

## Fred Anderson Tarpley, 1932–2014

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Fred Tarpley, well known to the American Name Society and many of its members, passed on March 1 2014. Fred's great enthusiasm and capability for learning and research were evident until the very end. He was always a very positive person in his outlook, and successfully transferred this to all he encountered. Even in the face of personal challenge Fred persevered and was always convincing.

Fred was born in Leonard, Texas on January 27 1932. He graduated from high school in 1948 at the age of sixteen evidence of Fred's thirst for education. Fred began his career teaching high school in Galveston, Texas at the age of nineteen. He then earned a BA in 1951 and an MA in 1954 each from East Texas State University (now Texas A&M University Commerce; in 1951, the school's name was East Texas State Teachers College and in 1957 the name was changed to East Texas State College). In 1960, Fred received his PhD from Louisiana State University. Fred taught at Jarvis Christian College in Hawkins, Texas (about 25 miles east of Dallas) where he became Head of the English Department. After serving the nation in the Korean War, he spent most of his career in what became the Department of Literature and Language at East Texas A&M University Commerce (East Texas State University). Clearly Fred was an asset to the university in many ways beyond his superior ability at teaching. His accomplishments are many and are evident by the honors he received from more than twenty varied organizations including Distinguished Alumnus of Texas A&M College and as a Texas Piper Professor (a prestigious award for outstanding college teaching in Texas with nominations by requirement only from the office of a Texas college or university president).

Fred's interests spanned the full range of literature, history, and miscellany, especially the toponymy of East Texas. He believed that toponymy often was a key that unlocked avenues of insight into an array of cultural aspects of a place or a feature. He was well published regarding the history and toponymy of East Texas, as is evident from such titles as his very popular *1001 Texas Place Names*, *Place Names of Northeast Texas*, *A Word Atlas of Northeast Texas*, and *From Blinky to Blue-John*. His research on the history of east Texas filled a void in the literature and resulted in the publication of *Jefferson: Riverport to the Southwest* and *Jefferson: East Texas Metropolis*. Fred always championed the literary heritage of East Texas, which included development of a travelling photographic exhibition of lectures featuring twenty-five writers of East Texas. He also initiated and directed the literary criticism contest for the University Interscholastic League, which was created at the

University of Texas Austin to provide contests for academics, athletics, and music. His interest in names was not limited to toponymy as evidenced by his support of the study of family names through the annual Texas Folklife Festival.

Fred's interests and research knew no bounds and occasionally moved into the lighter side, although Fred did not consider it so. He became an expert on the Bois d'Arc or Osage Orange Tree (among other names) native to Fred's northeast Texas (the tree was used mostly as a windbreak on the prairies). He was not amused at the various disparaging references to the "useless" aspects of the tree, and published *Wood Eternal: The Story of the Osage Orange and Bois d'arc, etc.* In this work Fred tracked the cultural aspects surrounding the tree including festivals, and provided a detailed examination of the tree's characteristics.

Fred was diligent in his writing, authoring or co-authoring nine books, scores of articles and academic papers (many of which were at the South Central Name Institute), and even two plays (one act each) and several screenplays. His contributions to East Texas literature, history, and toponymy have preserved a wealth of information for this area of Texas and the nation. He also hosted the national meeting of the American Name Society in Dallas in 1987 when the American Name Society experimented with separate national meetings (1987–1989).

I knew Fred for more than thirty years and in my time spent with Fred was aware immediately of his vast intellect, his boundless interests, and his untiring and keen abilities of investigation and research. On one occasion, Fred "invited" me to make a presentation to the Texas Historical Society where it became very apparent to me that Fred was held in the highest regard in Texas; almost a living legend. On another occasion, Fred asked me to offer a workshop also to the Texas Historical Society for those individuals actually volunteering to collect geographic names for a society project. Fred wanted the results of this effort to be compatible with the newly developed National Geographic Name Data Collection program at the US Geological Survey. What I thought would be an exercise solely in instruction became an experience of learning for me from one of the best toponymists. Another side of Fred became very apparent to me at this workshop. At the end of a very packed ten-hour day, I suffered a minor accident (although requiring a hospital visit); Fred (exhausted) immediately took charge, making various arrangements and staying overnight, adjusting his schedule accordingly even though it was not really necessary.

It is true that much of Fred's work was regional, but he was known nationally and internationally, with such notables as screenwriter Horton Foote and James A. Michener among others seeking Fred's advice and opinions.

Fred was highly respected and very much a notable toponymist among his other many and varied accomplishments. He is survived by three children and seven grandchildren as well as his sister, nephew, and other family. Fred will be greatly missed by me as a friend and colleague and by so many more both in the field of toponymy and elsewhere.