**Supplemental Appendix A.** Selected responses from long time members of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (ASIH) to requests for personal perspectives on how being a student member and award winner of ASIH has influenced their career, professional development, and/or personal life.

**Rocky Parker, PhD**

**Reflections on ASIH & JMIH since becoming a member in 2002**

***1) Personal narrative of the impact of ASIH on my career and life***

I became a member of ASIH in anticipation of the 2002 JMIH in St. Louis, MO. I was an undergraduate in Steve Beaupre’s lab at the time, and he always made a point to mention the role that scientists play in the larger levels of organization in academia. He said that not only was he a member of a scientific society but that he made many close friends in his discipline because of it, a cohort of colleagues that lasted a lifetime. That was appealing to me because I knew I wanted a career in biological research, but I was completely unaware that scientific societies even existed (they were as mythical and as foreign to me as dragons). My first meeting gave me the opportunity to meet the people whose papers I read and loved. That first experience of talking to authors from the literature demystified almost instantaneously the notion that such people were a superior class. This was particularly transformative for me because I, like many scientists, had a rural upbringing with no opportunities for seeing research as accessible. My first JMIH immediately bolstered a confidence in me that would have taken years to mature if I had not attended that first meeting. I was also introduced to many prominent members of the Society and witnessed the bonds these scientists shared. That would be formative for me and set a standard for my own career path. Throughout my years of service to the Society and participation at the meetings, I have been able to connect with more senior scientists about the science career path as I learned the qualifications and experience it would take to be successful. I had opportunities to talk to scientists who had worked in Congress, traveled to some of the remotest regions of the planet and been honored internationally for their research. These were all people that were members of the same society that I was, and it is special. I have also never encountered the level of true collegiality and camaraderie at other meeting or in other societies. ASIH has been a place where anyone is welcome and can find a niche, and the services we provide to the larger scientific and global communities are invaluable.

I cannot emphasize enough the value of the friendships that I made through the Society. I found an outlet for my desire to serve the community and, more importantly, I created my own network of peers who shared the same interests. Throughout my graduate career, I had the fortune of bunking with Mo Donnelly’s crew of students at each meeting. I was always around one or more of Mo’s students at JMIH, and this gave me a meeting family that has remained to this day. That network of support was by far the best aspect of joining and participating in the Society, even when it meant having to constantly say, “no, I am not a tropical herpetologist,” and “no, I don’t study frogs.”

I also gained excellent role models by befriending fellow graduate students who were further in their careers. My models were Ralph Saporito and Emily Taylor. Ralph and I were both chemical ecologists who were focused on the organismal level of inference, and Ralph surprised me by choosing to become faculty at a primarily undergraduate institution. It’s strange because when we see a peer biologist whose research is innovative and foundational, we often place the expectation of R1 life on them... even subconsciously. So when I saw Ralph pursue his career passions, it made me realize that I could do the same. Emily and I became friends through our shared ophidiophilia, and Emily, too, was exceptionally passionate about teaching and sharing her love of herps with budding scientists. She and Ralph both established careers where they could maintain active research programs with Master’s students as well as undergraduates and still continue to serve the society and integrate their own students into the human fabric of ASIH. They were friends that I made because of my participation in the Society and who enabled me to choose the best path that fit me. The Society gave me these role models, and my life’s course is better because of them.

My career took a sharp turn after my Ph.D. when I decided to pursue my postdoc in a molecular neuroscience lab. I had “turned to the Dark Side,” as many mentors put it at the time because I was using mouse models to learn about chemical signaling mechanisms. Those years would prove my hardest, and it was the friends I had made in ASIH that created my academic bedrock. They were the people I called or emailed or chatted with as I stumbled through the discovery of my academic path. But the best part was when I came back to the society and JMIH and so many scientists and friends were happy to have me participating again. Mo summed it up best by saying, “Welcome home.” ASIH is where I will stay.

***2) History of involvement with the Society and how it has changed***

I first became involved with the graduate student side of ASIH at the 2003 JMIH when I assisted Mo Donnelly’s students in collecting and scoring ballots for the Society elections. This specific activity made me feel like I was contributing to the functions of the Society, albeit at a rudimentary level. I also met Nick Lang at that JMIH and learned about how the Book Raffle functioned. At the time, the organizer of the Raffle would inherit the chair position of the graduate committee (which was not formalized at the time... right of passage thing, and a job that no graduate student wanted). The Raffle then was already an elaborate ordeal that Nick had grown when he inherited the Raffle from Chad Montgomery. As organizer of the Book Raffle, Nick had established contacts with representatives at several major book publishers to receive donated books that would be raffled off based on tickets sold during the JMIH (a format that would remain over a decade later). He had a massive spreadsheet with contact info, book titles, websites, etc. It was a well-oiled machine. Nick also created the ticket boxes that I would inherit in 2005 when I was the organizer from 2004-05 and again in 2005-06 while I was also chair of the graduate student committee. He had systematized the raffling process by purchasing ticket rolls and coordinating daily money deposits with Margaret Neighbors. As organizer, I had to use Nick’s database to contact possible donors, request book titles, etc. I also spent a lot of time begging graduate students to assist in these endeavors, and little did I know this would be a prelude for life as a faculty member. In addition to the networking and business skills I learned from fundraising for the Society, I would come to know Heidi quite well as she was my savior at the meeting site in helping with logistics of setup and breakdown. The employees of K-State seriously do not get paid enough for what they put up with. I would finally offload the ticket boxes and responsibilities to Tiffany Schriever at the 2007 JMIH in St. Louis when she was the organizer... and I always wondered what happened to those boxes.

The Raffle funding structure for travel awards was a set, equal number of ich and herp awards that were chosen at random (I think it was 10 for each...?). When I was chair of the graduate committee in 2007, we began offering two types of travel awards: domestic and international (I think that was in 2007... but I can’t remember for sure; I think the chairs when Chad Montgomery 2004-05; Nick Lang 2005-06; me 2006-07; Ali Hamiton 2007-08; Tiffany Schriever 2008-09...?). We created two separate awards that differed in amount, with the international awards being still chosen at random but we gave out fewer and they were larger in size. The graduate student body lobbied for this with Exec because many graduate students were coming from international field sites for the JMIH, and the travel awards were quite small. The only requirement of receiving a travel award was that you had to sign up for shifts at the Raffle table during the JMIH. I received a travel award for the 2003 JMIH, which is how I met Nick and would end up inheriting the whole process.

In addition to serving as chair of the Raffle, I organized two graduate student workshops for the JMIH. The first was “Course design and implementation” at the 2006 JMIH, and the second was “Establishing and maintaining a research program” at the 2007 JMIH. By 2008, I took on an advisory role for the graduate student committee (it became formalized by this time within the Society) and served to assist in fundraising brainstorming. I would also participate in my first faculty-grad student mixed committee (resolutions) for that meeting.

I served as a local host for the 2009 JMIH in Portland, OR, and organized a Pacific Northwest amphibian and reptile live display at Portland State. It was a massive undertaking made possible by the help I received from many graduate students from Oregon State and an event that the attendees raved about.

My proudest accomplishment was organizing the first LGBT faculty/grad student gathering at the 2008 JMIH in New Orleans. It was informal (we just met up in the lobby and walked to a couple of bars), but it was the first time I got to know the LGBT members of the Society and could hear about how the environment at the Meeting had changed over the years to become more inclusive.

**Nancy Wolf, MD, PhD**

**Raney Award winner, 1980**

I was a graduate student at Cornell in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, having been attracted by the prospect of working with Bill McFarland and studying the ecology of coral reef fishes. Only there aren’t any coral reefs in Ithaca. My advisor was doing research in the US Virgin Islands and took me down there to do some preliminary observations so I could develop a thesis topic. To continue with my research, however, I needed additional funding and was fortunate enough to receive a Raney Award from the ASIH. This allowed me to go the West Indies Lab in St. Croix for a more extended period of time and immerse myself in my research. With the data collected, I could write additional grants and continue my research.

Working at the West Indies Lab really changed my life. The research community consisted of faculty, graduate students and staff from institutions all over the country. We all shared a common interest, and it was nice to have a few faculty who were women. I still maintain close ties with some of my friends from the lab.

Working there also opened up an incredible opportunity. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was operating an underwater habitat called Hydrolab. It was located on the sea floor approximately 60 feet under the water surface, and was very tiny (a cylinder 16 feet long and 8 feet in diameter). Four aquanauts would live there for a week. Because it was pressurized, they could spend many hours doing research in the deep water without having to worry about decompressing or getting “the bends” every time they wanted to get out of the water. We were told that NASA had even used Hydrolab for training astronauts! One of the researchers at the West Indies Lab asked me to help collect data for a grant he received that would be using the Hydrolab. We studied the colonization of fishes on a set of artificial reefs that had been constructed on the sea floor, and had to live in the Hydrolab for a week while collecting the data. At the end of the week we would get inside and seal off the Hydrolab, undergo a 16 hour decompression before exiting, and then slowly swim to the water surface. This project went on for almost 2 years, so I actually lived under the ocean a week at a time for a total of one month! It was an incredible experience and one that I never would have had if the Raney Award had not enabled me to do my research in St Croix in the first place.

Although personal reasons have led me to transition to the field of medicine, I still treasure those memories and the friends I made at the lab. We still keep in contact and I am on the Board of Overseers for the Marine Biological Lab (MBL) in Woods Hole, MA. The MBL is an institution that promotes not only marine biology research, but also medical research that uses marine organisms. As I have learned during my medical career, there are many aspects of marine animals that are useful in medicine, for both research and clinical care, and I’ve always had fun giving examples when presenting cases.

**Michael A. Bell, PhD**

**Raney Award winner, 1975**

During the summer of 1966, I worked as a technician preparing fossil ichthyosaur bones for Charles L. Camp, a vertebrate paleontologist at the University of California, Berkeley. We worked on a ranch near Reno, Nevada, which was owned by the retired ichthyologist, Richard G. Miller. When Dick learned that I was interested in fossil fishes, he suggested that I collect fossil stickleback (*Gasterosteus doryssus*) near Fernley, Nevada. I collected about a hundred of them and noticed some curious variation. The stickleback pelvic girdle is usually a large, complex structure, but in my small sample of fossils, the pelvis ranged from full expression, through a diverse set of vestigial structures, to complete absence.

That fall, I returned to the University of California, San Diego for my second year of college. The week before classes, I dropped in unannounced on Richard H. Rosenblatt at Scripps Institution of Oceanography to ask if he would supervise my research on the fossils. Dick met with me immediately and agreed to sign me up for undergraduate research. I worked in his lab or read papers in the Scripps Library every morning before I went back up to the main campus for my classes. It was great! I learned a great deal about Threeespine Stickleback, and I have spent the rest of my career studying stickleback evolutionary biology. Dick became my unofficial academic advisor that year, and years later he was a member of my Ph.D. committee. One piece of advice Dick gave me during the fall of 1966 was to join the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists. I have been a member of ASIH since I was 19 years old.

Eight years later, I started dissertation research at the University of California, Los Angeles on Threespine Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) in California coastal streams. Donald W. Hagen (1967) had shown that morphologically divergent biological species of anadromous and resident freshwater Threespine Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) occur in parapatry within the Little Campbell River, British Columbia. Robert R. Miller and Carl L. Hubbs (1969) opposed Hagen’s interpretation that they are separate species, and proposed instead that three widespread, allopatric Threespine Stickleback subspecies that include his two proposed species occupy California streams.

I decided to apply Hagen’s method of sampling at intervals along streams to see if some of the streams in Miller and Hubbs’ (1969) study contained stickleback with variation similar to that reported by Hagen. Robert J. Lavenberg, the Curator of Fishes at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, generously provided supplies to preserve my samples, but I needed funds to go into the field. When the Edward C. Raney Fund Award was announced in *Copeia*, I submitted my first grant proposal. I was thrilled and surprised that my proposal was funded.

It was not a large grant, but it was enough to buy my first two seines and pay for our travel and living expenses for a summer in the field to sample streams along the coast of California. We slept in California State parks and on friends’ floors. Wading in streams all day to sein stickleback and sleeping in a soggy sleeping bag in foggy camp grounds was the coldest summer I ever spent. It was awful. I was never warm except in the car. However, we made samples from the Santa Clara River near Los Angeles all the way north into Del Norte County. These samples formed the basis for most of my dissertation (Bell 1976). We discovered that many coastal streams in central and northern California contain stickleback populations with the full range of character states that Miller and Hubbs had used to diagnose their supposedly widespread stickleback subspecies. Instead, the states of this character, the number of lateral plates, varied in relation to stream gradient within many drainages and was not a reliable character to diagnose subspecies (Baumgartner and Bell (1984).

My Rainey Fund Award paid for collection of samples that formed the basis for much of my dissertation, for 10 research papers between 1978 and 1987, and preliminary data for dissertation research by my first Ph.D. student, Jeffrey V. Baumgartner. Jeff later used those preliminary data to apply successfully for his own Rainey Fund Award in 1983. In addition, my award was an important vote of confidence in me, after an uncertain start to my graduate-student career. It taught me that I could obtain my own research funds, and I obtained seven small grants and research contracts before I was hired as a faculty member. I was told by members of search committees that my applications for faculty positions stood out because I had obtained support for my research. Thus, my Rainey Fund Award facilitated my research and my first Ph.D. student’s dissertation research, helped me launch my research program on Threespine Stickleback evolution, encouraged me to write more grant proposals, and gave me a much-needed psychological lift when I was just starting out as an evolutionary fish biologist.

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**Douglas F. Markle, PhD**

**Raney Award winner, 1976**

Being a student member of ASIH meant giving talks with Carl Hubbs and Donn Rosen in the front row, and knowing- with absolute certainty -that they would ask questions. It was … stressful. And wonderful. The established members of ASIH were always welcoming and encouraging and I have always tried to emulate them. As an undergraduate, I took Ed Raney’s last two classes at Cornell and was thrilled to receive one of the Raney Awards as a graduate student. The award allowed be to take a month-long trip to European museums where Gerhard Krefft, Jorgen Nielsen, Nigel Merrett and others offered more encouragement and hospitality. It was a great trip, and if the entire country of France hadn’t gone on strike, I’d have spent my last weekend on the Riviera. ASIH allowed me to embrace the profession and establish collaborations that have been one of the most fulfilling aspects of my career.

**Gordon Rodda, PhD**

**Gaige Award winner, 1979**

It all started innocently enough. While still a toddler, my mother bought me a natural history encyclopedia set. I was mesmerized; the world in those books was so much larger than the one I knew. I will never forget the drawing of a mud snake (*Farancia*). It seemed surreal. Or the gorgeous yellow spots of a spotted turtle (*Clemmys*). Eventually I memorized vast portions of the encyclopedia simply by reading it so many times. As I wandered around the neighborhood I grabbed everything I could catch, sein, or net and brought them all home, and soon my bedroom was packed with fish tanks, vivaria, and cages. I will never forget the euphoria I felt upon capturing my first minnow or snake. I wrote to Roger Conant and he wrote back.

My later experiences with the “real” world were not so uniformly benign. We had all heard the story of Kitty Genovese, murdered within earshot of dozens of her New York neighbors who didn’t bother to call the cops. The smaller city in which I lived had more gang murders in a year than did the British Isles of all homicides (including the Irish “troubles”). Two routine knifings occurred one night and broke up a party I was attending (one victim made it to the doorbell of the house before he expired). The tough guys at my school made it a practice to beat up kids, whose hair was too long, or so they said; I wasn’t going to question them. One Los Angeles policeman pointedly confided to me that when out of uniform he enjoyed beating anti-war protestors to within an inch of their lives, and dumping them on the street. If you made it long enough to get drafted, you could look forward to encountering bouncing Bettys, a specialty of the Vietnamese countryside designed not to kill, but to dismember you from the waist down.

So the opportunity to become a herpetologist and explore remote places and beautiful animals seemed not only to be a glorious occupation, but a salvation. What safer place could there be at night than in a swamp full of alligators? And herpetologists were cool folks to work with: what nicer people could there be in the world than the sort of people who were enamored with unloved animals? They weren’t beating up strangers or foreclosing on somebody’s mortgage; they were flipping rocks to see what’s on the other side. But before I could carry out my graduate research on alligator movements, I needed some rudimentary field gear. I had headlamps from my days as a caver. I managed to obtain the services of a disused boat and trailer from a faculty member in another department. To tow it I bought a marginal automobile for $275. I found volunteers to drive the boat, but I still needed a little bit of money for gas and supplies.

That’s where ASIH came in. Along with some seed money from other institutions like the American Museum of Natural History, the Gaige Fund provided me with the wherewithal to conduct real scientific research. The funds closed the circle between my aspirations and the start of a career. Many other things were needed, of course. I got great advice from my academic advisors and peers. I got scholarships from the federal government. I got the world of extant knowledge from great libraries. But a few small grants like the Gaige award were needed to get over the financial hump. Thank you ASIH!

The herpetological societies provide another service that is very hard to quantify, if no less potent: they provide not only financial support, but also psychological support, in the form of mentors (I got to meet Roger Conant!), and friends, but also a receptive audience. It is hard to dig deep into the science of creepy crawlies when all your relatives and ordinary friends think doing so is just plain creepy. At the society meetings you get to meet the people who are as enamored with your animals and results as you are. That is so inspiring and motivating! Scientific societies are the reward system that gets you over the psychological hump, and the cost of membership is less than one night on the town (or a visit to a therapist). Thank you members!