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In Memoriam: John Kenneth Beadles, 1931-2011



Dr. John Kenneth (“Ken”) Beadles passed away from complications of pulmonary fibrosis at his home on August 30, 2011 in Jonesboro, Arkansas. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Sharon Ruch Beadles, two children, son John David Beadles of Jonesboro, daughter Kristi Diane Trotter of Jonesboro, grandchildren, Terry Anthony “Tony” Trotter, John Phillip and his wife Ciara Cunningham Trotter, and Matthew and Tara Trotter Joplin all of Jonesboro, and great-granddaughter, Haven Leigh Anne Joplin; and six brothers, as well as nine nieces and nephews.

Ken was born on September 22, 1931 in the small prairie town of Alva, Oklahoma to Joseph Haven and Ellen Amanda Beadles. After high school, Ken served in the US Navy from 1950–54 as Dental Technician III (DT3) during the Korean Conflict before starting his higher educational career in 1957 at Northwestern State College in Alva (now Northwestern Oklahoma State University) where he earned a BS degree with a double major in biology and chemistry. After graduation, Ken taught in the Alva Public School System as a science teacher and football coach from 1957–62. He entered graduate school in 1962 at Oklahoma State University and received the MS degree in 1963 in zoology and natural science. Continuing his graduate education at OSU, Ken studied under the renowned ichthyologist, Dr. George A. Moore, and specialized in ichthyology and

vertebrate zoology. He received his Ph.D. degree from OSU in zoology in 1965.

That same year, Ken came to Arkansas State University (ASU) in the Department of Biology as an Assistant Professor of Biology. After just one year, he left briefly from 1966–1968 to work with USAID in the Ethiopia-Oklahoma A&M project in Alemaya, Ethiopia, as a science teacher, researcher, and advisor to Haille I University. Returning to Arkansas in 1968, Ken assumed the rank of Professor of Biology and Chairman of the Department at ASU, a position he held for the next 16 yr. During his tenure as Chairman, Ken became active in the Arkansas Academy of Science (AAS) and, until his retirement, never missed an annual meeting. He regularly presented papers, as well as authored and co-authored numerous papers at AAS for publication in the *Proceedings*. In 1982, Ken was elected President of AAS by his scientific peers.

He was an active leader in the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools, serving two terms on its Executive Committee and as a member of the Committee on Committees. In 1984, Ken was selected Dean of the Graduate School and Director of Organized Research at ASU where he served until his retirement in 1993. During his time as Dean, he played a key role in the successful establishment of the School of Nursing and the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership, the university’s first doctoral program. For his unstinting work and service to ASU, Ken was honored as one of the “First 100 Distinguished Faculty” at ASU in 2010.

In addition to AAS, Ken was an active member of the American Fisheries Society, Southwestern Association of Naturalists, American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi, Tri Beta, and Phi Delta Kappa, and was also a Danforth Fellow.

Although Dr. Beadles spent much of his academic career in administration, he was a pioneer in catfish farming and research in northeast Arkansas during the period from 1965–1978 on the eight pond complex at ASU’s farm in Walcott. At that facility, many ASU students conducted research and learned new techniques in catfish farming during those years, and some of these very students went on to become catfish farmers. Ken authored or co-authored 29 publications and environmental reports dealing with fishes and mammals during his career, over half of which were published in AAS publications. In addition, he

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presented 21 papers at professional meetings. Ken Beadles was much more than a scientist and teacher. He loved people and was a natural leader. Following his retirement, Ken became involved in Jonesboro civic activities serving as Chair of the Jonesboro Ecumenical Council and helping construct two Habitat for Humanity houses. In addition he served on the advisory board of the Women's Recovery Council, the Jonesboro Urban Renewal and Housing Authority, and was for many years, Chair of the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. He was an active member of the Jonesboro Rotary Club and had a perfect attendance for 38 years! He served as President in 1978–79, Governor of District 6150 in 1985–86, and was a Paul Harris Fellow, and a recipient of the James F. Gramling Award for outstanding and dedicated service to the Rotary Foundation. In addition, Ken served as a United Way volunteer, was on their Board of Trustees and was selected "Outstanding United Way Volunteer of the Year for 1999–2000."

Ken was a deeply religious and caring man who served as a Sunday school teacher for the past 28 yr at Jonesboro's First Baptist Church in addition to being a Deacon and serving as Chairman of the Deacons, Stewardship Chairman, and Finance Chairman. In recent years, he taught Sunday school classes to residents of Skillcare Nursing Home, Ridgecrest Rehabilitation Center, and St. Bernard Village. Ken served on a committee called "Embracing the Promise" which raised several million dollars to renovate and repair facilities throughout the state of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries.

Ken Beadles was the most positive man we ever knew and was an utmost supporter of the AAS, ASU, and students in general. He was a teacher's teacher! At every AAS meeting he attended, Ken could be seen with coffee cup in hand, going through the hallways greeting old friends, making new ones, and asking undergraduate students about their research, or trying

to get them to consider ASU as a place to start or continue their graduate studies.

Perhaps a few sentences from "A History of the Biological Sciences at Arkansas State University" sum up this great man: "During his career, he demonstrated great personal commitment to student diversity at the graduate level, recruiting minority students from throughout the traditionally all-black institutions of the Mid-South. And regardless of his other responsibilities, Dean Beadles always had time for students, continuing to teach Fisheries Biology and Ichthyology even after assuming the duties of the Graduate Dean. Across the nation today is a generation of teachers, researchers, and fisheries personnel who began their professional education in Dr. Beadle's classroom."

Ken Beadles was a dear personal friend of ours and steadfast mentor, a kind and compassionate man, a lover of his fellow man, an unwavering supporter of AAS, a first-rate ichthyologist and zoologist, and a consummate teacher. He will be sorely missed throughout the Arkansas academic community. Ken led an exemplary life of service to his fellow man and students were always his first priority. Although neither of us had the privilege of having Ken as a teacher in class (although he served expertly on CTM's thesis committee), we feel extremely fortunate and privileged to have known him for over 40 yr, and we are better people for having his life intersect with ours. We will long remember this gifted scientist, compassionate teacher, and dedicated humanitarian, and miss him dearly.

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