

James (Jim) Eugene Corrigan
(21 December 1952–26 January 2019)

Jim's earliest years were spent with his parents and younger brother in the Gatineau River valley, on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River, just north of Ottawa. This at least partially idyllic rural life drew to a close in the mid-1960s: before Jim became a teenager, his father Frank was dead and his mother Marjorie (née Clark) moved south with her two sons to the big city. While Jim was in high school at Ottawa's Glebe Collegiate his mother died, too. For 2 years Jim and his brother Ken were on their own in Ottawa South where Jim managed their day-to-day lives with the help of some charitable neighbours. Subsequently, a brief spell in the care of an uncle back in the Gatineau did not sit well with Jim and, as soon as he turned 16, he returned to Ottawa to live on his own and finish high school at Glebe Collegiate. Independence and self-motivation from an early age...

At the start of his Glebe years Jim was shy and reserved, seemingly an unlikely candidate for significant academic and athletic achievement. But beneath his quiet demeanour and teenage gangly body lurked a great analytical mind, a strong desire to achieve, and a highly competitive but compassionate and humanist philosophy of life. To say nothing about a wicked sense of humour and unselfconscious individualism. These characteristics were all obvious by the time he graduated from Glebe Collegiate: his academic success allowed him easy acceptance into the University of Guelph in 1972 and by then he was already well-known in Ontario as a determined bicycle racer and an excellent curler. Jim was highly competitive in the saddle and on the ice but kind-hearted and empathetic to his rivals, friend and foe alike, at the end of the race or match.

From 1972 through 1980, Jim lived in Ottawa and Guelph, alternating between earning a living in Ottawa and working on his Honours BSc in Environmental Biology at the University of Guelph. During this period he fed his passion for bicycling by opening (with backing from a couple of "silent partners", one a biking enthusiast on the entomology faculty at the University of Guelph) a bike shop, Southpaw Cycles, on Bank Street in Ottawa, and racing bicycles in various events around eastern Ontario. (Check out this 1976 Glebe community newspaper for a Southpaw Cycles article, advertisement, and photos: http://www.glebereport.ca/wp-content/uploads/1976/12/Glebe_Report_1976_06_05_v04_n06.pdf.) He also became a formidable curler, playing on various competitive teams in Guelph and Ottawa (including Ottawa's notorious "coma crew"), advancing to the Ontario men's provincial super league championship several times, and winning it in 1975.

While pursuing his undergraduate degree at the University of Guelph, Jim discovered entomology, the second great passion in his life after competitive sports. In the 1970s, in addition to its robust reputation for economic entomology, the Department of Environmental Biology was at the apex of a golden era for the study of classical natural history. Central to this was a group of faculty members, a majority of whom were wrapping up productive teaching and research careers begun at the end of WW II, who believed that all entomology students should have a



R. Bennett

Jim Corrigan, October 1983,
collecting leaf-miners near Norton,
Jackson County, North Carolina

comprehensive understanding of insect taxonomy, comparative morphology, physiology, ecology, and behaviour. Under their guidance Jim pursued entomological knowledge with the same zeal that drove his interest in competitive sports. Like many entomology students at Guelph at the time, Jim developed a keen interest in the taxonomy and biology of a particular group of insects. In his case it was leaf-miners, especially gracillariid “leaf blotch miners.” This was closely coupled with a strong interest in biological control and resulted in Jim becoming an important researcher and lab technician in the Department of Environmental Biology’s biocontrol lab before he had obtained his BSc in 1980.

After graduation, Jim continued to work at the Guelph lab through the mid-1980s until he moved to New Jersey to pursue graduate research in biocontrol at Rutgers University. He earned his MSc there in 1988, studying the biology of a culophid egg parasitoid. In that short time span, he also made a very successful inroad into American competitive curling, playing with a men’s team that went to the United States national championship and, losing in the final match, narrowly missed the prestige of representing the US at the world championship.

Following his successful incursion into the US, Jim moved to Quebec City to start a PhD program at Université Laval. There he quickly learned to speak colloquial French with a delightfully distinctive accent. For a variety of good reasons, however, he aborted the pursuit of his PhD early on and returned to Guelph in 1990 to take on the teaching and operational biocontrol research responsibilities that would define the mid portion of his career and take him well into the first decade of the new millennium.

Jim’s efforts at the Guelph biocontrol lab in the 1990s initially focused on collaborative development of a *Trichogramma* egg parasitoid for management of *Choristoneura* budworms. This work, however, was soon eclipsed by his involvement early in the decade with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ effort to control purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) in provincial wetlands using *Galerucella* (now = *Neogalerucella*) beetles. The loosestrife control program was established at the Guelph lab in 1992 and by the next year Jim and his colleagues were actively rearing and releasing beetles at loosestrife sites across southern Ontario. By the time active implementation of the program was terminated in 1997, hundreds of thousands of beetles had been released at more than 200 sites across southern and eastern Ontario and west to Georgian Bay. By then, the beetles had formed an advancing front, moving steadily northwards and westwards into new loosestrife territory, aided by the translocation efforts of a number of volunteer organizations. Jim continued to monitor the spread and establishment of beetle populations, as well as the reduction of purple loosestrife populations to very low levels, across Ontario until 2005. From its inception, this venture was largely Jim’s “baby” and is one of the best examples of a successful classic biological control program: well-planned, organized, implemented, monitored, and documented.

Starting in 1997 Jim also took on undergraduate and graduate teaching duties in the Department of Environmental Biology at Guelph and found time to earn a BEd degree from the University of Western Ontario. His lectures in entomology and applied environmental studies were well-attended and consistently earned him high instructor approval ratings. And, although he wasn’t piling on the miles in a bicycle saddle all that much anymore, Jim was still very active in competitive curling, culminating in his team winning the 2005 senior men’s (Jim was by then over 50 and officially an old geezer) Ontario provincial championship. During this era Jim’s curling colleagues gave him the affectionate sobriquet “The Bugman” because of his passion for entomology. Additionally, his reputation was cemented as probably the most originally dressed curler ever and for being able to change his intensely competitive on-ice demeanour quickly to one of affability, comradeship, and great good humour at the end of a match (see “Remembering Jim Corrigan, The Bugman” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2296530867260759/>).

The 1990s also saw the birth of Jim's last great passion in life: fly-fishing for Atlantic salmon. From relatively humble beginnings angling for brown trout in streams flowing into Lake Huron, Jim pursued fly-fishing with the same passionate intensity that characterized his approach to all things in life that mattered to him. He applied his entomological knowledge, critical eye, and attention to detail to the arcane art of fly-tying and soon became a master of that skill. With his athletic style, feel for technique, and playing the "long game" developed in his years of competitive sports, it didn't take him long to meet the challenge of fishing for Atlantic salmon in the tricky rivers of the Gaspésie and New Brunswick. This was the defining passion of the last 20 years of Jim's life.

In 2006 Jim's life changed again when he was head-hunted by the British Columbia Ministry of Forests to provide extension expertise in cone and seed insect and disease management to the province's extensive network of conifer seed orchards and seed production facilities. Jim closed out his entomological career with this endeavour, based out of Vernon, British Columbia, retiring in early 2018. His days of highly competitive curling were over by the time he moved to British Columbia but Jim remained happy playing the game on a more relaxed level with new friends and colleagues in his Vernon community. His devotion to hard-core fly-fishing however, remained unchanged and, in most of his years in British Columbia, Jim usually managed to spend a few weeks on the rivers of New Brunswick and the Gaspésie matching wits with Atlantic salmon. Through this period in Jim's life, his deep understanding of insect biology, insect/plant interactions, and experimental design and analysis coupled with his engaging personality and increasingly original life style and taste in clothing earned him the lasting respect and affection of his adopted British Columbia community of clients, peers, and friends.

All good things come to an end and for Jim this process commenced in earnest in late 2016. In 2009, the passing of his sole sibling (whom Jim had watched over since the demise of their parents) deeply affected Jim and left him with no close relatives. Jim started thinking seriously about how to spend the rest of his life. The answer came simply and quickly (and was no surprise to his friends): fly-fishing for Atlantic salmon! By 2015 Jim had purchased a home on the banks of the Miramichi River in Blackville, New Brunswick. With a well-known salmon pool literally in his backyard this was a dream come true for Jim and he made plans to retire and move there in 2018. His 2016 Gaspésie summer fishing trip was marred by the first indication his health was failing. Tests in British Columbia in September 2016 were followed in November by radical surgery related to advanced cancer in some major organs. Further significant surgery followed in February but, after more tests in July 2017, Jim was his usual cheerfully optimistic self and proceeding with the retirement plan. He even found the energy for fishing trips to the Restigouche and Miramichi Rivers in August and September.

Curling, however, was another matter. Jim continued to enjoy the sport until the surgeries killed his ability to throw a curling rock. The eternal optimist (taking his "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life" philosophy from Monty Python's *The Life of Brian*), Jim noted at the time "It's



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Jim Corrigan, July 2015, catch-and-release harassing an Atlantic Salmon in Ladder Pool, Dartmouth River, Gaspésie, Québec.

tough to complain ... I got 49 great years out of my sport, and retired with my knees and hips intact.”

By early 2018 implementation of Jim’s retirement plan was well underway and he was disposing of his material wealth not deemed essential to his future life as a gentleman fisher. His extensive entomology library and collection of British Columbia insects were donated to the Entomological Society of British Columbia and the Royal British Columbia Museum, respectively. His important collection of leaf-miners was packed for donation to the Canadian National Collection. Likewise, his world-class collection of fishing literature (much of it antiquarian, historical, practical, or of technical importance, some of it quite arcane or simply out-and-out weird) was ear-marked for donation to the Atlantic Salmon Museum in Doaktown New Brunswick. In mid-May a few close friends helped Jim pack what remained of his hoard into a U-Haul truck and, towing his Honda Element behind, Jim cut his ties with British Columbia and headed the truck east towards his new home. There were tears when he left...

A wonderful trip, mostly on secondary roads, across spring-time Canada ensued; Jim had not before experienced this great Canadian rite-of-passage. Life returning to the land after a lengthy winter, beautiful weather with long sunny days, explosions of wildflowers and insects, flocks of migrating birds, and the real joy of stopping to visit with old friends to reminisce and drop-off mementos of a life well-lived. Jim and his hoard arrived in Blackville, New Brunswick in late May and from then until the end of the fishing season in October, Jim achieved all the primary goals he had set for the last part of his life: he spent a final full season fly-fishing for Atlantic salmon on east coast rivers (70 days on the water!), became a licensed professional New Brunswick fishing guide, turned his home into a fishing lodge, and hosted/guided groups of his closest friends “from away” on fly-fishing adventures on the Miramichi. Things were going well and, looking to the future, Jim optimistically booked July 2019 dates for fishing on the Gaspésie.

In December, however, Jim remarked to his friends that he had “not been feeling 100%” and was “putting his affairs in order.” Despite realizing cancer was going to be with him until the end (and the end was approaching faster than he had expected), in characteristic fashion he stated “I’m not terribly bummed out by these developments.” He deteriorated rapidly in the New Year, and his last couple of weeks were difficult. He was, however, able to remain in his Blackville home until less than a day before he died. On 25 January, two of his closest friends helped transfer him into palliative care in Fredericton and, less than 12 hours later in the wee small hours of 26 January 2019, he passed with one of them watching over him.

Jim loved curling, bugs, fly-fishing, great blues and jazz, the pursuit of knowledge, a good debate, baseball and the Blue Jays, sleeping in the bathtub (having some kind of internal temperature control that woke him up to add hot water as needed), and (most importantly) his friends. Although he was a life-long bachelor, comfortable in solitude, Jim loved people and never lacked for female companions (at least two of whom broke his heart). His life alone was by choice. Jim had no traditional family to mourn his passing; his many friends were his family and have shouldered that role.

Jim lived life his way, with unique panache. He was a fierce competitor with strong convictions and would not be swayed if those convictions didn’t fit with politically correct ideas of the time. As one close friend remarked at his passing “He was always a pleasure to be around and spoke the truth.” It is a measure of his strength of character that Jim, without parental or other family guidance, completed high school, had a productive academic and athletic life, developed a successful career in applied entomology, and inspired not only younger students and athletes but his peers as well.

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