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ROZELLA PEARL BEVERLY BLOOD SMITH, 1911–1987

Hobart M. Smith¹

ABSTRACT—The life, activities, and contributions of an energetic, catholic woman scholar, Rozella B. Smith, are reviewed. Her pioneer innovations in bibliographic data retrieval and mapping by use of the computer, creating a permanent niche for her in the annals of herpetology, are emphasized. A list of her publications is included.

On 15 December 1987 herpetology lost one of its most energetic, catholic women scholars of all time. Her name in herpetology was known largely from seven books and 69 articles shared with her husband, two popular ones of which she was sole author, and one booklet shared with a colleague at the University of Colorado. Numerous other publications and cataloged manuscripts that were never published brought her list of formal writings to 95.

Those writings, however seminal in part, were not her only qualifications as a scholar. Her interests were extremely broad, including medieval history, Shakespeare, Heinrich Boll, Hanseatic League, Upton Sinclair, the history of printing, European and English history, Russian icons, English literature, James Michener, Kenneth Roberts, Hervey Allen, Benedict Arnold, anatomy, neurology, histology, entomology, chemistry, languages, Richard III, Sherlock Holmes, Nero Wolfe, correlation indexing, computer graphics, fixed-field data retrieval, needlework (of prize-winning caliber), photography (professional quality), sewing, stamps, Indian jewelry, teaching, beadwork, music and art history, music itself (piano, recorder), art itself (considerable scientific illustration was done during undergraduate and graduate days), classical literature, bibliographic methods, cataloging techniques, Hieronymus Brunschweig, gardening, flower culture, mathematics, classical movies, Irish history, cooking, and no doubt other fields. Each was tackled with total commitment and exhaustive accumulation of reference works and materials (the extent of her stockpiling for future work almost surpasses belief) until its poten-

tial for stimulating discovery and learning diminished, whereupon some other topic was pursued with equal zeal. However, she often returned after a time to a subject previously abandoned, carrying it still further. She pursued her interests like one possessed—a perfect example of Aeschylus' proverb that "when a man is willing and eager, the gods join in." Perhaps they did, for she exhibited not only animated enthusiasm but often also an astonishing extrasensory perception and psychic/psychokinetic abilities.

An expert in so many areas and extremely articulate, she was a captivating and insuppressibly animated conversationalist and raconteur. With her extrovert personality, she would neither hesitate to speak to strangers nor shrink from extemporaneous public speaking. Not being a conventional thinker, but revealing an exuberant originality, she was the despair of conservatives, the joy of innovators.

Certainly she exercised diplomacy to a degree, but her normal way was to say what she thought, be it bluntly offensive or not. She could needle with the best but tended to slum irritating topics or people, in part because they tended to raise her always high blood pressure. A very calculating pragmatist, she was always conscious of where the power lay in her environment, what course would best serve her interests, and therefore what facade would be expedient. Highly intolerant of incompetence, she was very astute in choosing her friends and developing beneficial contacts, zeroing in on not only the seat of power but also of competence, meticulously avoiding those she regarded as "losers" and concentrating on "winners." She rarely made a

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Fig. 1. Rozella B. Smith, 1952.

mistake in that context. An insight into her *modus operandi* is provided by her detestation of Thomas Becket as an utter ass. However strongly negative she was in some contexts, she nevertheless could be a persuasive team-builder, lauding and promoting good will and cooperation, often in the face of contrary evidence and pressures.

These are attributes of indeed a complex person. She disliked multiple interactions because she saw herself as a different person with each friend or group. Indeed, she regarded herself as a multiple personality, and although no psychological extreme existed, her appraisal was probably correct. Too many antithetical facets of behavior were revealed to think otherwise. One would assume, for example, that her exuberant, articulate facade left no room for self-doubt; yet in reality she was intensely insecure, like Queen Elizabeth I, strongly dependent upon continual reassurance of the merit and excellence of her accom-

plishments. Lacking sufficient encouragement in one endeavor, she would seek another outlet for her energies that might be more rewarding of praise. To a considerable degree her peripatetic career and catholic interests were due to unfulfilled expectations of unceasing enlivenment. Yet she was always a commanding presence and exemplified the liberated woman when models were rare indeed.

But her claim to fame in herpetology and, more importantly, in general scientific endeavors came from her captivation with the intricacies and potentials of computer applications to fixed-field data manipulation and graphics. Her interest in that field began over 25 years ago, as computers were coming into being as a research tool in universities. She took related courses at the University of Illinois and helped with application of computer methods in cataloging materials as head cataloger in the library of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, in 1966. That work built upon the master's degree in library science she had obtained at the University of Illinois in 1963 and upon her work from 1963 to 1965 as bibliographer, Acquisitions Sections, Slavic Department, University of Illinois Library, Urbana. Several more months of experience in library automation were obtained in 1967 as acquisitions librarian in the Clendening Medical Library at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City.

Moving permanently to Boulder in 1968, she turned her creative originality to computerization of the enormous quantity of data accumulated over a period of nearly 30 years by her husband on the literature pertinent to Mexican herpetology. It was not an easy undertaking because most programmers consulted at that time were "number-crunchers" who had little experience or patience with the simplified (fixed-field) method of data retrieval and manipulation that she wanted. Attempts while at the University of Illinois got nowhere, but shortly after arriving at the University of Colorado she successfully ferreted out a brilliant programmer who could see her goal and, while grumbling some at first, provided her with the necessary techniques and programs. He eventually was enthusiastically converted to her philosophy and aims, for they were achieved with great success. She,

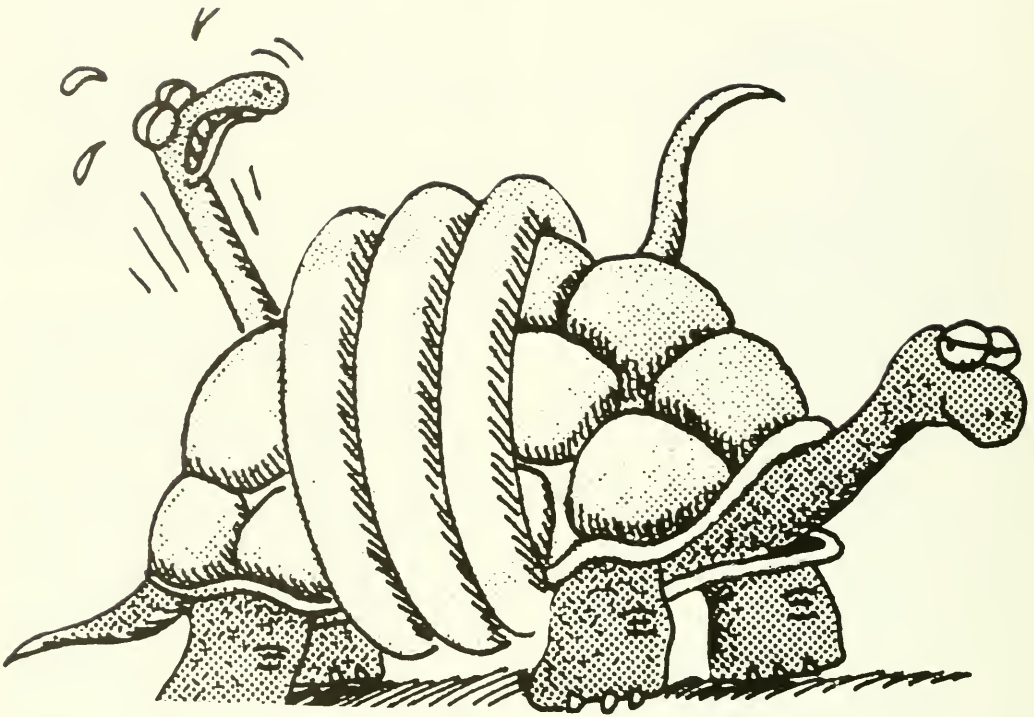


Fig. 2. An inspired representation adopted by Rozella Smith as her semi-heraldic symbol, portraying the exasperatingly Sisyphean struggle she (the snake) encountered in attempting to get anything out of some of her more important, seemingly smugly reluctant associates (the turtle). (Courtesy of the artist, Gary Larson, and the copyright owner, Frank Slavens.)

likewise, felt vindicated and took fully justified pride in having done it "my way," making Frank Sinatra's song by the same title her theme.

The skills she then developed in a wide variety of data manipulations were responsible for the plethora of indices and analyses in volumes one and two, both of which she typed, of the series she started, entitled "Synopsis of the Herpetofauna of Mexico." The same sort of data manipulation was involved in volumes three and four of that series, although both of those volumes were produced from computer output. Volumes five and six were produced with the help of a word processor. No other herpetological works have been so thoroughly analyzed and indexed as the volumes she prepared of the Mexican synopsis. The last volume, number six, contained probably her crowning achievement: numerous distribution maps prepared completely by computer. No other major work in herpetology has exploited the

potential of computer-drawn, spot-distribution maps.

Throughout this time Rozella expanded her capabilities tremendously, supported continuously from 1971 to 1985 by grants from the National Library of Medicine and various divisions of the National Science Foundation. Numerous unpublished projects she completed demonstrated her versatility in data retrieval in English literature as well as biology. Indeed, her output capacity far exceeded assimilability. Several analyses of data on the herpetofaunal literature of Mexico were prepared but never published, and in her spare time she produced a complete concordance of all of the Sherlock Holmes corpus, plus several other concordances, none ever published under her name.

In the field of computerized data retrieval and graphics, she was an innovator considerably ahead of her time, initiating applications that established precedents yet to be approached by others. Her basic contribution

was to make accessible to innocent, inexperienced tyros some of the benefits of computer usage otherwise limited to experts.

She was clearly a workaholic. Approximately one million IBM cards were punched, 35 programs for recording and retrieving data were developed, and numerous others utilized. Much of her work that was never published should have been, including not only computer techniques and results of their application, but also highly original research papers written for graduate literature courses at the University of Illinois. Had she been blessed with better health in her final years she would no doubt have continued in her innovative ways and published more examples of her creativity.

As it was, she had unknowingly possessed an aneurysm on the left middle cerebral artery most of her life. It began leaking periodically in 1977, causing small strokes, from each of which she soon recovered. A CAT-scan taken in 1977 did not reveal the aneurysm, unfortunately, which continued occasionally to release blood through the brain tissue into the ventricles, partially occluding the aqueduct and producing a chronic condition of hydrocephalus. From that point on her health slowly but steadily deteriorated as the hydrocephalus became more pronounced and, in late summer of 1987, acute. Two operations, 30 September and 7 November, were followed by successful recovery until 11 December, when the first evidence, in the form of a nearly fatal pulmonary embolus, appeared of disseminated intravascular coagulation, a fatal complication of unknown origin. Although its effects were temporarily stemmed, on 14 December the condition became totally systemic and death followed the next day.

Born 18 May 1911 in Wichita, Kansas, to Charles Gillman Blood and Sarah Dorothy ("Dollie") Sherman (Shearman) Blood, half English and half Irish (the Kansas Blood family is famed in Irish circles), Rozella was the only child in her family. Little is known of the Blood side of the family, although one ancestor is known to have captained a river boat on the Mississippi. The Sherman side, however, included five sisters and one brother, who settled in various parts of Kansas and Colorado. Rozella's parents traveled widely in western United States during World War I, with stays in California, Oregon, Washington,

Idaho, Utah, and Colorado, imprinting an affinity for the West that persisted throughout their daughter's life.

She graduated from Wichita High School in 1929, from the University of Wichita (Bachelor of Arts) in 1932 and (Master of Science, entomology) 1933, and from the University of Illinois (Master of Science, library science) in 1963. In addition, she attended the University of Kansas Medical School as a graduate student and assistant instructor in anatomy, neurology, and histology, serving also as staff artist, from 1933 to 1937. At the University of Illinois she was an unattached graduate student from 1953 to 1961. Numerous unrelated courses were audited or enrolled in throughout much of her postgraduate life. German was her favorite foreign language, in which she took enough courses for a degree; other languages studied, some intensively, were French, Spanish, Latin, Gothic, Arabic, Polish, and Czechoslovakian. She was awarded a teaching certificate in Kansas (teaching science and mathematics in Altoona High School, 1937-1938) and in Illinois (teaching ancient history in University High School, Urbana, 1965-1966). In conjunction with the latter she served also as a research associate, editing several experimental teaching manuals.

Thus, upon leaving Wichita for the University of Kansas in 1933, she moved to Altoona in 1937-1938; returned to Wichita to teach in the Department of Zoology in the summer of 1938; married Hobart M. Smith in Chicago, Illinois (Karl P. Schmidt and Howard K. Gloyd witnesses in a private ceremony), August 26, 1938; collected amphibians and reptiles throughout much of Mexico (over 20,000 specimens) under a Walter Rathbone Bacon Scholarship (1938-1940) awarded to her husband by the U.S. National Museum of Natural History; spent a year (1940-41) in Washington, D.C., while the collections of the preceding two years were being studied; lived in Rochester, New York, 1941-1945, while her husband was employed at the University of Rochester; in Lawrence, Kansas, for one semester, 1945; in Bryan, Texas, for one year (1946), incidental to her husband's stint at Texas A & M University; in Urbana and St. Joseph, Illinois, in connection with the University of Illinois, 1947-1968; and in Boulder,

Colorado, 1968–1987, with the University of Colorado.

At the University of Colorado her services included guidance to undergraduates, graduates, and faculty members in her own and other departments, and to affiliates of the Center for Computer Research in the Humanities, in techniques of her special forte of fixed-field data processing and retrieval, and of correlation indexing.

In August 1982 she received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Colorado in recognition of her seemingly infinite talents and creativity. The "Inventory of Live Reptiles and Amphibians in Captivity Current January 1, 1983," published in July 1983, was dedicated to her by the author, Frank Slavens. A month later the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles dedicated to her and her husband a symposium on Mexican biogeography held during a joint meeting with the Herpetologist's League. A forthcoming book on middle American herpetology by Drs. Jaime Villa R., Larry David Wilson, and Jerry D. Johnson is likewise so dedicated.

The memory of Rozella Smith will be perpetuated in the minds of the hundreds who knew or were influenced by her, including her small family: husband, Hobart M. Smith, Boulder, Colorado; son, Bruce Dyfrig (born 1943 in Rochester, New York), living with his family in Lakewood, Colorado; daughter-in-law, Dorothy Lee Tanner Smith; granddaughters Rebecca Rozella June and Elizabeth McKenzie Smith; daughter, Sally Frances Nadvornik (born 1946 in Bryan, Texas) living with her family in Lawrence, Kansas; son-in-law, Ronald Joe Nadvornik; and grandsons Patrick Joseph, Charles Ronald, and Gregory Lee Nadvornik. Also in her memory the Rozella Smith Research Fund has been established in her department (Environmental, Population and Organismic Biology) at the University of Colorado, supporting graduate student research of all types—a most fitting memorial to this most versatile scholar the department and herpetology have ever known. A personal memorial in her name has also been established at Boulder Memorial Hospital, where she spent the last ten weeks of her life among doctors, nurses, and technicians who became truly treasured friends and shared with her and her family the most

poignant memories of her life.

At least four nominal species-group taxa bear the name *rozellae* in perpetuity: *Thamnophis rozellae* Smith, 1940 (= *T. marciianus praeocularis* [Bocourt, 1892]); *Celestus rozellae* Smith, 1942; *Hyla rozellae* Taylor, 1942 (= *Ptychohyala e. euthysanota* [Kellogg, 1923]); and *Tantillita lintoni rozellae* Pérez-Higareda, 1985.

FORMAL WRITINGS

Publications usually constitute the primary achievements of scholars. Although Rozella Smith's publications are collectively an impressive monument, they are a mere shadow of her enormously diverse productivities. That they are still of major significance is remarkable in itself. Yet she was quite cynical about the significance of publications per se, inasmuch as she pointed out that data retrieval methods could produce quantities of articles on varied facets of a limited subject, without contributing much. She was well aware that quantity has nothing to do with quality in publication and scorned those who sought quantity. In her disdain of quantity she unfortunately was not adequately motivated to make available numerous high-quality writings of her own.

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C. In Preparation

(Several manuscripts on the Sherlock Holmes corpus are to be completed under joint authorship with David Chiszar but are not now sufficiently near finalization to list titles.)

1. Stimulus representations and imagery processes in animals. David Chiszar and Rozella B. Smith.

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