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Thomas J. Henry
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Dr. J. E. McPherson, Educator and Researcher Extraordinaire: Biographical Sketch and List of Publications

Thomas J. Henry¹

Like many outstanding naturalists, John E. (“Jay”) McPherson grew up with a strong interest in the natural world, especially insects. This innate curiosity led him to enroll as a zoology major at San Diego State University in 1959. Upon completion of his undergraduate degree, he continued on to pursue his interest in insect biology, completing a Master’s thesis on the life history and morphology of a poorly known species of Notonectidae. Shortly thereafter, a teaching assistantship enabled him to pursue a Ph.D. at Michigan State University in East Lansing, where his research involved distinguishing two closely related species of bark beetles. During this period, Jay also worked on various pest species, including the cereal leaf beetle, pine tip beetle, and pine cone beetle.

In 1969, Jay took a position at Southern Illinois University (SIU), Carbondale (SIU) as an assistant professor. There he developed a broad and successful educational program, in which he taught numerous courses, including general zoology, introductory and advanced entomology, aquatic entomology, and pest control. He soon was promoted to Associate Professor (1974) and Full Professor (1979). Over his career, Jay (Fig. 1) has taught thousands of students, directed three Ph.D. and 23 Master’s students, and served on more than 40 thesis

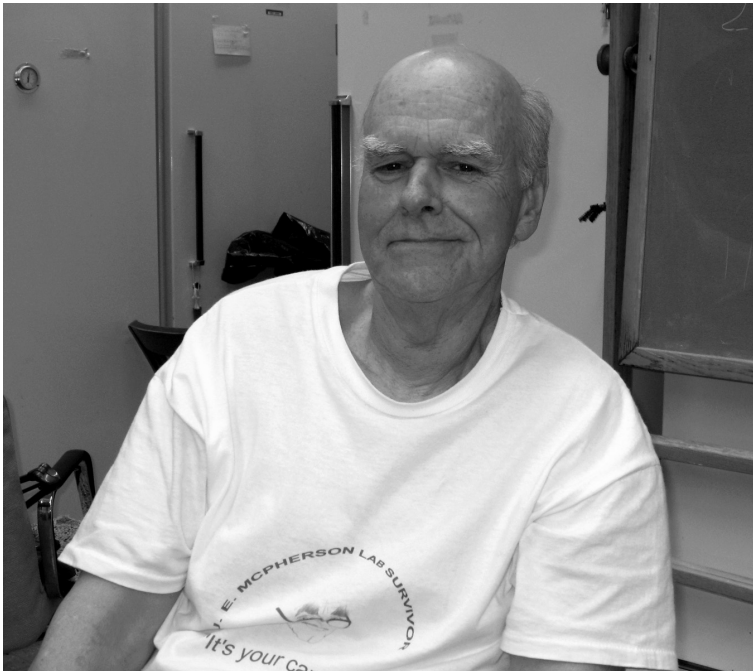


Figure 1. J. E. McPherson in his “McPherson Lab Survivor” T-shirt at SIU, June 2008 (photo courtesy of Robert W. Sites).

¹Systematic Entomology Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture, c/o National Museum of Natural History, MRC-168, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. 20013-7013 (e-mail: thomas.henry@ars.usda.gov).

committees. His students have pursued a wide range of research topics; as a heteropterist, I have followed most closely those who studied the Hemiptera. Those who have gone on to have outstanding careers of their own, include Jeff (Jeffrey D.) Bradshaw [reduviid biology and morphology], Scott (C. Scott) Bundy [pentatomoid biology and morphology], Steve (Steven L.) Keffer [Nepidae], Rich (Richard J.) Packauskas [Coreidae], Bob (Robert W.) Sites [Naucoridae], Steve (Stephen J.) Taylor [biology and taxonomy of Gerromorpha and Aradidae], and Steve (Stephen W.) Wilson [Fulgoroidea]. As testament to his success and dedication to teaching, he received in 1993 the North Central Branch, ESA Distinguished Achievement Award in Teaching and, in 1996, earned the Outstanding Teacher Award from the College of Science at SIU.

In addition to Jay's heavy involvement in teaching, he has been extraordinarily active in his university and scientific societies. He has served on more than 46 committees at SIU. He has been chairman of the Graduate and Undergraduate Student committees, served on numerous search committees for departmental staff positions, been acting Chairman of the Department, and was long the Assistant Chair for the Department of Zoology, beginning in 1980 until his retirement. At the college and university levels, Jay served on more than 20 committees, including the Biological Sciences Advisory Committee, College of Science Dean Search Committee (Chair), Blue Ribbon Committee to consider the future of SIU, and Outstanding Dissertation Award Committee for the University.

Jay's contributions to scientific societies are many, particularly the Entomological Society of America (Fig. 2), where he helped create the ever-popular Linnaean Games, served on the Governing Board for six years (two terms), served as editor of the *American Entomologist* for nine years (see Wheeler 2002. *American Entomologist*: Summer, p. 66), and was vice president (2001) and president of the Society (2002). That aspect of his career is covered in an article by George Kennedy in this issue honoring Dr. McPherson.

Despite his focus on teaching and university affairs and his remarkable societal accomplishments, Jay has somehow managed to maintain an impressively productive research program. During his career, he has produced more than 180 scientific publications, primarily on the biology, life history, and immature stages of true bugs, especially the Pentatomoidea, Reduviidae, and several families of aquatic bugs, including Belostomatidae, Gerridae, Nepidae, and Notonectidae. He has published detailed descriptions of 193 nymphal stages and 39 eggs of Heteroptera in 21 families that serve as models for others to follow. He also published a series of classic papers (e.g., McPherson 1975, 1976, 1979) documenting the effects of photoperiod on the adult morphology of *Euschistus tristigmus* (Say). More recently, he has focused on certain other Pentatomidae, including studies on the comparative genitalic morphology of *Brochymena* and *Parabrochymena* (McPherson 2007), the U.S. species of *Euschistus* (McPherson and Ahmad 2008), two closely related species of *Mecidea* (McPherson et al. 2009), and three species of *Murgantia* (McPherson and Ahmad 2008), the last of which resulted in the discovery of a new species (McPherson and Ahmad 2011). His recent interests also involve the Reduviidae, which include the description of the new harpactarine genus *Parasinea* to accommodate a new species from Colombia and a previously known species transferred from *Sinea* (McPherson and Ahmad 2011), and clarification of the identity of *Sinea sericea* Hussey (McPherson 2012). Among his most outstanding contributions are his book chapter (Panizzi et al. 2000) in Panizzi and Schaefer's *Heteroptera of Economic Importance* on the economically important species of Pentatomoidea of the world, treating about 40 genera and 58 species, and two important books, the *Pentatomoidea of Northeastern North America* (McPherson 1982), with keys and an exhaustive literature review of 58 genera and 120 species and subspecies, and the *Stink Bugs of Economic Importance in America North of Mexico* (McPherson and McPherson 2000), with keys and overviews of 23 genera and 45 species.

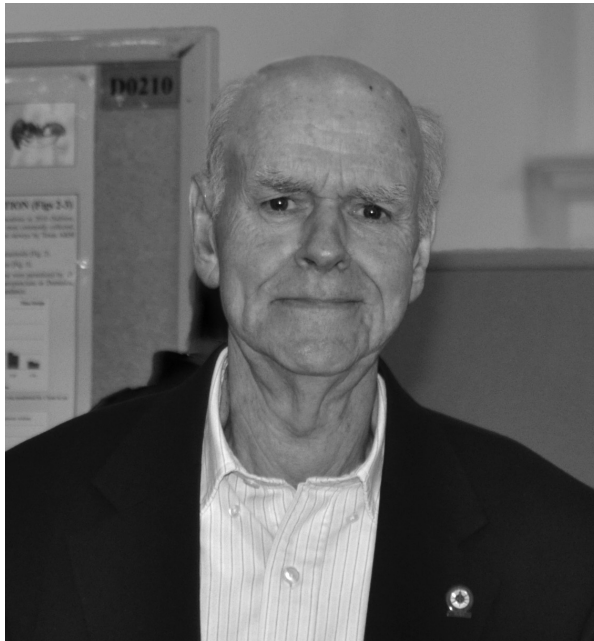


Figure 2. J. E. McPherson at the Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting, Reno, Nevada, November 2011 (photo courtesy of C. Scott Bundy).

Jay McPherson has had a remarkable career as an award-winning teacher, as a leader and active participant in ESA, including president in 2002, and as a scholarly researcher. Although Jay has retired (15 June 2012), a recent conversation that I had with him suggested little will change. He likely will continue teaching on a contractual basis, he certainly will stay active in ESA, and clearly his research program shows little sign of slowing. Congratulations Dr. McPherson on your retirement and many accomplishments. We applaud your outstanding career and look forward to many more productive years.

List of Publications by J. E. McPherson

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