

BIRD LOVERS: WILLIAM ALDEN KLAMM AND NANCY AGNES KLAMM

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William A. Klamm was born in 1916 in Lakewood, Ohio. He graduated from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland in 1940 with a degree in Chemical Engineering. During World War II he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and served for 4 years, rising to the rank of Captain and commander of a fleet of bombers based in Alaska. After leaving the military, Bill spent most of his career working for a subsidiary of Pennzoil (Segall 1998).

Nancy Klamm, the daughter of William and Grace Campbell, was born Agnes Campbell in 1911 in Woodville, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Pennsylvania College for Women (now Chatham College) in 1932 with a major in chemistry and a minor in mathematics. After graduation Nancy obtained a job as a senior buyer in the Chemistry Department at Case Western Reserve University. It was there that she met William A. Klamm and they began dating. When Bill returned from the war, Bill and Nancy renewed their courtship—which included a great deal of birding. They were married on 9 September 1950 (Baranick 2002, Renkert 2002).

Bill was a lifelong birder who joined the Wilson Ornithological Society in 1957. He and Nancy were very active with the Kirtland Bird Club and the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. They regularly contributed their records and short notes to the Cleveland Bird Calendar (e.g., Flannigan et al. 1974; N. Klamm 1968; W. A. Klamm 1968, 1974; W. Klamm and N. Klamm 1968), a local journal of birds and birding published by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the Kirtland Bird Club. Bill also published notes in the *Ohio Cardinal* (W. A. Klamm 1980–1981, 1990). The published records of Bill and Nancy Klamm in the Cleveland Bird Calendar are numerous and often simply labeled “Klamm”—Bill and Nancy were insepara-



Bill and Nancy Klamm, approximately 1973. Photograph courtesy of Richard and Nancy Renkert.

ble—their observations almost always made together. Both were also long-time members of the Audubon Society of Greater Cleveland.

Bill and Nancy attended their first Wilson meeting in 1958 in West Virginia and missed no meetings in the next 33 years. Bill was an incredibly meticulous, methodical record keeper, regularly writing a summary of the weather for the Cleveland Bird Calendar. He was also an avid photographer, documenting local rarities with home movies. Bill and Nancy knew birds well and the value of bird records of all sorts. They were much more than listers. They were true bird “watchers.” Above all Bill and Nancy recognized the importance of ornithological research and education, and were especially supportive of student efforts, seeking out student papers to attend at Wilson meetings and later seeking out the students to discuss their presentation. In 1967 Bill gave a paper at the Wilson meeting in Crawford Notch, New Hampshire, on “Some observations on competition between Lewis’ Woodpeckers and Red-shafted Flickers.”

In 1968 Bill Klamm was elected treasurer

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of the Wilson Ornithological Society; he served in that capacity until 1973. I was elected to take his place as treasurer and Bill worked closely with me for most of the year. He was a wonderful mentor and he and Nancy remained my close friends. They helped a great deal when we hosted the Wilson meeting at Mississippi State University.

Nancy Klamm was never a member of the Wilson Ornithological Society except vicariously through her husband, although she too never missed a Wilson meeting in 33 years. She was an avid birder, contributor to the Cleveland Bird Calendar, and ardent supporter of local conservation efforts.

William A. Klamm died on 6 May 1998 of complications from emphysema. Following his death, Nancy sold Bill's very valuable stamp collection and donated the proceeds to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the Kirtland Bird Club. The funds were used to set up a lecture series in Bill's name. In April 2002 I was honored to be the first William A. Klamm memorial lecturer at the museum. Before the lecture Nancy and I had dinner together and we reminisced about Wilson meetings and field trips we had shared. She told me that she and Bill had no children and no close relatives, but had been frugal and saved a good deal of money. She was ill and knew her time was short. Nancy and Bill had discussed what they might do with their savings and Bill wanted to leave a good portion of it to the Wilson Ornithological Society. They had both decided that they wanted the money to be used as an endowment to encourage and enable students to attend annual meetings and to encourage service to the Society. They wanted only the interest to be used so that there would always be funds available. Nancy asked my opinion of their priorities. I assured her they were wonderful. Wilson meetings were a highlight of the year for Bill and Nancy. They loved the meetings and were especially interested in seeing greater attendance and participation by students.

Although an active chemical engineer by profession, birds were Bill's passion and he and Nancy birded on all seven continents. Bill was very grateful for being welcomed into the Wilson Ornithological Society and being given the opportunity to serve the Society as treasurer. It was especially fitting that the editor

of *The Wilson Bulletin* who served when Bill was treasurer—George A. Hall, also a chemist by profession—was the recipient of the first William and Nancy Klamm Service Award from the Wilson Ornithological Society.

Nancy Klamm died 22 July 2002. She left 40% of her estate, about \$1.2 million, to the Wilson Ornithological Society. The bequest more than doubled the Wilson Society's assets when it was received in 2004 (Morris 2003, 2004). Other bequests established the William and Nancy Klamm Endowed Chair of Ornithology at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, renovated bird exhibits at the museum, and supported other birding organizations in the region.

Cleveland Plain Dealer reporter James McCarty, in a 1993 article describing the tenacity and enthusiasm of birders, focused on Bill and Nancy Klamm who had been birding together for 40 years (McCarty 1993: 10):

“Now that they're retired, the Lakewood couple can be found most days at traditional birding haunts along Lake Erie, he with a video camera for chance meetings with rare birds, she doting over him, offering a sandwich from a paper bag or dabbing wind tears from his eyes with a handkerchief.”

The title of the article began appropriately with “Bird lovers . . . ”

They were.

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