



IN MEMORIAM

Joseph Tracy Gregory
Professor of Paleontology, Emeritus
Curator, University of California Museum of Paleontology, Emeritus
UC Berkeley
1914 – 2007

Joseph T. Gregory, a skilled and influential teacher, an internationally recognized authority on the Triassic faunas of the American Southwest, and student of the history of the field of vertebrate paleontology, passed away in Houston, Texas, on November 18, 2007. He was 93.

Joe was born in Eureka, California, on July 28, 1914. His father's jobs took the family to various places, including Duluth, Minnesota; Copperopolis, California; and eventually to Berkeley, where Joe graduated from Berkeley High School in 1931. That fall he entered the University of California, Berkeley, and began an academic career that was closely entwined with its program in paleontology. An introductory course in paleontology taught by Professor Charles Camp and Professor Ralph Chaney piqued his interest in prehistoric life and its fossil record. In 1934, he accepted an invitation to work during the summer with Professor Camp collecting Triassic vertebrates in Arizona and New Mexico. After receiving his A.B. degree in 1935, Joe undertook graduate studies at Berkeley under the mentorship of Professor R. A. Stirton and received his Ph.D. in 1938. His doctoral research resulted in a definitive analysis of the Miocene mammalian fauna discovered in Big Springs Canyon, South Dakota (University of California Publications, Bulletin of the Department of Geological Sciences 26:307-466, 1942).

During the 1938-39 academic year Joe went to the east coast for postdoctoral study at the American Museum of Natural History and taught at Columbia University. From New York, he moved to Austin to accept a staff position in the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas. A skeleton of Trilophosaurus, which had been discovered by members of the Works Progress Administration's fossil salvage program he supervised, caught his interest. Study of this specimen led to a yearlong position at the University of Michigan as a successor to Professor E. C. Case, who had initially described this remarkably specialized reptile. It was also the first of a series of studies that broadened the scope of his research to include analyses of a variety of fossil reptiles and amphibians.

Joe's paleontological research was interrupted during World War II when he served in the Army Air Force (1942-1946) as a meteorologist stationed in Washington, D.C., and then Guam. After he left active service in 1946, Joe served in the Air Force Reserve until 1964, retiring with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

In 1946, after his active military service, Joe was an instructor in the University of Michigan's geology summer camp in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, and then, in the fall, accepted a position on the faculty of Yale University. He spent the next 14 years (1946-1960) at Yale as a member of the Department of Geology and a curator in the Peabody Museum of Natural History. During those years he carried out research on a variety of vertebrates. These included analyses of the remains of Cretaceous birds, which had been added to the Yale collections many years earlier, and various Paleozoic and Mesozoic vertebrates. Some of the material for the

latter studies came from his continuing fieldwork in the American Southwest. In addition to his influential studies of particular groups of vertebrates, his analyses of the stratigraphy of North American fossiliferous deposits of Triassic age and their correlation with the fossil records of other continents provided a firm foundation for further research.

In 1960, Joe returned to Berkeley to join the faculty as a professor of paleontology, chairman of the Department of Paleontology, and a curator in the University of California Museum of Paleontology. Through the following years he taught courses on the evolution of amphibians, reptiles, and other vertebrates, as well as an influential course on the history of the field of vertebrate paleontology. During his sabbatical leave in 1967-68, Joe was appointed a visiting professor at the Paläontologische Institut, Johannes- Gutenberg Universität, Mainz, Germany, which gave him an opportunity to continue his research on the history of studies of vertebrate paleontology. He continued to be active in field exploration, studying Triassic deposits in Texas and helping collect a variety of Devonian vertebrates from sites in the Roberts Mountains in Nevada. During the summer of 1970 he participated in a summer field course in the Rocky Mountains region sponsored by the Museum of Paleontology. In Montana, Joe and two of his students discovered the skull of an adult Triceratops that is now on exhibit in the foyer of the Marian Koshland Bioscience and Natural Resources Library on the Berkeley campus.

In addition to his service to the department, Joe was the director of the Museum of Paleontology from 1971 to 1975. For decades, a fossil locality on the Blackhawk Ranch, situated on the slopes of Mount Diablo, had been a focus of research and a regular destination for class field trips. In 1971 the ranch was put up for sale. Joe initiated negotiations with the purchaser, the Blackhawk Ranch Corporation, and was instrumental in the eventual donation of a small parcel of land including the fossil locality to the University of California.

A decade before he retired in 1979, Joe followed Professor Charles Camp and took over the editorship of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology's Bibliography of Fossil Vertebrates. This bibliography is of international scope and serves as a significant reference facilitating the research of many of his colleagues. During his tenure as editor, 18 volumes of the bibliography, covering the years from 1969 to 1993, were published. The volumes covering literature published between 1981 and 1993 are now available online through the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology's website. In 1992, the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology established the Joseph T. Gregory Award, which continues to be given annually to recognize members who have followed Joe's path and made significant contributions to the development of the field of vertebrate paleontology and the programs of the society.

Joe's research contributed significantly to a wide range of studies in vertebrate paleontology. He was well regarded throughout his career for his pioneering fieldwork, his dedication to building and curating museum collections, and his devotion to scholarship. Most of his fieldwork was centered on the Triassic reptiles and amphibians of the Dockum and Chinle formations of the American Southwest, notably Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. These animals lived when the first dinosaurs evolved, and his careful stratigraphic work was instrumental in determining the timing of the appearance of these animals and their identifications.

He is survived by his son Carl and daughter-in-law Faye of Houston, Texas. His wife, paleontologist Jane Everest, died in 2005, and their daughter Sarah passed away in 2006.

W. A. Clemens
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