

## J. Frank Randall

Written by Karen Ventrone

Wednesday, 15 January 2014 14:37

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Dr. J. Frank Randall, 95, a long time member of the Boone, NC, community and retired Professor of Biology at Appalachian State University, died on January 10, 2014 at Watauga Medical Center.

Born in 1918 at the family farm on Big Pine Creek, Madison County, NC, Dr. Randall was the fifth child of John Wesley Randall, Jr., and Lou Ella Randall. Like so many in the Randall family, he pursued a career in teaching and education, receiving an A.A. from Brevard College, an A.B. from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, an M.S. from The University of Michigan and a Ph.D. in Biology from The University of South Carolina. Before joining the faculty of what was Appalachian State Teachers College in 1957, Dr. Randall taught for two years at Oakwood Friends School in Poughkeepsie, NY, for seven years in the public secondary schools of North Carolina, and for three years at the then newly-established Alpena (MI) Community College.

Dr. Randall's enthusiasm for teaching was evident in his early morning ornithology classes. He readily shared his avid interest in birds and their environment and nurtured this same appreciation and love of nature in his students. He had a breadth of interest that led him to help develop a series of Biology Department classes ranging from ecology and biogeography to mammalogy, ichthyology, vertebrate zoology, evolution, and endangered species. He was a proponent of the idea that understanding the natural world around us is an important part of an education. In that vein he created a special biology course for home economics majors and constantly shared his love of field biology formally and informally with students, family, and friends. His two academic trips with students to Alaska (1974 and 1977, respectively) and three trips (1979, 1982, and 1985) to South America to the Galapagos Islands and portions of mainland Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru, including Machu Picchu, were cherished experiences and robust learning exercises for the participants.

He took pride in, and his students benefited from, his multidisciplinary knowledge. He delighted and surprised many students from small communities with his detailed knowledge of their communities, some of which was acquired during his comprehensive survey of fish in the Catawba-Wateree river basin. Focused on more than just their academic success in a particular class, he conveyed to his students the importance of development of the whole person by challenging them to think deeply about ethics, politics, and human impact on the Earth.

He was keenly aware of his responsibilities as an educator and teacher and played a major role in establishing the Appalachian Faculty Senate, serving as its first chairman. In addition to his professional responsibilities, Dr. Randall was active in the Audubon Society, North Carolina

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Nature Conservancy, Bluff Mountain Stewardship Committee (where he conducted hiking tours), and the Nongame Wildlife Advisory Committee for North Carolina. He was active with Boy Scouts, serving as a Scoutmaster and as an Explorer Post Advisor.

His lifelong commitment to conservation and preservation was fostered by appreciation for plants, animals, and ecosystems that he absorbed from his father during childhood in the rural NC mountains and by the love of geography and education inspired by his mother. These characteristics were expanded and reinforced when, as a young man, he hitchhiked throughout much of the western US.

Dr. Randall was a kind, gentle, patient, and non-violent person and a conscientious objector during the second world war—an unpopular but genuine belief for which he had to mount legal challenges to state and federal agencies to defend. He served through the American Friends Service Committee and other organizations, performing conservation work in California and Oregon, as well as helping migrant workers and American citizens of Japanese heritage who were relocated to internment camps by the federal government. As part of his alternate civilian service, he volunteered to become a 'smoke jumper' for fighting forest fires in west; although, that program was canceled before he was deployed.

Since his retirement in 1990, Dr. Randall spent much of his time adding to, enjoying, and working on his Roaring Fork nature preserve in the Meat Camp section of Watauga County. He shared his love and enthusiasm for this favorite spot with friends, relatives, scouts, students, and beloved canines, Snowzey and Baxter.

Dr. Randall was one of a close family of eight children. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by all of his siblings and their spouses: brothers Herman, Paul (Evelyn), Robert (Elizabeth), Fred (Myrtle), and sisters Virginia Roberts (Gordon), Maye Hill (Jim), Nina Roberts (Sam), as well as niece Carolyn Roberts Woodrow and nephew Robert L. Randall, Jr.

Surviving Dr. Randall are his wife of 63 years, Lera Britt Randall, formerly of Chadbourn, NC, and son, Richard R. Randall, of Durham, NC. He is also survived by dozens of nieces and nephews and their children, whose friendship and love he cherished.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions to The Nature Conservancy,

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American Friends Service Committee, Southern Environmental Law Center, National Audubon Society, institutions of higher education, UNC-TV, or other non-profit, charitable organizations of the donor's preference.

The family welcomes favorite recollections from students and friends wishing to share them at [jfrankrandall@gmail.com](mailto:jfrankrandall@gmail.com). Visitation will be 3:00-5:00 p.m. Sunday, January 12, 2014, at Austin and Barnes Funeral Home (828.264.8888, [www.austinandbarnesfuneralhome.com/](http://www.austinandbarnesfuneralhome.com/)) in Boone. A memorial service, to be scheduled, will be held in the Spring.