



Dr. Wann Langston, Jr.

July 10, 1921 - April 7, 2013

Wann Langston, Jr, passed away on Sunday, April 7th, at the age of 91, after a long and rewarding life. He followed his wife of 66 years, Marietta Evans Langston, who passed on in December.

Wann was born July 10th, 1921 in Oklahoma City. He was the first-born son of Wann Langston and Myrtle Fanning Langston. Unfortunately Wann Jr.'s mother was taken from him the day after his birth. His father who was a cardiologist at the nearby medical center, allowed his baby son to live at the hospital with him for the first delicate months, where he was the darling of the nursing staff. Myrtle's sister, a kind woman whom Wann always simply called "Auntie", came to live with the family soon after, and she took care of "Little Wann." When Doctor Langston decided to study medicine in Edinburgh, Scotland, his son and his Auntie went along. They stayed in Edinburgh for three years.

Upon returning to the US, Wann's father met Clara Jones, a Texan from Salado who was working as a nurse in New York City. They were married and returned to Oklahoma City, and moved into a tall brick house near the hospital and medical school. Wann's sister Nancy and brother Robert were born, and the family thrived throughout the depression years. Wann's stepmother never failed to feed the penniless men who showed at mealtimes at the family's back door. When he was old enough, young Wann enjoyed walking to the hospital

and exploring a much smaller Oklahoma City in the 1930's.

Wann's interest in bones and fossils started when he was very small. At four, on a trip to the natural history museum in Vienna, he saw his first giant dinosaur, and remained there transfixed until the guard came and dragged him away at closing time. From then on his fascination with paleontology never wavered. In his words, "As a child I dug up anything resembling a bone. I recall my mother driving me to a local dump near the Oklahoma City Zoo and leaving me and a long suffering friend to "excavate," all the time fantasizing about Tyrannosaurus rex." On a visit to New York during the late 1920s, Wann was "deposited" at the Museum of Natural History every morning, and "collected" each evening. He spent the days there happily engaged with a box of clay, making miniature models of the dinosaur skeletons on display. Throughout his life, he took great pleasure in modeling bones. His mother suffered such indignities as Wann's "bug box" (used to clean small skeletal remains and kept under his bed!), and once came home to an unexpected smell of soup: Wann was boiling a rare find, a two-headed chicken he had managed to procure from the local carnival. For Wann, the soup was only incidental - the skeleton priceless!

Except for a brief interlude when, according to his sister Nancy, Wann dreamed of becoming an opera star (l), he remained fascinated by what he finally discovered was called "paleontology." When Wann was 10, a kindly professor at OU (Dr. Stovall) took an interest in him and allowed him to assist in the preparation of fossils at the lab. During this time he discovered that there were other kindred souls who had a similar passion for paleontology. Throughout his long and productive professional life, Wann showed his gratitude to these generous early mentors by always making himself available, in a similar fashion, to young and aspiring enthusiasts who had been "bitten by the Dinosaur Bug".

After serving in the Navy in WWII, Wann married Marietta (Evans) Langston in 1946. They met at OU, where Marietta was teaching freshman Geology labs. After Wann completed his Ph.D. at Berkeley, CA, the couple, along with their new daughter Karen, moved to Ottawa, Canada, where Wann had accepted a position as curator of fossil vertebrates at the National Museum of Canada. In three years, a second daughter, Sandra, was born. During the family's almost 10-year stint in Canada, Wann spent the summer months collecting specimens in the western Canadian

Tribute Wall



“ <http://www.jsg.utexas.edu/news/2013/04/memorial-wann-langston-jr/> ”

Wayne Roberson - April 10, 2013 at 12:00 AM