Citation:

John Catalani has spent most of his free time over the past 30 years studying, collecting, and telling people about Ordovician nautiloids in Illinois and Wisconsin, and it is no exaggeration to say that he has become one of the foremost authorities on this group in this period.

John received his Bachelor of Science degree from Illinois State University, and his Master of Science degree in Earth Science Education from Indiana State University. Since 1972, he has been a teacher at South High School in Downers Grove, Illinois, where he has shared his enthusiasm for and love of fossils with more than a generation of students. In 1982, John had an opportunity to volunteer at the Field Museum in Chicago with the great paleontologist of the Mazon Creek, Eugene Richardson. The experience gained with Dr. Richardson had a great impact on John — he learned paleontology from one of the masters and he still talks about it today. John has published in the professional literature on Ordovician cephalopods and has donated specimens to several institutions, including a spectacular four-foot nautiloid from Wisconsin to PRI last year.

Since 1985, John has written a quarterly column called “An Amateur’s Perspective” for PRI’s magazine, American Paleontologist. His topics have ranged from “evolution and the Pope” to fossil collecting on public lands to the nature of science education. He never shies away from stating his opinion, yet throughout every essay we can clearly see not only his keen scientific skills but also his profound appreciation for the science of paleontology and how it is done and what it means to all of us.

For his dedication, achievement, and excellence in paleontology, the Paleontological Research Institution is pleased to present its 2000 Katherine Palmer Award to John A. Catalani.