

Donn Lloyd Tippet

(January 14, 1924 – January 29, 2014)

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Donn Tippet made significant contributions to the systematics of the gastropod family Turridae *sensu lato*, in curating the turrid collections in the National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution), and in helping numerous other researchers and collectors with this diverse and difficult family. Given Donn's extensive work on the turrids, it may come as a surprise to learn that his day job was as a psychiatrist. A native of Ohio, he obtained his medical degree from the Ohio State University College of Medicine in 1947, and practiced in both Ohio and Illinois, including serving as a clinical faculty member at the medical schools of Ohio State University and the University of Illinois. He also served with the U.S. Navy from 1950 to 1952.

While in Ohio, Donn published two psychiatric papers from his professional work (1957; 1958). Both were co-authored with Irving Pine, who one decade previously was the last psychiatrist for the author Zelda Fitzgerald (1900-1948) (Cline, 2003: 286-287, 359, 362, 375, 400-402).

In 1962, Donn moved to the Washington, D.C., area, where he lived the rest of his long life. Donn started a private psychiatric practice in the Woodley Park neighborhood, with his office located across the street from the National Zoo. Perhaps because the nature of that practice would be mostly rich neurotic women and their spoiled children, Donn spent one day a week working for the federal government at St. Elizabeths Hospital, the mental hospital, which has a more realistic spectrum of mental patients. Donn formally retired from both positions in 1989, although he continued a part-time consultancy until 1997. He later recounted that a favorite topic of discussion among the older psychiatrists at St. Elizabeths was Ezra Pound (1885-1972), who was incarcerated there from 1946 to 1958 for committing treason during World War II by making numerous radio broadcasts in support of Mussolini. According to Donn, the older psychiatrists were never able to decide whether Pound was faking his insanity (so that he would not be sentenced to the maximum security federal prisons at Leavenworth or Alcatraz) or whether he was truly insane.

Sometime around 2005 or 2006, Donn prepared an autobiographical sketch, which included a section titled "The Shell Game" that explained how his malacological interests began:

Sea shells were a source of little familiarity or knowledge to me prior to the summer of 1967 or 1968, at which time I was in a "touristy" store in Bethany Beach.

There, accompanying a friend looking for a gift, I came across the standard display of shells, laid out to show the shapes, colors and sizes of these objects. At once, taken by them, I had to have something of this fascinating conglomeration of nature's wares. "Something" grew to about \$100.00 worth, which included only a beginning of the profuse varieties available. The clerk, a seasoned student and dealer, explained much about them in the course of capturing my fancy. A beginner's book accompanied the shells, and this provided study and a beginning to the field of what I soon learned is the field of Malacology.

Before long I received a copy of Tucker Abbott's first edition of *American Seashells*. I was now hooked for sure. With this I began a program of collecting. How naïve it was, I learned later, to think I could collect a specimen of every shell. So my original plan to collect shells world-wide was gradually reduced to collecting just Atlantic shells, and then to just collecting Western Atlantic shells, then to Caribbean shells, and then to collecting only shells known as gastropods. From there I gradually began to specialize in collecting only the family Turridae – but I did begin to collect them world-wide bringing me full circle. Naturally, I had to make the transition from common names to learning the scientific names plus the classification and taxonomy involved. From a short-term intensive hobby that captured my attention and took time and money it gradually evolved into a long term, serious, and, life-long labor.

Donn focused his malacological interests on the turrids, perhaps the most speciose of marine gastropod groups, and even today, one that is particularly difficult for species identification. Although the Turridae is now divided into about a half-dozen families, that split did not make species identification or generic assignments any easier. As Tucker (2002: 4) wrote, turrids "are perceived to be the most difficult gastropod group to study," due to "the large number

of supraspecific taxa that have been described” and “the extraordinary species diversity,” all of which “complicates their systematics.” Fortunately, the turrids did not drive Donn crazy, although he was assuredly frustrated at times with the problems created by the proliferation of names and the very real biological diversity of this group.

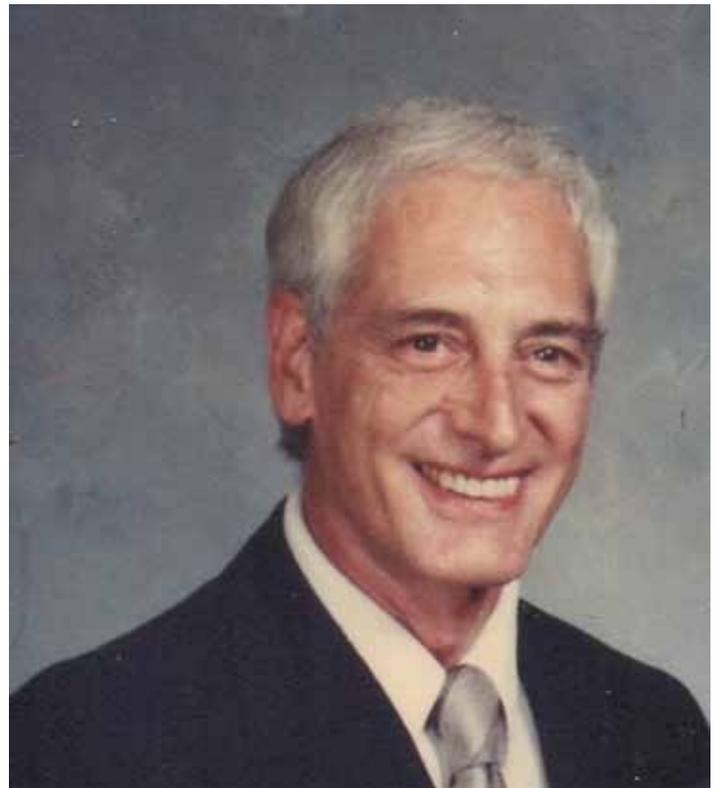
Donn was active in the National Capital Shell Club, serving as its President for two terms, and in 1978, he became a volunteer research associate at the National Museum of Natural History. Those of us who worked there fondly remember his weekly visits – always on Tuesdays – where he could faithfully be found identifying the voluminous unsorted material, updating the systematic arrangement of the turrids, and reconciling the conflicting interpretations in the malacological literature. Two long-time curators at the Smithsonian – Paul Bartsch and Joe Morrison – were both enamored of the turrids, and made extensive collections that were inadequately curated until Donn arrived on the scene. In 1995, Donn donated his turrid collection to the museum, after cataloging it in the museum’s database.

Donn went out of his way to make other visitors to the Mollusk collection feel welcome, and took an interest in their work. Paul Callomon (Academy of Natural Sciences) aptly wrote on the Conch-L list serve (Feb. 24, 2014), that “I used to greatly enjoy spending time with him, as he represented an earlier, gentlemanly age, very much like his SI [Smithsonian] contemporary Fred Bayer. He epitomized the meticulous approach that was characteristic of medical doctors in those days.”

On March 23, 2011, Donn wrote to me that he was “still curating the collection – all these years and am not done yet. But who was it said ‘a complete collection is a dead collection?’” While that aphorism about collections that Donn quoted sounds like something that W.H. Dall of the Smithsonian might have written, it appears that the literary critic Susan Sontag, in her book *The Volcano Lover*, about Sir William Hamilton (1731-1803), the inveterate collector of antiquities and paintings, was the first to popularize it:

A complete collection is a dead collection. It has no posterity. After having built it, you would love it less each year. Before long, you would want to sell or donate it, and embark on a new chase.

The great collections are vast, not complete. Incomplete: motivated by the desire for completeness. There is always one more. And even if you had everything – whatever that might be – then you will perhaps want a better copy (version, edition) of what you have; or . . . simply an extra copy, just in case the one you possess is lost or stolen or broken or damaged. . . . The



Donn Tippett, circa 1980. Photograph courtesy Kathy Tippett.

collector’s need is precisely for excess, for surfeit, for profusion. It’s too much – and it’s just enough for me. Someone who hesitates, who asks, Do I need this? Is this really necessary? is not a collector. A collection is always more than is necessary. (Sontag, 1992: 72).

Donn published nine papers on turrids, starting with the description of a rare sinistral species from Brazil (Tippett, 1983). As his confidence and expertise grew, he wrote increasingly detailed papers that discussed the generic relationships among species, and he did much to clarify the systematics of several problematic genera. He described twelve new species, mostly from the western Atlantic, and also established two replacement names for junior homonyms.

Donn was also an invaluable resource on the turrids for other malacologists and collectors, as demonstrated by the fact that many authors acknowledged his contributions to their research, and that at least four turrid species were named after him. Perhaps the most fitting dedication was that of John Tucker, whose 1,259 page catalog of over 11,350 species-group names in the Turridae *sensu lato* has this dedication: “This book is dedicated to Donn Tippett for all the efforts he made to keep me at this” (Tucker, 2004: 2).

Donn was a long-time member of the American Malacological Society, the Conchologists of America, and

the National Capital Shell Club (before it disbanded). He was also active in his community, including the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation (Bethesda, Maryland).

Donn leaves his wife, Kathy Tippett (also a shell collector), and his son, Gregory Nelson Tippett.

Donn's life and work demonstrate how a dedicated amateur, through research, curation, and assisting others, can make significant contributions to the study of mollusks.

Acknowledgements

Kathy Tippett kindly provided me with the excerpt on mollusks from Donn's autobiographical sketch, the photograph, and additional information on his retirement from psychiatry.

List of New Taxa:

blakensis, *Drillia* (*Clathrodrillia*) – Tippett, 2007: 210-211, figs. 1-3, 8 [400-450 m, Blake Plateau, northwestern Atlantic].

brasiliiana, *Borsonia* – Tippett, 1983: 136, figs. 1-5 [150 fm, 200 miles north of Sao Luis, Brazil].

coltrorum, *Strictispira* – Tippett, 2006a: 45-47, figs. 1-3, 19, 25, 36 [25-30 m, Escavaldia Island, Guarapari, Brasil].

dautzenbergi, *Drillia* (*Clathrodrillia*) – Tippett, 1995b: 129, figs. 4-5 [Isla Margarita, Venezuela]. Replacement name for *Drillia gibbosa* (Born, 1778), var. *minor* Dautzenberg, 1900, non *Drillia minor* Seguenza, 1880.

eversoni, *Clathurella* – Tippett, 1995b: 135, figs. 10-11 [21 m, off Dania Beach, Florida].

hedlandensis, *Bathytoma* – Tippett & Kosuge, 1994: 19-20, pl. 8, figs. 5-8 [260-340 m, northwest of Port Hedland, Western Australia].

kathyae, *Fenimorea* – Tippett, 1995b: 132, figs. 14, 32 [152 m, Barbados].

knudseni, *Drillia* – Tippett, 2006b: 20. Replacement name for *Drillia dunkeri* Knudsen, 1952, non Weinkauff, 1876.

petiti, *Fenimorea* – Tippett, 1995b: 133, figs. 17, 33 [30 fm, west of Crystal River, Florida].

petuchi, *Drillia* (*Clathrodrillia*) – Tippett, 1995b: 130, fig. 18 [Barbados].

redferni, *Strictispira* – Tippett, 2006a: 54-60, figs. 4-8, 23, 29, 31-35 [12 feet, Guana Cay, Abaco Island, Bahamas].

riosi, *Sediliopsis* – Tippett, 1995b: 133, figs. 6-7 [250 m, off Sao Paulo, Brazil].

rosenstielanus, *Hindsiclava* – Tippett, 2007: 211-213, figs. 4-6, 9-10 [549 m, west of Riohacha, Colombia].

wolfei, *Drillia* (*Drillia*) – Tippett, 1995b: 127, figs. 1, 28, 31 [20 fm, 15 km east of Cape Lookout, North Carolina].

Eponyms:

tippetti, *Bathytoma* (*Bathytoma*) – Vera-Pelaez, 2004: 12 [Philippines].

tippetti, *Hindsiclava* – Petuch, 1987: 76, pl. 13, figs. 12-13 [Honduras].

tippetti, *Kermia* – Chang, 2001: 3, figs. 5A, B [Taiwan].

tippetti, *Turricula* – Tucker & Le Renard, 1993: 2 [Eocene, France]. Replacement name for *Surcula multifilosa* Cossmann, 1923, non Bellardi, 1877.

Publications by Donn Tippett:

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Pine, I., Gardner, M., & Tippett, D. L. 1958 [July]. Experiences with short-term group psychotherapy. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 8(3): 276-284.

Tippett, D. L. 1983 [28 October]. A new sinistral turrid from Brazil (Gastropoda: Turridae). *The Nautilus* 97(4): 135-138.

Tippett, D. L. 1992 [25 June]. Comment on the proposal to remove the homonymy between Clavidae McCrady, 1859 (Cnidaria, Hydrozoa) and Clavinae Casey, 1904 (Mollusca, Gastropoda). *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* 49(2): 144-145.

Tippett, D. L. & Kosuge, S. 1994 [30 April]. Descriptions of a new species and a recently described species of the genus *Bathytoma* from the West Australia and the Philippines (Gastropoda Turridae). *Bulletin of the Institute of Malacology Tokyo* 3(2): 19-21, pls. 8-9.

Tippett, D. L. & Tucker, J. K. 1995 [7 March]. Taxonomic notes on *Kenyonia* Brazier and *Conopleura* Hinds (Gastropoda: Conoidea). *The Nautilus* 108(2): 37-38.

Tippett, D. L. 1995a [March]. [Letter to the editor]. *American Conchologist* 23(1): 14-15 [*Pleurotoma ebur* and *P. opalus*].

Tippett, D. L. 1995b [29 December]. Taxonomic notes on the western Atlantic Turridae (Gastropoda: Conoidea). *The Nautilus* 109(4): 127-138.

Tippett, D. L. 2006a [16 February]. The genus *Strictispira* in the western Atlantic (Gastropoda: Conoidea). *Malacologia* 48(1-2): 43-64.

Tippett, D. L. 2006b [June]. Taxonomic notes on some Indo-Pacific and West African *Drillia* species (Conoidea: Drilliidae). *Iberus* 24(1): 13-21.

Tippett, D. L. 2007 [21 December]. Two new gastropod species (Neogastropoda: Drilliidae, Turridae) from the western Atlantic Ocean. *The Nautilus* 121(4): 210-213.

Tippett, D. L. [undated, probably written around 2005-2006]. The shell game. Manuscript, 1 page [extracted from

longer life history].

References:

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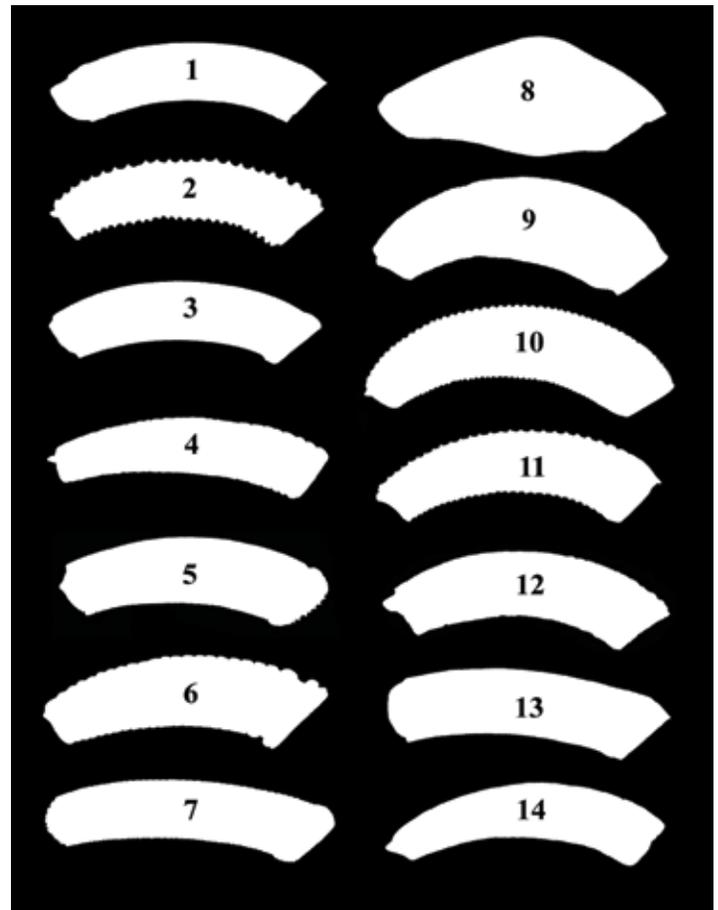
Petuch, E.J. 1987. *New Caribbean Molluscan Faunas*. The Coastal Education and Research Foundation, Charlottesville, Virginia, 154 pp.

Sontag, S. 1992. *The Volcano Lover*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, iv + 419 pp.

Tucker, J. K. 2004. Catalog of Recent and fossil turrids (Mollusca: Gastropoda). *Zootaxa* 682: 1-1295.

Tucker, J.K. & J. Le Renard. 1993. Liste bibliographique des Turridae (Gastropoda, Conacea) du Paléogène de l'Angleterre, de la Belgique et de la France. *Cossmanniana* 2(1/2): 1-66.

Vera-Pelaez, J. L. 2004. Contribution al conocimiento del genero *Bathytoma* Harris & Burrows, 1891 (Gastropoda, Turridae, Borsoniinae) en Japon, Taiwan y Filipinas con la description de tres especies nuevas. *Pliocenica* 4: 107-125.



Key to the Caecidae on the back cover

1. *Caecum* n. sp. cf. *C. achirona* (de Folin, 1867)
2. *Caecum* n. sp. cf. *C. brasilicum* de Folin, 1874
3. *Caecum circumvolutum* de Folin, 1867
4. *Caecum imbricatum* Carpenter, 1858
5. *Caecum cycloferum* de Folin, 1867
6. *Caecum floridanum* Stimpson, 1851
7. *Caecum heladum* Olsson & Harbison, 1953
8. *Meioceras cingulatum* Dall, 1892
9. *Caecum* n. sp. cf. *C. cinctum* Olsson, & Harbison, 1953
(an extremely variable, common species)
10. *Caecum* n. sp. cf. *C. cinctum* Olsson, & Harbison, 1953
(an extremely variable, common species)
11. *Caecum* n. sp. cf. *C. regulare* Carpenter, 1858
12. *Caecum* n. sp. cf. *C. plicatum* Carpenter, 1858
13. *Caecum* n. sp. cf. *Caecum* sp., 203 of Redfern, 2013
14. *Caecum tortile* Dall, 1892