



Dr. F. Thomas Ledig

August 13, 1938 - May 20, 2015

Dr. F. Thomas Ledig passed away on May 20, 2015 at 76 from metastatic melanoma. He was a world renowned research scientist in the fields of forest genetics and conservation biology. He could not have been loved more by his family and a host of wonderful friends from all over the world.

Tom was born in Dover, New Jersey. After earning his B.S. from Rutgers University and his M.S. and Ph.D. from North Carolina State University, he went on to become a Full Professor and member of the Board of Permanent Officers of Yale University. In 1979 Tom joined the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Southwest Research Station as Director of the Institute of Forest Genetics, located in Berkeley and Placerville, California.

Tom traveled the world as a highly sought after expert on forest genetics and conservation, consulting with government and scientific institutions. His research took him to Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Hungary, India, Italy, Kenya, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Portugal, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Vietnam, and throughout the United States. He was familiar through travel with forest conditions in many other countries.

Major recognition of his life's work includes the Society of American Foresters Barrington Moore Memorial Award for outstanding achievement in biological research; Fellowship in the American Association for the Advancement of

Science; a special award from the Universidad Autónoma Agraria Antonio Narro, Saltillo, Mexico; and two North American Forest Commission awards. His service as secretary of the UN/FAO/North American Forest Commission's Forest Genetic Resources Working Group was one of the most rewarding experiences of his career. Yet, his most treasured honor was a 1997 letter, signed by former colleagues at Yale University that reads, in part, "We miss the joie de vivre that left when you left."

Tom retired in 2008 as Senior Scientist in the Pacific Southwest Research Station and continued as an adjunct professor at the University of California-Davis. He remained active in research. His most recent work involved genetic diversity in conifers, evaluating experiments he established in 1973-1974 on the effects of climate change on pitch pine; and working on a National Geographic Society grant to study Coulter pine in Baja California. His career is represented in part by over 135 publications in genetics and physiology. To the end, he maintained his long-time interests in hiking the mountains and the Southwest desert, photography, SCUBA diving, and collecting fine and folk art.

Tom is survived by his wife, Linda Marie Lux; three children from a former marriage: Colleen Stanton Cassidy, Sean Cormac Ledig, and Brendan Owen Ledig; his grandson, Nicholaus Vitaly Ledig; brother Alan Lloyd Ledig; and father-in-law Raymond Clyde Lux.

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. F. Thomas Ledig*

November 29, 2022 at 08:20 PM



“ *Today, August 1st, 2016, I just learned about Tom's passing over a year ago. I'm in tears. We received Tom in our property in Sierra La Marta, México, where he made several visits to collect and study Picea mexicana.*

The last time we met was precisely in our mountain, and he hiked it with his usual energetic pace.

Linda, truly, I'm in tears.

José Sánchez de la Peña, Monterrey, México.

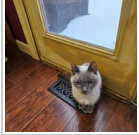
José Sánchez de la Peña - August 01, 2016 at 08:30 PM

LI

“ I am in tears...he gave me an opportunity to come to Yale from India in 1973 - really green. I vividly remember meeting him for the first time in his office at Greeley in Sept. 1973!. He took care of me, gave me timely advice and even came to my graduation at Yale. Later he served on my Ph.D. thesis committee at Rutgers; where I worked on pitch pine in the Pine Barrens. Although I moved away from forest genetics, I am deeply indebted to him for everything I have done in genetics, since. I have explored and exploring this landscape of genetics because of him. His courses are still guiding me as he gave me the required basic tools to explore and make sense of the natural diversity of plants and animals. He had excellent quantitative skills. His prose was crisp and succinct. His papers were always filled with numerous references. His voice and equations on the board are still frozen in my memory. My silent sadness is intense and deep. This is my great personal loss. Alas, Tom, you and memories of the time I spent with you as your student and the ways in which you have influenced me will live with me forever. Tom lit so many lamps in his lifetime and the one in my heart continues to glow drawing the energy he provided many decades ago. It was my honor and privilege to have him as my mentor and friend. May Your Soul Rest in Peace. My deepest condolences to all of you - Linda, Colleen, Sean, Brendan.

Diddahally (Raju) Govindaraju, Lexington, MA.

linda - July 13, 2015 at 10:42 AM



“ I was creating a family tree and found Uncle Tom. His father was my great grandfather. I called him and explained the connection and he was so happy and gracious. He helped out with information and a picture of my great grandfather. Over the years I enjoyed receiving his yearly updates in Christmas cards. I wish I could have met him in person.

*Sherri Hill
Indiana*

Sherri Canon-Hill - June 29, 2015 at 11:25 PM

JN

“ It would be presumptuous of me to suggest that Tom was my professional colleague...I was never in his class. But he always treated me as if I were his professional colleague, an honor I shall not forget. I was working for a park agency in the Bay Area and Tom made three significant contributions to my career: He helped to keep me sane, he provided eucalyptus seedlings for a parkland planting (I hope PSW still has the planting records!), and he gave a seminar on Coulter pine. I'll not forget his friendship and his willingness to be of service; I shall miss him.

John Nicoles

John Nicoles - June 08, 2015 at 08:58 PM

BL

“ To summarize everything that made Tom who he was- his scientific expertise especially in the field of forest genetics, his understanding and concern for the natural world, his wealth of travel and experience around the world, his zest for life, his wonderful relationship with my sister Linda, his ties to family and friends- would not be easy. He lived life fully and well and admirably. We will miss him all our days but remember him for all of his.

Brain Lux

Brian Lux - June 07, 2015 at 06:40 PM

PE

“ Vale Tom. A giant in the world of forest genetics. I was fortunate to meet Tom a few times over the years. He entertained me for a few hours in his office near Berkeley in 1989 while I was on holiday. We went to a naval base out of town to inspect some eucalypt trials. A man of integrity, concern for the natural world but more importantly a friend to those he met. Condolences to his family and friends. A life we'll lived.

Peter Volker, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

peter - June 05, 2015 at 10:36 PM

MG

“ Tom was the guy who gave me my first gig out of college with the US Forest Service, collecting measurements in a research planting he'd installed 35 years earlier. Tom, recently retired at the time, was like Indiana Jones - full of energy, adventure, and a passion for his work. That job was supposed to last 2 weeks. 7 years and almost a dissertation later, I find myself setting up my own long term studies, working with great people, and of course, continuously measuring pitch pines. Thanks, Tom, for giving me that first job and starting this exciting career in Forest Service Research. You will always be remembered at the Silas Little Experimental Forest.

Mike Gallagher - June 04, 2015 at 05:58 PM

JH

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



John Hom - June 04, 2015 at 03:13 PM

LI

“ Tom was one of the first professors we met at Yale in the warm August of 1978 – he wore tight blue jeans and climbed trees in his “Jesus Shoes” for genetic research reasons that I never fully understood. He also taught us all to use a chain saw, as he said we had to learn to be real foresters. And though I never met that challenge, Laura (cc’d) did, I well remember Tom’s enthusiasm, energy and tolerance for our antics and amusements.

We at the Class of 1980 were saddened to hear of his passing and you and his family are in our thoughts.

Tom

Thomas McHenry

Linda - June 03, 2015 at 07:18 AM

LL

“ I am so sorry to hear that we have lost Tom. It seems only yesterday (though it was this past February) he had called me on my cell as I skied through Great Mountain Forest. Ironically, I was right near another Yale professor D M Smith's research plot at the time. Tom wanted some corroborative info about native pitch pine on Canaan Mtn to support his continuing research report on the work he had done here....We were back and forth on emails and I sent him the info he needed...never realizing that might be the last time we spoke. He had such a calm and soothing voice and wonderful sense of joyful curiosity in this world and everyone in it. I am glad he was my teacher and life long friend, even though the meridians of longitude between us were many.

Condolences and peace

*Star Childs
EECOS Environmental
Norfolk, CT*

ILinda - June 03, 2015 at 07:09 AM

NG

“ When thinking of Tom we automatically have Linda in mind. The most hospitable couple! Tom had a real knack for mixing/serving special drinks which always gave their soirées a distinctive atmosphere, complemented with Linda's delectable food. Such lovely and lingering memories and this, animated with lively discussions of global interests !
We keep a fond memory of this noble Tom.

nadine and alan goodban

nadine goodban - June 02, 2015 at 09:34 PM

KO

“ To his family:

When housemate Vicki VanSteenberg and I entered Yale Forestry School in 1977, Tom was among the first to help orient us, have us for dinner at his apartment, and share his goodwill. We enjoyed knowing him and appreciated his involvement in our graduate school lives.

My best to all of you as you deal with this loss to so many.

Ken Olson, M.F.S, 1980, Yale School Forestry and Environmental Studies

Ken Olson - June 02, 2015 at 03:45 PM

LI

“ *Ledig was a Mergen appointee. And like Mergen he was about way more than forest genetics. I did not climb any trees with him but he was an important factor in the transition of the program from traditional forestry to a broader emphasis on ecosystems. He played a significant part in our debates where he was always sensitive to the need for keeping the old to bolster the new bold shift. It was not about dominance of a particular discipline but rather about the need for continuity and a constructive base of traditional practices. His tempered voice seems a diminished art in current academic discourse. We miss it.*

bill burch

linda - June 02, 2015 at 02:51 PM

VP

“ Tom was my best friend over a period of many years. He lives on in my heart and mind and will forever be there.

Vic Porter

Vic Porter - June 01, 2015 at 03:21 PM

CS

“ I met Tom in the early 1980s when I was a starving graduate student and he was a professor at UC Berkeley. No, I was not his student, but a neighbor across the street and fellow weight-lifter in Harmon Gym. Tom took me under his wing. He and Linda always made sure that on Holidays especially -- Thanksgiving, Easter, Christmas, I had a place (well, I think they wanted to make had something to eat, wasn't alone and feeling sorry for myself). He seem to know when my work-study paycheck had gone for rent and not food. I was always being invited over.

Tom actually played detective and discovered I had a sister in South Carolina. He actually contacted her to find out birthday. He had also hear me mention in passing my admiration but out-and-out fear of one of my professors, Dr. Henrik Blum. Tom then threw a surprise birthday dinner for me and who do you think showed up? Dr. Blum became my mentor and along with Tom, have been most responsible for me becoming a professor. Oh yeah, I later found out from my sister that Tom had sworn her to secrecy. Imagine that: she gets a phone call from a total stranger to be discreet about a matter regarding her younger brother and she's immediately in on keeping me in the dark.

Tom introduced me to world of back-packing. On one of our many camping trips, I met his son. Sean has rightfully pointed out how his father made the world his laboratory. My own world will forever be dimmer with Tom's passing.

Clarence Spigner

Clarence Spigner - June 01, 2015 at 01:54 PM

EC

“ Ed and I feel very fortunate to have known Tom. He was much more to us than my best friend's father. He was also our friend and whenever we visited Tom and Linda they made us feel like family.

We will never forget his relaxed charm. We respected and admired Tom tremendously and were often struck by the way his exceptional intellect was always expressed in a kind and patient way.

His sense of humor, incredible energy, and warmth will be in our memory forever. We will think of him always with love and joy.

Eugenia Cross - June 01, 2015 at 11:34 AM

SC

“ Tom Ledig was not only a renowned scientist and my father-in-law, he was my friend.

We enjoyed so many good times and when it came to hiking, he left all of us in the dust.

I've never met anyone with so much energy and zest for life. I always tried to make

him laugh, and when he did, it was a hearty laugh, full & happy. This is how I will always

remember Tom - with love and respect and the good fortune of having had him in my life.

Steve Cassidy - May 31, 2015 at 09:44 PM

CL

“ Long ago, my father taught me how to tie my shoes laces.

He also taught me to question, to seek, to embrace challenge and change – to love learning, whether it comes from a book, a plant, a work of art, the sky, my own inner voice, or other people. From him I learned that the world is wide and full of wonders and that everyone in it has amazing personal stories to tell of struggles, growth, accomplishments, and also loss. His energy, his lust for life, his humor, and his love will live on in me – and in all the lives he ever touched – and for that I am eternally grateful.

I can't help but feel that the world lost him too soon, but I do feel that we are all so lucky to have had him for so long.

At the risk of being a SoCal cliché, I want to share this poem from the poet Rumi in my father's honor:

*On the day I die, don't say he's gone.
Death has nothing to do with going away.
The sun sets, and the moon sets, but they're not gone.
Death is a coming together.
The human seed goes down into the ground like a bucket,
And comes up with some unimagined beauty.
Your mouth closes here, and immediately opens
With a shout of joy there.*

Namaste to all who loved my father. May All Beings Be Happy.



Colleen Ledig - May 30, 2015 at 01:11 PM



“ *My father was no ivory tower intellectual. The whole natural world was his laboratory. His work as a forest geneticist and of conservationist took him to some of the most remote and forbidding places on several continents.*

Strangely, he also liked to visit those same places on vacation, sometimes dragging along friends, my stepmother or myself on his adventures.

He loved the natural world and often lamented the harm done to it by mankind. But through his work, he leaves behind a body of research which may guide others in ways to preserve the natural world for future generations.

Sean Ledig - May 28, 2015 at 07:51 AM

DG

I am in tears...he gave me an opportunity to come to Yale from India in 1973 - really green. I vividly remember meeting him for the first time in his office at Greeley in Sept. 1973!. He took care of me, gave me timely advice and took me on his many planting trips. He pointed out the importance of ecology and evolution to become good tree breeders. He even came to my graduation at Yale. Later he served on my Ph.D. thesis committee at Rutgers; where I worked on some evolutionary aspects of pitch pine in the Pine Barrens.

Although I moved away from forest genetics, I am deeply indebted to him for everything I have done in genetics, since. It's only because of him. I have explored and exploring this landscape of genetics The principles he taught us in his courses are still guiding me to explore and make sense of the natural diversity of plants and animals - now humans. He had excellent quantitative skills. His prose was crisp and succinct. His papers were always filled with numerous references. He was one of the clearest thinkers in the field of forest genetics. His voice and the equations he wrote on the board at Greeley labs are still frozen in my memory. Those memories are flooding me and my silent sadness is intense and deep.

This is my great personal loss. Alas, Tom, you and memories of the time I spent with you as your student and the ways in which you have influenced me will live with me forever, like the serene stillness of a deep pond.

Tom enlightened so many people in his lifetime and the lamp he lit in my heart continues to glow drawing the energy he provided many decades ago. It was my honor and privilege to have him as my mentor and friend.

May Your Soul Rest in Peace.

My deepest condolences to you all - Linda, Colleen, Sean, Brendan.

Diddahally (Raju) Govindaraju, Lexington, MA.

Diddahally Govindaraju - July 11, 2015 at 07:02 AM

HN

I have just today, Dec 17, learned about the passing of Tom. Even in this internet age, news sometimes travels slowly. In fact, I found out because I saw a paper just published with Tom as first author, and I was going to write to him and say hello – until I read further and realized that he had passed. That hit me like a ton of bricks, because Tom was such a positive influence on me, and helped shape my career in academics.

I knew Tom from my days at Yale from 1975 to 1977. He had a much bigger influence on me than I think he ever knew, perhaps because I never told him, which I now regret. He was the person who got me interested in becoming a physiological ecologist, and I made my first measurements of photosynthesis in his lab. I still have the paper I wrote for him, and he kindly gave it a good grade, even if it wasn't, perhaps, up to his high standards. And when I accidentally drained his very expensive CO₂ calibration tank while doing my measurements, he didn't get mad, as he had every right to be, but gently, and with great import, told me how not to repeat that mistake again. Today, I still do gas exchange and physiological ecology, some 30 years later, all because of my positive experiences working with Tom.

One memorable outing with Tom involved a trip to the NJ Pine Barrens to help weed out invading oak trees in his Pitch pine plots. I remember the terror I felt when the weeder I was using sliced right through one of his pine trees after bouncing off a hard oak stem. But as with the gas tank, he took that in stride, and he just chalked that up to inexperience on my part. That night he brought us all to an isolated restaurant in the barrens, where he ordered a round of hot peppers for everyone. This was my first time ever to eat a jalapeno, and I was quickly in agony. Not being a drinker, everyone else quenched their fire with beer (or milk), while 32 oz. of Sprite had no effect on me, so I remained on fire for quite a while.

A fellow student and I made up a seminar from a fictitious institute of forestry on how serotinous pine cones open (Tom studied serotiny in Pitch pines), and a few weeks later, when he saw the fake talk advertised in the Yale bulletin, he slyly asked me and my co-conspirator whether we had ever heard of this institute, and at that moment, we knew the gig was up! He knew who had put that seminar in. But he thought it was pretty funny, and much to our relief, let us pass his course!

I'm glad I got to know him, and yet sorry that we lost track of each other when he left for California. About two years ago, he did write me and gave me a paper of his on acid rain effects that he never got published. I guess he sent it to me because he knew I was into air pollution effects research. As always, it was well written and reflected his high

standards and intellect that I respected from the day I first met him.

My belated condolences to all the Ledig family, and I hope these little vignettes provide you some solace and warm remembrances of Tom. I'll miss him greatly, as I know you all do too.

Howard Neufeld - December 17, 2015 at 03:00 PM



Once in his office I saw an envelope with Indian stamps addressed to New Heaven, Conn. I wonder if it was from the Indian man now in Lexington, Mass.

David Williams - August 03, 2018 at 02:17 PM