalli* Cook & Daigle (1985), *Epigomphus westfalli* Donnelly (1986), *Philogenia minteri* Dunkle (1986), *Gomphus westfalli* Carle & May (1987), *Epipleoneura westfalli* Machado (1986), *Argia westfalli* Garrison (1996) and *Metaleptobasis minteri* Daigle (2003).

I first met Dr Minter Westfall in 1968 when I went to Gainesville to attend the University of Florida and begin pursuit of a Master's degree in Entomology. It didn't take long to know I was in the right place. Minter put me to work right away researching damselfly taxonomy for his forthcoming *Zygoptera Manual*, which much later (1996), with the tremendous collaboration of Mike L. May, became the sequel to the famous 1955 *Anisoptera Manual* that Minter had coauthored with James G. Needham. The *Anisoptera Manual* was also revised (2000), again with Mike's help, and together these two books serve as the foundation for identification of North American Odonata.

Through the 35 years I knew him, three of Minter's qualities influenced me greatly, though I'm not sure he consciously taught these things. These are: (1) study the entire biology of dragonflies if you want to understand their true nature, (2) take great care that you have it right before you publish (or edit and re-edit), and (3) persevere. I have never met another person more tenacious in their approach to furthering scientific knowledge. When on a seemingly impossible bibliographic search, he was a bloodhound. And watching him dredge all day with that cumbersome steel Needham scraper is etched in my mind forever. I think I am going to miss him in more ways than I realize right now.

For those who didn't know Minter Westfall, I can give you some idea of the man. For most of his life, Minter could see with but one eye and he wore glasses — I see with both of my eyes and for most of my life haven't needed glasses, but I wish I could see as clearly as he did. Minter was hearing impaired — I'm not, but I wish I could hear as plainly as he did. Minter was slight in stature but had strength and held an unparalleled love for the natural world — for that, I will always look up to him, even though I towered over him. He was also a great conversationalist.

Writing this obituary for a colleague of Minter Westfall's stature has been an honor but at the same time, the loss of a friend also makes it a difficult task. On my desk is a stainless steel letter opener with an embossed leather handle, a Ph.D. graduation gift from him in August of 1975. There is one other memento I hold dear — before I left Gainesville that fall, he gave me an already well-aged Swift 10X hand lens that he had used for many years. It is now badly worn, and I have put it away for safekeeping; I've decided it has seen the last of its days in the field. With heavy heart, these are the tangible objects I will have to always rekindle thoughts of a great odonatologist, mentor and friend. But I also feel forever rich in a way, for having known Minter Westfall gives me added inspiration to continue pursuing knowledge of the Odonata. I think he would like that.

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* For 1936-1985, see *Odonatologica* 15(1986): 14-17; — notes (often published anonymously) in *Selysia* are omitted.