

Dr. Bill Stanley: A Tribute

By Bruce Patterson, PhD, MacArthur Curator of Mammals

ON OCTOBER 6, 2015, WILLIAM (BILL) T. STANLEY, PHD, DIED OF A HEART ATTACK WHILE CONDUCTING FIELDWORK IN ETHIOPIA. He was 58 years old. With his passing, The Field Museum,

the science of mammalogy, and all of natural history lost one of its most engaging, talented, and admired practitioners.

At the heart of Bill's prominence and professional success was his warm, generous personality. He was instantly likable and invited familiarity. These qualities helped cultivate the devotion that his co-workers, volunteers, and interns felt for him.

It made Bill a welcome member of any committee or team. His remarkable wit and knack for finding humor in practically any situation drew people closer to him.

As the Negaunee Mammals Collections Manager and Director of the Gantz Collection Center, Bill was gatekeeper to the Museum's encyclopedic collection, which attracts hundreds of visiting scientists from throughout the world. Born in Lebanon and raised in the United States, Kenya, and Brunei (his father worked internationally), Bill was exposed to many cultures, making him particularly adept at facilitating the work of foreign visitors.

Bill's family and his childhood experiences in Kenya helped cultivate his love for both nature and science. From 1989 onwards, Bill worked to document East Africa's small mammals, especially those on Tanzania's Eastern Arc mountain ranges.

Each year he would spend two to three months in the field, amassing truly exceptional collections (and growing an equally remarkable beard). Through his research, Bill forged collaborations with many scientists and discovered and described many new species of mammals—including mice, shrews, and bats—and played a central role in describing an entirely new genus of monkey.

As impressive as these accomplishments are, they exclude Bill's most exceptional talent—he was an incredibly effective science communicator. Bill mixed his deep knowledge and passion for the subject matter with his understanding of and empathy for diverse audiences. He brought science to the public in accessible ways, making it seem both important and fun. The world is much richer for Bill having been here. **ITF**



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“Bill will always hold a special place in my family’s heart. Anyone who met him couldn’t help but be inspired to look at the world in a new way and appreciate the power of scientific curiosity.”

Bill Gantz
Field Museum Trustee

“Bill was one of those magical personalities who left everyone his life touched in a better mood and sharing with the wonder he found in the world. There is an aching gap in our lives that will take time to heal.”

Richard W. Lariviere
Field Museum President and CEO



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