

Awards and Citations

Presentation of the 2019 Harrell L. Strimple Award of the Paleontological Society to James L. Goedert

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I have an enduring admiration for paleontologists whose day jobs are not paleontology. I am here to introduce you to Jim Goedert of Gig Harbor, Washington. Jim and his late wife Gail were partners in paleontology and this award is for both of them.

As a Seattle native and fossil lover, I have been hearing stories about Jim and Gail for most of my adult life. I finally had the pleasure of meeting Jim two years ago. Jim retired as a signal inspector for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad to take care of Gail before her passing in February, 2017. He and Gail had collected in Washington and Oregon for almost 40 years and are both credited with many amazing discoveries and paleontological finds. The people who told me about Jim and Gail related that they were relentless prospectors who braved weather and tides to search remote and unexplored outcrops in search of new fossil sites. Early in their practice, they realized that new fossil sites often yielded new fossil species and new scientific insights and that these fossils belonged in museums and in the hands of paleontologists who would study, describe, and publish them. As a result, they maintained no personal collection, instead choosing to direct their fossils to destinations most likely to land them in the published literature of paleontology.

As servants of paleontology, Jim and Gail began to correspond with an increasingly wide circle of scientists who worked with them to publish their findings. Because of these collaborations, their curiosity, and extensive field experience, Jim and Gail embarked on an intense Odyssey of self-directed geological and paleontological training. They didn't just collect fossils, they also learned the local stratigraphy, became adept fossil preparators, and wrote and published scientific papers. In so doing, they became invaluable collaborators to a surprisingly diverse group of scientists.

By 1988, Jim had begun to write scientific papers. When I asked him to share his publication list with me, he sent me a list of more than 100 titles. I shared this list with Larry Barnes, one

of Jim's earliest collaborators, who pointed out an additional nine papers that Jim had forgotten to list. I also understand that Jim asked to have his name removed from others, because he felt "he hadn't done enough work."

This bibliography would be a credible record for a tenured professor, yet Jim has accomplished this in his spare time, working out of his garage. In my discussions with his collaborators, I learned that Jim and Gail had joined them for field work in Oregon, California, Japan, Mexico, China, and Europe. Jim's papers cover a broad spectrum of taxa that includes algae, plants, worms, crabs, bivalves, gastropods, brachiopods, pteropods, ostracodes, fish, sharks, birds, and whales and other marine mammals. Collectively, these records paint a picture of the evolving biota of the active margin of the North American continent during the Cenozoic.

Many species and genera have been named after the Goederts, and many more of their finds are now located in museums around the world, waiting to be analyzed. Steffen Kiel, a German scientist and friend mentioned that Jim told him to "Stop naming things after me."

Counting authors on his papers, I estimated that Jim has collaborated with more than 65 paleontologists from places as far away as Germany, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia. I've also talked with local fossil enthusiasts in the Pacific Northwest who have collected with Jim and Gail and have come to respect them as the professionals they are. Many people speak of the generosity and humility of the Goederts and their impact on lives in both the professional and amateur paleontological communities.

The Goedert's personify all of the attributes of the ideal Strimple awardee and it is my deep honor and privilege to present the 2019 Strimple award to Jim and Gail Goedert.

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