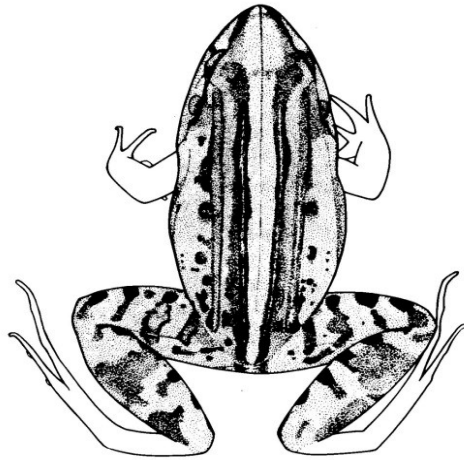


**BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
AND
BIBLIOGRAPHY OF W. RONALD HEYER**



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**SMITHSONIAN
HERPETOLOGICAL INFORMATION
SERVICE NO. 147**

2016

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2016 – Division of Amphibians & Reptiles
National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution

ISSN 2331-7515

Cover Image: Striped *Leptodactylus poecilochilus* from Heyer, 1978,
Bull. Los Angeles Museum of Natural History 29: fig.64.

Biographical Sketch

I was born in Bellingham, Washington, on 29 August 1941. My father, Bill, accepted an air force civilian position and we moved to Spokane, Washington where I entered elementary school at age 6. My mother, Evelyn, worked part-time as a bookkeeper for commercial businesses in the Spokane area. My brother John, a physician in Phoenix, Arizona, was born when I was 5 and my sister Nancy, an outreach worker for the Episcopal Church in Washington, North Carolina came along when I was 7. While I was named after my father, I was called Ron. I learned that my name was William when my first grade teacher read our names from the class list.

I was always placed in the back row for school pictures and usually towered 5 or 6 inches above my classmates. I did not stop growing until I reached 6'6" in my first year of college. I had the usual childhood diseases and a yearly allergic reaction to pine and fir pollen that caused asthma. I enjoyed growing vegetables, collecting stamps, and writing poems. I worked after school and during the summers loading freight trucks and stocking books at a department store. I was once pinned to the inside wall of a trailer by a huge truck tire and had to have my co-workers lift it off me. I was teased quite a bit for that mistake. I was successful in school and aspired to be a high school math teacher. I graduated from William & Clark high school in 1959 and headed over the mountains to Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington.

My undergraduate biology professor, Jens Knudsen, was instrumental in changing my career aspirations. Field trips for his classes took us to mountains, deserts, tide pools. Lab exercises taught us illustration. I became a teaching assistant and ran undergraduate anatomy and biology labs. Jens' mentoring sparked my interest in zoology and provided a sound base for continuing my studies in graduate school. I met my wife, Miriam, at the beginning of my senior year. I had spent my second summer living on a house boat and counting salmon while working for Alaska Fish and Game. When I returned to school in September sporting a six inch, untrimmed, black beard, I vowed to date a different woman every week for the entire year. Miriam was number two. She turned out to be number four, five, and my steady girl. I knew I was onto something when she enjoyed our date sitting on an overturned pail, at a golf course pond in the evening fog, listening to frogs call. I wanted to work with tiger beetles and pursued the entomology program at Washington State University. I found out that the tiger beetle expert at WSU would be retiring, and Jens suggested I try the graduate program at the University of Southern California where he had completed his work. I applied and was accepted to study fishes under Jay M. Savage.

Jay was in Costa Rica during my first year. Dave Wake supervised Jay's lab in Los Angeles and kept the USC fish and herp students busy. I took a couple of fish collecting trips in the Pacific during that year and was sea sick the entire period. I decided to switch to herps. Jay suggested I take on a study of the lizard genus *Ameiva* for my Master's project. Miriam and I were married after her graduation and my first year of graduate school. We spent our honeymoon collecting amphibians and reptiles in Costa Rica. My *Ameiva* project turned into an altitudinal transect from Tilarán to the top of the Cordillera Central. Charles Walker, from the University of Michigan, Roy McDiarmid, Roy's brother, and Norm Scott accompanied us on our first couple of collecting days. Dr. Walker was thrilled to catch his first caecilian, and Miriam was not so thrilled to cook most of

our provisions on a wood stove at the back of the casa at Finca el Silencio. Miriam and I had many experiences during the altitudinal study that would establish a base for our future field work that included relatively primitive, and sometimes frightening times in the field.

I completed my Master's thesis and began working on the evolution and relationships of the genus *Leptodactylus*, while Miriam taught school in Monrovia, Los Angeles County. Our daughter Laura was born in 1967, and Miriam became a full-time mom. We lived on my graduate fellowships from NSF, teaching fellowships, and our savings until I completed my dissertation. Jim Dixon was at the LA County Museum during those years, and he and I did field work in Mexico. I received the Stoye Award at the ASIH meetings at the end of my final year (1968) and accepted a post-doctoral position with Bob Inger to supervise his ecological research team at the Sakaerat ecological reserve in Thailand.

Our crew of four local men and one field assistant-translator worked plots during the day and collected in Kao Yai National park, Sarika waterfall, and other streams and trails at night. We ate grasshoppers, frogs, and more conventional Thai food. We lived in a one room house and ate with the meteorology crew in a mess hall. I became sick with falciparum malaria. Miriam ran the plot surveys, occasionally rescuing the study areas from browsing elephants. I still have hearing problems from the medications I took to cure the malaria. Fortunately, our daughter Laura was never ill.

We returned to the States in 1970, and I began teaching biology at Pacific Lutheran, my alma mater. I received an NSF grant to continue my studies on the genus *Leptodactylus* and spent summers and interim sessions in the field in Argentina and Ecuador. Keith Berven was my undergraduate assistant on those excursions. I did some museum work in São Paulo but missed meeting Paulo Vanzolini who was in the United States at the time. Miriam and I joined Roy McDiarmid on the Osa Peninsula in Costa Rica in the summer of 1973 for a few weeks and were intrigued with the natural history of that area. It was the first time I saw a *Bothrops asper* eat a *Leptodactylus savagei*. Our daughter Elena was born in 1971. Miriam went back to school to earn a Master's degree in counseling. In August 1973, Miriam and I, with help from Dave Wake's mother, hosted the SSAR herp meetings at Pacific Lutheran University and then packed our belongings and girls and drove across country to the Smithsonian and our new home in Arlington, Virginia.

I became assistant curator in the Division of Amphibians and Reptiles at the National Museum of Natural History in the fall of 1973. During this time, Paulo Vanzolini dropped by the museum and invited me to join him on a field trip to Amazonas and Rondônia, Brazil. We worked the Purus River and lived on a small boat with six others. Vanzolini's nephew Roberto Brandão, now an entomologist at the MZUSP, was the third scientist on board. I continued traveling to Brazil for field work with Vanzolini and his colleagues as well as conducting a two year tadpole ecological study at the Smithsonian CERC site on Chesapeake Bay in 1975-1976. I was promoted to associate curator in 1978 and became director of the Smithsonian Tropical Lowland Biology Program in 1980. This program supported diverse research in tropical biology and anthropology, funding museum colleagues such as Cole, Meggers, Kress, Acevedo, Coddington, Erwin, Pogue,

Thorington, Vari, S. Weitzman, and M. Weitzman. In one of the Program's projects, Miriam and I surveyed the Madeira River by boat in the fall of 1975 while my sister Nancy cared for our children. Stan and Marilyn Weitzman brought our daughters to São Paulo, where we celebrated Christmas at the Boracéia Research Station. The girls raced *Rhinella icterica* across the patio, and we ate chocolates in celebration of the holiday. Earlier (1975-1977), Miriam, Laura, Elena, and I studied tadpole ecology at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute's Barro Colorado Island field station in Panama. Laura was "home-schooled" during these occasions, and I taught Elena to read. We had nightly tick checks and marveled at the camp tapir eating the kitchen vegetable parings and a monkey who came through the mess hall door, opened the refrigerator, and ran out with a loaf of bread.

I became Chairman, Department of Vertebrate Zoology (1983-1986) and continued my research and field work in Brazil. I was honored by the Brazilian Academy of Sciences and elected as foreign member in 1981. Miriam finished the PhD program at Catholic University in 1982, accepted a position with Phillips Programs, and began working in special education. I took many field trips to the Atlantic forest region of Brazil and found and described new species. Field colleagues included entomologist Francesca (Chica) do Val, Smithsonian colleagues Ron Crombie and Fran Irish, and herpetologists Adão Cardozo, Carlos Alberto Gonçalves da Cruz, Celso Morato, Chuck Myers, Oswaldo Peixoto, Stan Rand, and Paulo Vanzolini. Rand, da Cruz, Peixoto, Craig Nelson, and I published a major work on the frogs of Boracéia, one of the only existing long term studies of amphibian populations at a single site.

With the recognition of widespread decline in amphibian populations in 1989, amphibian biologists established the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force in 1990 to investigate causes and to begin to raise public consciousness of this ecological disaster. I became Chairman of the DAP Task Force in 1991/92. A new experience for me as I became a fund raiser and speaker on behalf of amphibian conservation and travelled to meetings in Europe, Africa, and South America. Miriam took early retirement at that point and helped with the work of the task force. Colleague Rafael de Sá at the University of Richmond suggested a joint proposal to the National Science Foundation to study the phylogeny and relationships of the genus *Leptodactylus*, and it was funded for 6 years. We gathered tissue samples through field work and donations by colleagues and completed the work with a monograph in 2014. Field companions included Diego Baldo, Rafael de Sá, Esteban Lavilla, María Laura Ponssa, Diva Maria Borges Nojosa, and Larry David Wilson. I was honored for my contributions to Latin American herpetology by the Latin American Congress of Herpetology in 2011 and for my contributions to Brazilian herpetology by the Brazilian Congress of Herpetology in 2013. I "officially" retired in the summer of 2013. During my career as herpetologist, I have described 54 species of amphibians and reptiles and have had eight species of amphibians and reptiles, and one nematode named for me. I am so grateful to the friends and colleagues who helped and encouraged me in my work.

W. R. Heyer & M. M. Heyer
November 2015

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