

# Memorial to Claude William Hibbard

1905-1973

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Dr. Claude W. Hibbard was born March 21, 1905, in Toronto, Kansas, and died October 9, 1973, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. He apparently suffered a heart attack early in the morning while at work at the University of Michigan Museum of Paleontology. He was professor of geology and curator of fossil vertebrates at the University of Michigan where he had served continuously since 1946. He is survived by his wife, Faye; his daughter, Mrs. John (Katherine) Mull; two granddaughters; his mother, Evie Hibbard of Toronto, Kansas; four brothers; and a sister.

He was museum assistant (1928 to 1934), assistant curator of vertebrate paleontology (1935 to 1941), and curator of vertebrate paleontology and assistant

professor of zoology (1941 to 1946) at the University of Kansas before going to the University of Michigan.

"Hibbie" received his B.A. (1933) and M.A. (1934) in zoology from the University of Kansas and his Ph.D. (1941) in zoology from the University of Michigan. He joined The Geological Society of America in 1945 while he was assistant professor of zoology and curator of fossil vertebrates at the University of Kansas. He worked in four major fields of study simultaneously: education, geology, vertebrate paleontology, and zoology—an indication of his broad training and interest.

He began in the field of education as principal of a country grade school at Thrall, Kansas. Some would say he continued his country school technique of teaching throughout his educational career. I would agree; it was sound, basic, with a maximum contact with hard work in the field, the laboratory, and the classroom. From a country school teacher, he went on to be a university professor and president of the Kansas Academy of Science and the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters. He was deeply respected by his students.

In the field of geology, he became an authority on the stratigraphy of the Pliocene and Pleistocene. His principal area of study was southwestern Kansas, but he also made significant contributions to knowledge of the stratigraphy associated with vertebrate fossil localities in Mexico, Idaho, and Michigan. He worked for the United States Geological Survey, consulted for the Kansas Geological Survey, became a professor of geology and a Fellow of The Geological Society of America. He received the Erasmus Haworth Distinguished Alumni honors in geology from the University of Kansas and was president of the Michigan Geological Society.

In the field of zoology he was a naturalist in the very best sense of the word. He was

a practical farmer-rancher and knew the local fauna, both invertebrate and vertebrate, and the flora as well. From 1934 to 1935 he was a wildlife technician in the National Park Service. He was a member of the American Society of Mammalogists (board of directors), the American Ornithological Union, and the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (board of directors).

Vertebrate paleontology was his major field. To him it was a single field, not separable into a zoological facies or a geological facies; both were indispensable parts of a whole. He began as field assistant and never was above that kind of work for the rest of his life. In 1960 he was president of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology.

Hibbard came closer to establishing a stratigraphic sequence of late Pliocene and Pleistocene vertebrate faunas than any other worker in North America. In doing this he pioneered the technique for washing and screening microvertebrate faunas. The "washing" was not the beginning of the technique; it started with pick, shovel, gunny sack, and a strong back. Nor was "screening" the end of the technique; it ended with hour after hour of picking, identification, comparison, and finally, publication.

Hibbie published extensively—more than 150 papers. His data did not sit around and get cold. One knew the progress he had made and the status of his current thinking. To be sure, he sometimes changed his mind, but he did so in print. To me, this technique has greater merit than that of a perfectionist who waits until the last bit of information is in. Then it is usually too late.

A. S. Romer once accused the vertebrate paleontologists of being "feeble folk." Hibbie was not one of that class. He was strong-willed, outspoken with his colleagues, and demanding of his students and associates. Yet his enthusiasm was contagious, and if a student or colleague could keep up mentally and physically, there was no end to his patience and helpfulness. He shared his field knowledge with many individuals and led organized trips to his collecting localities time and again. A better understanding of late Cenozoic stratigraphy and vertebrate faunas of the southern High Plains has evolved from the give and take with Hibbie and from his enormous contribution.

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