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**GILES W. MEAD JR.  
1928–2003**

**G**ILES W. Mead Jr., a prominent ichthyologist and long time member of ASIH, died on 13 February 2003 at his family ranch on Atlas Peak, high above the Napa Valley in Northern California. Giles was born in New York City on 5 February 1928; his father, Giles W. Mead, was a well-to-do business man. When young Giles was seven the family moved to Southern California, where he grew up in Beverly Hills.

Giles received his A.B. (1949), M.A. (1952), and Ph.D. (1953) degrees from Stanford University where he worked for the U.S. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries (BCF): Among other projects he traveled to Japan to study the stomach contents of pelagic fur seals in the Northwest Pacific. In graduate school, he joined an active group of ichthyology and herpetology students taught by George Sprague Myers in the now defunct Stanford Natural History Museum. After receiving his doctorate, he transferred to the BCF laboratory at Woods Hole. Following a stint in the army at Fort Detrick, Maryland, Giles returned to the BCF, this time in the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum where he re-

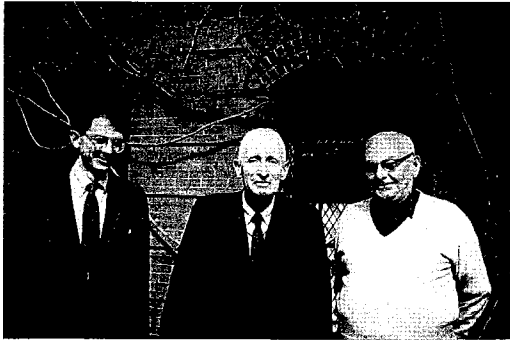


Fig. 1. Giles W. Mead on the left, Henry B. Bigelow in the center, Bill Schroeder on the right, in the mid-1960s at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. Photo from the Smithsonian Fish Division files.

placed Isaac Ginsburg as the fish taxonomist for the bureau. Giles spent four years in Washington and then moved to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard. From 1960 to 1970, he was Curator of Fishes and Lecturer in Biology (Fig. 1). At Harvard he taught a highly motivated group of students and mentored even more; many of those whose lives he touched serve today in responsible research and teaching positions.

The peripatetic Mead returned to Southern California in 1970 to assume directorship of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, a post from which he resigned in 1978 after successfully battling to save the museum's research staff and collections from the ravages of California's draconian Proposition 13. During his tenure, a new wing was added to the museum, and a popular branch of the museum was opened at the La Brea tar pits. After several more years in Southern California, he moved north to the ranch, where he concentrated on grapes and philanthropy.

Throughout his career in science Giles continued to learn: From George Myers, he learned the basics of systematics and the history and bibliography of ichthyology; From Professor Rolf Bolin, he learned about the structure of fishes; From Lionel Albert Walford, a marine biologist who worked for the Bureau of Fisheries, Giles learned that the bounty of the sea is not endless and that prudent management will require the study of ecosystems; From Professor Ernst Mayr, Giles learned contemporary ideas about evolution; and From Professor Henry Bigelow, he learned about the interactions and continuum of life in the sea.

Giles was particularly interested in oceanic fishes, distributions as well as systematics. His major research contributions include sections

on benthic invertebrates (now Aulopiformes) in fishes of the western North Atlantic and a monograph on the pelagic family Bramidae published as a Dana Report.

Mead assumed a leadership role in FWNA by arranging research funding, editing several volumes, finding new authors, and expanding taxonomic coverage of the series. The project had been initiated by a small group of east coast ichthyologists that reckoned they could cover the area from Hudson Bay to the mouth of the Amazon in three or four volumes and never mind the deep sea fishes, which at that time were mostly rare in collections. Then the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service exploratory fishing expeditions in the tropical western North Atlantic hauled up literally hundreds of rare and unknown species.

Another topic that particularly interested him concerned the broader aspects of museum management, and he was proud of writing "Museum Ethics" for the American Association of Museums.

Mead's retirement in Napa was scarcely inactive. He enlarged and managed his vineyards and produced some very fine reds as well as experimenting with port wine. He turned his hand to conservation efforts in the Napa Valley and placed the ranch under a conservation easement. Through a family foundation he was particularly active in supporting conservation efforts throughout the Pacific Northwest as well as a wide variety of research projects and civic support. Giles and the Mead Foundation supported an international workshop on gadiform systematics and made it possible to publish such books as Pietsch and Grobecker's 1987 *Frogfishes of the World* and Pietsch and Anderson's 1997 ASIH Special Publication No. 3, *Collection Building in Ichthyology and Herpetology*. Giles enjoyed reviewing the results of foundation grants and was extraordinarily well read.

Travel and collecting were givens. During his ichthyological career he participated in expeditions in the North Pacific, tropical and subtropical Atlantic, the Southeast Pacific and the Indian Ocean accumulating valuable material from all of these regions. He also collected Native American textiles and Escher prints and enlarged his father's collections of Japanese netsukes and spectacular minerals. He collected books, especially natural history ones; the core of his exceptional personal library was the purchase of William Beebe's library. Mead's reprints were donated to the LACM, and many of his most valuable books were given to the Huntington Library.

Giles Mead was intensely interested in people,

and his friends were legion. Wherever he was there seemed to be a heady mix of people and ideas. A memorial gathering of Giles' family and friends was held at the Mead Ranch in March of 2003. It was a great party; Giles would have loved it.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- DANIEL M. COHEN, P.O. Box 192, Bodega Bay, California 94923; E-mail: dmco@monitor.net; and BRUCE B. COLLETTE, National Marine Fisheries Service, Systematics Laboratory, Smithsonian Institution, P.O. Box 37012, National Museum of Natural History, WC-57, MRC 0153, Washington, DC 20013-7012; E-mail: collette.bruce@nrmnh.si.edu. Send reprint requests to DMC.