

JIM SLATER, THEN AND NOW

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One drives just beyond Mansfield Hollow Lake in Mansfield Center, Connecticut, to find an old cape nestled among venerable sugar maples. Jim and Betty Slater have lived there for more than 30 years. Golly, part “wolf,” part German shepherd, greets visitors at the door. He walked into the yard one day several years ago without a collar, and decided to make the Slaters' home his as well. Many of their other pets (6 cats, 4 tortoises, 3 snakes and a twenty year old “suwannee chicken”) arrived in similar fashion.

When a visitor steps inside, there is no doubt that this is the home of collectors. Least apparent, at first anyway, is the world-class collection of Hemiptera, housed in a sunny new addition built to hold insect cabinets, file drawers, a work table, and all of the other tools a working systematic entomologist requires. It is easy to see how Jim still gets so much bug taxonomy done, working in such pleasant surroundings.

Original illustrations of hemipteran taxa adorn every wall. Jim realized early on that scientific illustrations were crucial to the quality and impact of his scientific papers. When in Europe in 1960, he became acquainted with Arthur Smith, an illustrator at the British Museum who had plenty of experience with true bugs. Arthur was already distinguished in his field, and produced many splendid pen and ink drawings of the Blissinae, now beautifully framed and proudly displayed with the work of a new generation. Jim worked closely with these talented young individuals (Molly Stock, Karen Stoutsenberger, Kathleen Schmidt, Steve Thurston, and Mary Jane Spring), and they produced the technically accurate yet aesthetically pleasing illustrations that grace his subsequent papers.

Probably even more noticeable to the first-time visitor than the bug drawings, though, is the vast array of milk glass displayed everywhere: more in one place than anyone is ever likely to encounter, except perhaps a glass museum! All the pieces are, of course, arranged systematically. The purple-slab hens are lined up next to the blue hens, which are next to the more familiar white hens. Systematic entomology shares more with “milk-glass-ology” than one might at first suspect. There are obvious parallels between these disciplines as far as acquiring new specimens goes (see Dick Baranowski's comments below), but even more fascinating is the fact that Jim has written a key to milk glass hens. Leave it to a keen taxonomic eye to be able to recognize the authentic from the copy, and to translate the relevant features into “key characters” that allow easy distinction for those with less acute “vision.” Milk-glass has to be easier than the genus *Ozophora*! Like the milkglass, the cast iron trivets prominently displayed on living room and kitchen walls originally belonged to Slater's mother. Perhaps it was she who instilled the “collector's instinct” in her only child.

As a boy, Slater was already interested in the natural world, from birds to herps, especially snakes. Betty Slater remembers Jim being very interested in snakes when they met as undergraduates at the University of Illinois, and recollects that even

after her husband began work on his Ph.D. at Iowa State College, he still considered herpetology as a career. In fact, at the end of his tour of duty with the Navy during World War II, Jim brought a box of poisonous snakes back from Okinawa and gave them to a zoo in Chicago!

So Jim, under the guidance of Dr. Harry Hazelton Knight, professor of entomology at Iowa State, prepared a dissertation on the value of the female genitalia as taxonomic characters in the Miridae. He produced what is still the only comprehensive work on the subject, and played a critical role in advocating the use of genitalic morphology in bug classification. Although he has maintained an abiding interest in the Miridae, after moving to The University of Connecticut in 1953 Jim turned to the study of Lygaeidae.

When Jim started his studies of lygaeid bugs the most active worker in North America was Harry Barber, a retired New York secondary school teacher. Barber was very cooperative, and Jim's work on the Lygaeidae progressed rapidly. In 1955 Jim published his first large paper on the group, a world revision of the sedge-feeding subfamily Pachygronthinae.

Jim then set out, with support from the National Science Foundation, on his biggest single project ever, the 1,600+ page, 2 volume, *A Catalogue of the Lygaeidae of the World*. Studying literature and type specimens required an extended stay in Europe, and much travelling between major museums. He was accompanied for at least part of this time by Betty and three of their four children (Alex, Jackie, and Sam; their youngest, Lydia, not having been born yet). Imagine traipsing across Europe, from museum to museum, camping with 3 children in a Volkswagen bus! We continually marvel that something as comprehensive as the catalog could have been produced without all the modern conveniences that today we take for granted! Photocopying machines were in their infancy, personal computers had not been invented, and everything was typed or handwritten on 3 by 5 cards. The catalog was quite a feat indeed.

Jim then devoted nearly 20 years of his professional life to the study of the Blissinae. Numerous taxonomic revisions and an analysis of host-plant preferences were a prelude to his fine compendium, "Systematics, Phylogeny, and Zoogeography of the Blissinae of the World." His interest in this subfamily was piqued when he was asked to prepare the lygaeid fascicle for Lund University's series *South African Animal Life*. Based on specimens collected on the Lund University expedition in 1950–1951, this work helped focus Jim's research and field work for the coming decades.

Field work, whether in nearby colonial graveyards or far afield, has always been an important aspect of Jim's work, influencing his ideas and those of his students, and providing raw material for many taxonomic papers. Our knowledge of the Lygaeidae would be far less complete had not he and Betty undertaken what must at times have been a trying experience for both of them—an 8-month collecting trip to South Africa during 1967–1968. After all, here was the family again (this time without Alex but with young Lydia), thousands of miles from home, in a strange land accompanied by a graduate assistant whom they barely knew. Nevertheless, those eight short months yielded more lygaeids than even Jim had ever imagined. He returned to South Africa in 1970, only to have his trip interrupted in its first days by a ruptured disc in his lower back. He continued to do field work in subsequent years, visiting Australia, Panama, and the West Indies. These trips provided not only many spec-

imens of new taxa, but also valuable biological data on host plants, associations with other insects, and population numbers. Many contacts with foreign colleagues were also established, resulting in fruitful collaboration and numerous publications.

Jim has more recently devoted a good deal of time to an even more diverse subfamily of lygaeids, the primarily ground-dwelling Rhyparochrominae. He has described many new taxa, including the minute Lilliputocorini, and has produced the first tribal phylogeny of this large group.

The lygaeids are not, however, the only heteropteran group to receive his expert taxonomic attentions. Jim has long been interested in other families of bugs, as well as the Heteroptera and their evolution in general. His broad knowledge is evident in both *How to Know the True Bugs*, written with longtime friend and colleague Dick Baranowski, and the Heteroptera section of McGraw-Hill's encyclopedic *Synopsis of Living Organisms*. His 1957 paper on the Thaumastocoridae, coauthored with Carl Drake, is still the only comprehensive paper ever to appear on the family. This novel little group of bugs from South America, Australia, and India continues to fascinate Jim, and his contributions dealing with them have appeared periodically.

Jim's professional accomplishments have been widely recognized by the scientific community. He was elected president of the Society of Systematic Zoology in 1982. In 1986, the Entomological Society of America's Eastern Branch bestowed upon him the L. O. Howard Distinguished Achievement Award for outstanding contributions in systematic entomology. Other forms of recognition are his receipt of The University of Connecticut Faculty Research Award in 1972 and his election as an honorary life member of the New York Entomological Society.

For a university professor, all of the above mentioned accomplishments would be laudable, but probably thought lacking, if they had not had an influence on others. The professional traditions of which Jim is a part will be perpetuated by his many students, some students of the Heteroptera, some not. All have benefitted from Jim's unwavering commitment to the highest intellectual standards, and those who studied bugs from his amazing knowledge of the Heteroptera. Contributions by a number of former students, as well as those of other admiring colleagues, are included in the present volume.

Perhaps the best indication of colleagues' respect for Jim was the large turnout at his retirement dinner. All who attended, and all who wrote letters commemorating the occasion, warmly congratulated Jim for his contributions to science and service to the university and broader academic community. We offer similar feelings again here, and wish Jim many more years of retirement FUN!



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