

PRESIDENT OF THE TENNESSEE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE FOR 1995

Dr. Diane R. Nelson is professor of biological sciences at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). In 1993, she received the ETSU Distinguished Faculty Award, the University's highest award for achievements in teaching, research, and service.

A native Tennessean, she attended elementary school in Oak Ridge and junior high and high school in Knoxville. Intending to become an elementary school teacher, she enrolled at The University of Tennessee at Knoxville but quickly found her calling in biology. With the mentoring of Dr. A. Paul Wishart in Science Education and Dr. Arthur Jones in Zoology, she graduated at the top of her class with a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education (Natural Science). While an undergraduate, she became the first female "rat keeper" and then an National Science Foundation research assistant for Dr. Helen Ward, working on Acanthocephala and publishing her first paper in the *Journal of the Tennessee Academy of Science*. Because of her mentors' leadership roles in the Tennessee Academy of Science (all three are former Presidents of the Academy), she became aware of the importance of professional societies and joined the Academy as an active member. Dr. Nelson completed her Master of Science degree at The University of Tennessee at Knoxville with the assistance of a NASA Traineeship and accepted a 1-year appointment teaching general biology at East Tennessee State University in 1968. The following year she was hired on a tenure-track appointment in the Department of General Science and Science Education by Dr. John Bailey, former Director of the Tennessee Junior Academy of Science. Required by the University to have a terminal degree and with the encouragement of her husband Jack as well as colleagues such as Dr. William H. Ellis and Dr. Ben P. Stone (both former Presidents of the Academy), she completed her Doctor of Philosophy degree at The University of Tennessee at Knoxville while teaching full-time at East Tennessee State University. Her dissertation on the tardigrades (water bears) of Roan Mountain led to an invitation to present her research at the First International Symposium on the Tardigrada, held in Italy in 1974. Since then, Dr. Nelson and her students have continued to conduct research on the ecology and systematics of tardigrades, collaborating with colleagues in the United States and Europe.

In addition to her interest in invertebrates, Dr. Nelson developed a passion for marine biology and underwater photography in 1980. She enrolled in courses at the Bermuda Biological Station for Research and other marine biological stations in Puerto Rico, Texas, and Georgia. As a result, Dr. Nelson teaches marine biology and invertebrate zoology at East Tennessee State University, and she has led students on field courses to Bermuda, The Bahamas, Australia's Barrier Reef, and Bonaire. After teaching Chautauqua short courses for college teachers at the Bermuda Biological Station for several years, she now teaches college students in the summer program at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Ft. Pierce, Florida. Recently, she has studied whale sharks in the Sea of Cortez and sand tilefishes in Belize and the Red Sea with Dr. Eugenie Clark (*National Geographic's* "shark lady"). Her husband, Dr. Jack L. Nelson, who has his Doctor of Philosophy degree in chemical engineering from The University of Tennessee at Knoxville and works at Eastman Chemical Company, also is an underwater videographer on many of the trips.



Dr. Diane R. Nelson

A long-time member of the Tennessee Academy of Science, Dr. Nelson has presented papers, chaired the zoology section, served on the executive committee, was elected a Fellow of the Academy, and served as secretary for 14 years. In addition, she has been active in the Association in Southeastern Biologists, serving on several committees and the executive committee, presenting papers, and chairing sessions and as Vice-president. She also is the current Program Officer for the American Microscopical Society. On 1 January 1995, she assumed the presidency of the Tennessee Academy of Science.