Citation:

Each year at this time, the Paleontological Research Institution is proud to recognize a non-professional for their contributions to paleontology. We are especially grateful to MAPS for providing us with this very special opportunity.

The Paleontological Research Institution is a natural history museum located in Ithaca, New York. We house one of the nation’s largest fossil collections, publish the oldest paleontological journal in the Western Hemisphere, and provide educational programs to thousands of people, in the northeastern U.S. and beyond. Like all natural history museums, we depend on the support and involvement of volunteers and other members of the general public. We especially value our interaction with non-professional paleontologists. The Institution, in fact, was established by Gilbert Harris in 1932 as a place where paleontologists with no other affiliation could come to work and study, and it was largely operated by non-professionals for much of its history. Each year, we recognize an individual who is not a professional paleontologist for the excellence of their contributions to the field. This award is named for our second Director, Katherine Palmer, who was an avid supporter of amateur paleontology.

Bill Klose has spent the past 50 years collecting and identifying fossils from all over the world, and selflessly donating enormous quantities of specimens to scientific institutions. Bill started collecting in the summer of 1950 during a vacation trip to Oregon. Initially he focused on minerals. The shift to fossil collecting was gradual, between 1950 and 1956, during the time he lived in San Mateo County, California. In 1957, Bill joined the Navy, which was to take him to many places over the next decade. All the while, he collected fossils. From 1959 to 1963, he attended Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, majoring in geology. From 1970 to 1997, he worked for Proctor and Gamble in Pennsylvania.

In 1976, Bill began to donate specimens. Since that time, he has donated an estimated 40,000 specimens to the Paleontological Research Institution. As recently as last week, he is still bringing them to Ithaca by the car load, usually claiming that he has just “discovered” more boxes in his basement. These remarkably well-curated collections span all kingdoms and phyla and ages. Of particular note among these treasures is an enormous collection of graptolites from the Ordovician of New York, which is among the finest anywhere. Bill has been particularly generous in acquiring specimens for the Institution that we could otherwise never have been able to obtain. He has also donated tens of thousands of specimens of fossil plants -- almost all self-collected -- to the Pennsylvania State Museum. Since his retirement in 1997, Bill has also been an active volunteer in the collections departments of several institutions, including PRI, the Pennsylvania State Museum, the Reading Public Museum, and the Everhard Museum.

Perhaps the best summary we can give of Bill and his extraordinary generosity is that he loves fossils with a great passion, and he loves to share them with others. We have all benefitted from that love, and generations of visitors to several museums will go on benefitting for many years to come.

For his dedication, achievement, and excellence in paleontology, the Paleontological Research Institution is pleased to present its 1999 Katherine Palmer Award to William F. Klose II.