

O B I T U A R Y

Robert F. Clarke (1919–2008)

Dr. Robert F. Clarke, Emporia, Kansas, passed away on 2 April 2008. He was born 18 October 1919 in Portsmouth, Virginia. He married Elaine McNabb of Melvern, Kansas, in 1947. In 1948, he and Elaine moved to Emporia, Kansas, where he was a stationary engineer for the Santa Fe Railroad and a freelance illustrator. Dr. Clarke always had a passion for reptiles and amphibians, and had amassed a large collection. After a rain, one of the biology professors from Kansas State Teachers College (now Emporia State University) found him collecting frogs in a ditch and encouraged him to begin college to pursue his passion, which he did in 1952 at the age of 33. He completed his Bachelors Degree in 1955 and Masters Degree in Biology in 1957 at Emporia State University. He received a prestigious National Academy of Science Fellowship to complete his Doctorate in Zoology at the University of Oklahoma in 1963. The family returned to Emporia and he taught at Roosevelt High School on the Emporia State University campus, then became a Biology Department faculty member at Emporia State University in 1968. He was Chairman of the Department of Biology at Emporia State University from 1972 to 1979. As Assistant to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs from 1969 to 1970, he helped initiate sabbatical leave and tenure policies. He retired from Emporia State University in 1985.

As a naturalist/educator, Robert Clarke taught several areas of biology for more than 30 years, published over 50 works on herpetology, established CPR training programs in Emporia, was instrumental in starting the Chickadee Check-Off Program to assist non-game research in Kansas, was a frequent speaker at colleges and universities as part of the American Institute of Biological Scientists, and was the editor, editor emeritus, and one of the creators of the *Kansas School Naturalist*. As an artist/naturalist, he was ranked in the top ten of Kansas wildlife artists. He designed and illustrated numerous association conference covers and illustrated several covers of the *Kansas School Naturalist*. He developed and illustrated over 100 cartoon-like panels entitled "Something Wild" that appeared in over 25 Kansas newspapers.

Dr. Clarke held the office of President for the following organizations: Southwest Association of Naturalists (1971), Kansas Herpetological Society (1972), and Kansas Academy of Science (1981). He was co-founder of the Kansas Conservation Forum and held over 20 professional memberships. Dr. Clarke received the following awards: The Robert L. Packard



Outstanding Educator Award by the Southwestern Association of Naturalists (1989), Kansas Wildlife Federation Conservation Communicator Award (1991), The Governor's Kansas Conservationist of the Year Award (1982). He was a Distinguished Alumnus in 1991 from Emporia State University, Emeritus Professor (1986), and Xi Phi Outstanding Graduate Student in Biology from the University of Oklahoma (1961). In his primary profession of herpetology, the pinnacle of his long and productive career was being invested as a Distinguished Life Member of the Kansas Herpetological Society.

Robert is survived by a daughter, Linda Clarke (Emporia), son, John Clarke (Wichita), and four granddaughters, Jessica, Lacy, Tara, and Kristi Clarke (Wichita). His wife, Elaine preceded him in death. He loved his family, lizards and nature, his art and friends, his Model A, making jokes, and laughter. His smile and Virginia accent will be missed.

Modified from an obituary published in the *Topeka Capital-Journal* on 4 April 2008