

On Bryan Patterson

I would like to add a few words about Pat to the memorial in the News Bulletin of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology (121: 53-55; 1981).

His 1956 paper on the Trinity mammals has probably been as important for the history of mammals as any other paper this century. He resolved the long-standing confusion in the history of mammalian upper molars by showing that the triangle of symmetrodonts is nonhomologous to the triangle of (nonzalambodont) Cenozoic therians. In doing so he had to remove the docodonts from the Pantotheria, and indeed from the Theria. These discoveries are Pat's.

Here and elsewhere he took on conceptually difficult material and made it intelligible. This is rare in any field. So are some other things:

After his description of the Carboniferous enigma Tullimonstrum, Gene Richardson at the Field Museum received letters from several more or less illiterate people in Kenya claiming that something like it lived and danced in the Ayangyangi Swamp of Kenya. An expedition was proposed. Then Pat happened to visit his old stamping grounds, back from Kenya, and was told of this remarkable discovery. He was suitably impressed. However, shortly afterwards Gene received a Christmas card from Cambridge, Mass., bearing the signatures of the several letter-writers. A much better and fuller version of this incident, with copies of the letters and a narrative poem but no mention of the Christmas card, was published in 1969 by the Vanishing Press (E.S. Richardson, Mgr.)

Pat was also warm and generous. I miss him.

Leigh M. Van Valen

