

The IFM wants to honor Bill's lasting legacy and immense contribution to mammalian research over several decades by means of a Tribute in honor of Bill the scientist, but also to recognize the amazing person he was.

As a close friend and colleague of Bill, we thought it fit to approach Bruce Patterson to write the following tribute.

On 6 Oct 2015, William T. Stanley died of a heart attack while conducting fieldwork in the mountains of 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. The next day, obituaries appeared in Chicago's major daily newspapers: The [Chicago Tribune](#) and the [Chicago Sun-Times](#) and aired over the local National Public Radio station.

At the heart of Bill's prominence and professional success was his warm, generous personality. He was instantly likable and invited familiarity. It helped cultivate the devotion that his co-workers, volunteers, and interns felt in working with him. It made him a welcome member on any committee or team he served. His remarkable wit and knack for finding humor in practically any situation drew people closer to him. He was the life of any party he attended.



Figure 1. Social media post of "Bill's Angels" (photo by Matt Johnson)

Each year, the Field Museum's encyclopedic mammal collection attracts hundreds of visiting scientists from throughout the world. As collection manager, Bill was the gate-keeper to these resources. Born in Lebanon and growing up 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. Loan interactions and specimen identifications quickly gave him a broad and deep understanding of mammalian diversity and the people who study it. Bill was a vital component in the training of many Chicago graduate students who based their thesis or dissertation studies on the collections. By helping students access the resources they needed, while respecting and preserving their integrity as specimens, Bill helped students develop stronger dissertations and become more effective advocates for scientific collections.

Bill's family and his childhood in East Africa 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 2 to 3 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! He was an active participant in a

number of African Small Mammal Symposia, the Global Mammal Assessments focused on Africa, and *The Mammals of Africa* volumes. He also delivered many talks at annual meetings of the American Society of Mammalogists (ASM). At the time of his death, [Google Scholar](#) listed 70 of his publications. Additional articles are in the works.

Bill's leadership abilities were evident early in his career, so responsibilities quickly piled up at his door. He directed the day-to-day activities of the Museum's collections staff in mammals from the 1990s onwards. His clear thinking and networking also made him a logical spokesperson and representative for the museum's professional staff as a whole. He served as chair of the ASM's Standing Committee on Systematic Collections, and in 2012 was named Director of Collections at the Field Museum, responsible for 26 million specimens and objects ranging from meteorites to mummies.

As impressive as these accomplishments are, they neglect 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. This allowed him to simultaneously educate and motivate his audiences. Not surprisingly, he was in constant demand to lead museum members and donors through the collections, present public programs on the floor, lead adventure tours overseas, and above all to interface with the media. In all these arenas, he conveyed newly discovered facts and wonder for the natural world with charm and wit. He made science accessible to the public and made the endeavor seem both important and fun.

The world is much richer for him having been here, but his many friends feel bereft by his sudden exit.

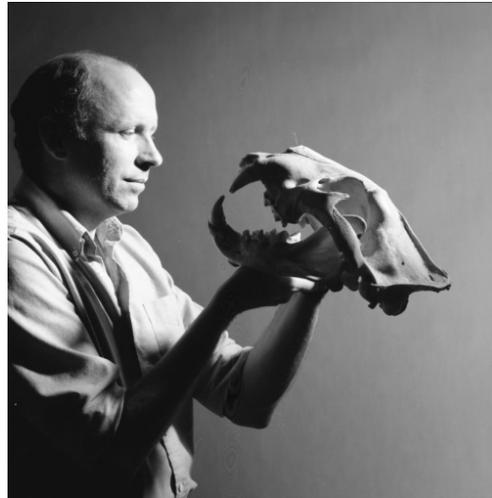


Figure 2. Examining the skull of one of the 'Man-eaters of Tsavo' (Field Museum image GN87767, by John Weinstein)



Figure 3. Bill explaining to media the role of collections in the 2012 discovery of the Olinguito (AX086\_08C2\_9-Ashlee Rezin for the Sun-Times)

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