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Natural History Study Area

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ORDWAY BULLETIN
No. 114

MACALESTER
COLLEGE

located at 9550 Inver Grove Trail (Dakota County Road 77), Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

An INVOLUNTARY RETIREMENT at ORDWAY.

He was old and very crotchety - even ornery - and he had been around for longer than most people could recall. For twenty years he had spent every minute of his time in the environs of Rice Hall and prior to that in old Carnegie Hall and his purpose had been to help educate those students of biology who came in contact with him. Now a new phase in the biology curriculum had come about and it was time he went. He probably was not entirely unwilling although on the final day he was physically removed from that bailiwick over which he had presided for a pair of decades. Now he found himself transported to the property at Ordway and to a new life for him.

Actually it was not a new life in the sense of beginning anew. The real fact is that he was to return to the kind of life he had come from although the passage of years had perhaps robbed him of this heritage. For twenty years - 60 terms plus 20 summer sessions - he had held forth in the confines of his little glassed-in cubicle save for a couple of forays in the corridors which frequently set his colleagues into dithers and which invariably ended with his being forcibly returned to his own area.

He had seldom been referred to directly by name; it was usually some off-handed comment about "Snapper". Indeed, he never really had a name that one could recall although his family name was Chelydridae and if he had been more haughty he might have shown much conceit about the fact that his was one of the very oldest families in existence, almost as old as the dinosaurs and even older than the Macalester tartan! If anyone had ever dealt with him on a direct and formal basis he would properly have been addressed as Chelydra serpentina, not exactly an attractive moniker but perhaps consonant with his disposition. Anyway, his principal penchant was for bad-tempered misanthropy - and although he did not recognize it, the time had come for him to depart.

Unceremoniously transported in a back-pack borne by one of his associates he was taken to the shores of River Lake and carefully released there one humid afternoon. He did not immediately revert to his amphibian traits by entering into the water and swimming away from those people who had shunned him. Instead he crawled rather leisurely into the tall grasses, perhaps sulking a little while contemplating his new freedom in these strange surroundings which should have been familiar to him but for the fact that he had been kept away for such a long time. Later he was seen swimming near the lakeshore. Perhaps by now he has become assimilated by his new surroundings or he may have perished from inability to

adjust. I rather incline toward the first possibility for he was one tough individual and the Halls of Rice for some time to come will have an empty place which he filled for so many years. He was not nearly so large as one could reasonably expect for his age and this perhaps was because of his confinement and limitation in diet. Nevertheless he was quite formidable, extremely self-centered and not inclined to incite loyalty or excite affection ... yet, I do wish him well.



Feb. 14, 1983
jdm/

R J CHRISTMAN,
Naturalist

Post scriptum: On the very day of retirement an unexpected replacement came to the Biology Department - actually hitched a ride with a class returning to the Campus from Ordway. He is smaller and much, much younger and, it must be said, very much more handsome. Indeed, he is a beautiful member of the Testudinidae family, Chrysemys picta marginata by name, although already nicknamed "Scooter". His projected tenure is for one year during which time he will carry out the expected duties and probably succeed in influencing students through his beauty and charm rather than by intimidation and crotchety behavior.

I wish him well, too.