

NORMAN IRA PLATNICK (1951–2020)

On 8 April 2020, the world received the sad news that the eminent American arachnologist and systematic biologist, and world authority on spiders (Araneae Clerck, 1757), Dr Norman Ira Platnick, Curator Emeritus at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York, had passed away at age 68 in Philadelphia, PA, after complications from a fall in his home. He married the late Nancy Stewart Price of Cambridge, MD, in 1970 and is survived by their son, William Durin Platnick, and daughter-in-law, Rebecca Ehrlich.

Norm, as he was known to friends and colleagues, was born on 30 December 1951, in Bluefield, WV, to Philip (Filipas) Platnick and Ida Fannie Platnick née Kasczeniewski, Jews who immigrated to the United States from Lithuania and Poland, respectively, during the Second World War. Philip, a dentist before the war, owned a successful scrap metal business. Norm and his sister, Roberta Lee Platnick, who was ten years older, moved to Princeton, WV, with their parents when Norm was at elementary school in fourth grade. Although ‘culturally Jewish’, Norm was nonpracticing and converted to Christianity in the final years of his life.

Norm was an accomplished reader, with an interest in classical music, at age 4. He had read the entire World Book encyclopedia and the Great Books of the Western World series by second grade. ‘When he found a bug in the woods, he would rush home to identify it in the books’, said his mother, Fannie Platnick, in 1964. Norm’s baby-sitter took him to speed-reading classes when he was in third grade, and he scored 88% on the end-of-class test. Norm played the piano and was composing classical music by age 12. His Intelligence Quotient (IQ) was between 148 and 178.

In a lifetime of accomplishments (Appendix), Norm’s higher education timeline is in a class of its own. Getting what he called a ‘precocious start’, Norm became a college freshman at age 12, receiving a B.S. degree at 16, M.S. at 18, and Ph.D. at 21. He has remarked that he lacked ‘a high school diploma, having made it only through seventh grade’! The unusual events by which this transpired were set in motion by Norm’s seventh-grade science teacher in Princeton, whose husband, Hawey Wells, was a biology professor at Concord College, Athens, WV. Wells encouraged Norm to audit his freshman biology course at Concord in the summer of 1964, if he passed the American College Testing series of college entrance examinations. Entering Concord freshmen required a minimum score of 15; Norm, tested in subjects like chemistry and physics, in which he had no formal training, scored 25. Norm did not know, until an article appeared in a local newspaper, however, that he would be admitted to Concord as a freshman. Joseph Marsh, Concord’s president at the time, had visited the West Virginia State Board of Education in Charleston, WV, and mentioned Norm’s auditing arrangement in passing. The chair of the board, a former neighbour from Bluefield, knew Norm, and the board decided that, since Norm had passed the entrance examination with a score that ‘would be consid-

ered excellent five years from now’, there was no reason not to admit him to Concord. The state board directed the Mercer County Board of Education to release Norm to attend Concord College instead of eighth grade middle school. Norm recalled his mother receiving a telephone call from President Marsh, apologizing for how the family had received the news: the newspapers had published the story before Marsh returned to Athens.

Norm’s life as an undergraduate student, majoring in Biology at Concord College was ‘pretty normal, considering the circumstances’. Although he was among students many years older, Norm apparently had little trouble adjusting. ‘I spent a lot of my time in the student union, playing cards with my friends, all of whom were older, of course, but that’s only natural’, he recalled in 1968. Norm took the usual four years to graduate, commuting from Princeton on the Tri-City-Traction bus, for the first two years, until his parents rented him a tiny apartment across from campus. Norm’s mother, Fannie, also attending classes at Concord, to complete a teaching certificate, often requested her son’s help with homework after they returned from afternoon classes. Norm also engaged in extracurricular activities at Concord. His father, Philip, a Kiwanis Club member in Princeton, encouraged Norm’s membership of Circle K, and he attended one of their national conventions in Texas. Norm enjoyed the spotlight, regularly performing (often in the role of a child), in productions of the Concord theatre department.

Those formative years as a teenager at Concord College ultimately determined the trajectory for the rest of Norm’s life, both personally and professionally. Norm’s lifelong interest in spiders began serendipitously, as a direct consequence of meeting his future wife, Nancy, ‘at Concord on October 12, 1967’ (Fig. 1A). Their son, Will Platnick, maintains that his father’s passion for spiders started because he ‘tried to impress a girl’. ‘It took two years for her to take me seriously’, recalled Norm. Nancy, also pursuing a B.S. in Biology, had taken a course on arthropods with myriapodologist, William Shear, Trinkle Professor Emeritus at Hampden-Sydney College, VA, and had become fascinated with millipedes (Diplopoda Blainville, 1844). According to Will, ‘my mom was an excellent collector and, when she went out collecting in the Appalachian Mountains, my dad would tag along to spend time with her’. Norm was ‘lousy’ at finding millipedes but collected spiders in abundance and tried to identify them back at college. ‘I took one spider and tried to determine what it was ... it took the better part of the day, but I finally figured out it was in the genus *Cicurina* Menge, 1871’, he recalled. The rest is history.

After graduating from Concord in 1968, Norm accepted a teaching assistantship at Michigan State University (MSU), East Lansing, MI, where he had initially intended to pursue a graduate degree in genetics, before realizing that arachnology was his true calling. Norm’s M.S. thesis, a revision of philodromid crab spiders of the genus *Ebo* Keyserling, 1884, was advised by Richard J. Sauer, associate director of the MSU Experiment Station, who later became professor at Kansas State University and vice-president of



Fig. 1: Norman I. Platnick, AMNH curator and original spiderman. **A** Norm and his future wife, Nancy Price, at Concord College (1968); **B** with Herbert Levi (left) and Pekka Lehtinen (centre) at a meeting of the American Arachnological Society, Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg (1975); **C** at the opening of the AMNH Spiders Alive! exhibition with The Amazing Spider-man actor Andrew Garfield (2012); **D** at the AMNH with Spider-Man actor Tobey Maguire (2007); **E** at the California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco (1978); **F** examining vials of *Zorocrates unicolor* (Banks, 1901) at the AMNH (2005); **G** sitting on model trapdoor spider, *Cyclocosmia* Ausserer, 1871, at the AMNH Spiders Alive! exhibition with actors Robert Cuccioli (left), Reeve Carney (right), and spidermen from the Broadway show, Spider-Man Turn Off the Dark (2012); **H** with Paul Selden at the XII International Congress of Arachnology, Queensland Museum, Brisbane, Australia (1992). Photos © R. Mickens/AMNH (C, G), D. Finnin/AMNH (D), D. Hogan Charles/NY Times (F), R. Gillespie/G. Roderick (H).

the University of Minnesota. In his spare time, Norm continued to compose classical music, wrote philosophical poetry, and read Nietzsche, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Peanuts.

In 1970, Norm graduated with his M.S. in Zoology, the year Nancy graduated with her B.S. from Concord, and the couple were married. The Platnicks then moved to Cambridge, MA, where Norm was advised by Herbert Levi (Figs. 1B, 2C), former professor and curator at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, graduating in 1973 with a Ph.D. in Biology for a dissertation revising ghost spiders of the family Anyphaenidae Bertkau, 1878. The Platnicks moved to New York that same year, after Norm accepted an appointment as Assistant Curator in the AMNH Department of Entomology. For the next ten years, Norm and Nancy lived in a Manhattan apartment, a block from the AMNH. During this time, Norm received tenure and promotion to Associate Curator in 1977, and then promotion to Curator in 1982, while Nancy worked in department store (and later bank) credit card divisions, in the city.

In 1983, after their only child, Will, was born, Norm and Nancy moved to a house in Bay Shore, on Long Island, NY. Nancy worked for the next 20 years as a library aide at the nearby Brook Avenue Elementary School (Fig. 2E), later attended by their son. Norm's daily commute to the AMNH became a 4-hour round trip by train and subway. To avoid the rush hour, Norm left home at 5 am and returned at 3 pm. With fewer people aboard, he had 'space to work on the train,' time in which much of the work on his spider catalogs eventually took place. Looking back, Norm regarded his commute to the city as '30 years of riding the railroad'. In 1998, Norm was awarded an endowed chair as Peter J. Solomon Family Curator of Spiders and served in that capacity until taking early (financial) retirement in 2010, to care for Nancy, who had cancer. He was Curator Emeritus and Senior Scientist in Residence at the AMNH Division of Invertebrate Zoology until 2014. After Nancy passed away in 2013, Norm moved upstate to East Amherst, NY, to be near Will and Becca. When Will and Becca moved again, to Philadelphia, in 2018, Norm purchased a house nearby.

As an AMNH Curator, Norm took over stewardship of the Collections of Arachnida and Myriapoda from former AMNH Curator, John Cooke, building on the legacy of Cooke's predecessor, Willis J. Gertsch, to continue developing the spider collection into the world's largest and most taxonomically comprehensive, a global resource with over a million specimens and 4000 types (Fig. 1F). AMNH Scientific Assistant, Louis Sorkin, assisted Norm with curation of the collection, including processing outgoing and incoming loans to arachnologists and myriapodologists around the world, handled public enquiries and outreach concerning arachnids, and undertook indispensable bibliographic work for the *World Spider Catalog*, from Norm's appointment in 1973, until his retirement. Curation of the non-spider arachnid and myriapod collections was taken over by the author, assisted by other scientific support staff, from 2002, and of the spider collections, in 2014.

Norm's arachnological expeditions to Chile, as well as Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, New Caledonia, New Zealand, and Panama (Fig. 2A–B), while AMNH Curator, were supported by \$4.3 million in research grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Geographic Society, and other foundations and funding agencies (Appendix). During one trip to New Caledonia, Norm fell down a mountain and, injured and disoriented, became lost in the forest below. 'We didn't know he was missing until someone from the research team called to say he had been found', recalled his son, Will.

During his Chairmanship of the AMNH Department of Entomology (1987–1994), Norm secured two NSF grants that enhanced ongoing curation of the terrestrial arthropod collections, partially supporting construction of the insect compactor, followed by an instrumentation grant to acquire a scanning electron microscope for the AMNH. He served two years as Chair of the Senate of the Scientific Staff (2006–2008). In addition to his position as Curator at the AMNH, Norm served as adjunct professor at City College, City University of New York (CUNY) (1978–2014), and Cornell University (1988–2014), and as adjunct senior research scientist for the Center of Environmental Research and Conservation (CERC) at Columbia University (1999–2014), enabling him to teach courses, such as a Seminar in Zoogeography at CUNY (1980, 1981, 1998), serve on graduate student committees and mentor his own students as major professor.

Norm was a prolific scientist, publishing almost 12,000 pages in 338 printed publications, including 42 monographs, eight books and two edited volumes over the course of his four-and-a-half-decade career. This exceptional body of work fundamentally affected several fields. 'In each of three broad areas—empirical spider systematics, biodiversity informatics, and systematics theory—he contributed so much that were it his sole effort, his life would now be celebrated for it', remarked Wayne Maddison, professor and Canada Research Chair at the University of British Columbia, and current president of the International Society of Arachnology.

In Norm's early years at the AMNH, former AMNH Curator, Pedro Wygodzinsky, encouraged him to read the work of Willi Hennig, the German entomologist who formulated the theory of phylogenetic systematics (Hennig 1950, 1966), also known as cladistics. Norm was hooked and, while making his mark on the study of spiders, vigorously advocated his perspective on the use of phylogenetic methods for biological classification, along with other former AMNH curators such as Gareth Nelson, the late Donn Rosen, and Eugene Gaffney, resulting in many heated debates at conferences and in the pages of journals like *Systematic Zoology* and *Cladistics* (e.g. Harper & Platnick 1978; Platnick & Marcus 1979; Platnick 1986). Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Norm 'fought a scientific revolution'—referred to by some as the Clade Wars (Hull 1988)—'and won' said Jonathan Coddington, Curator of Arachnida and Myriapoda at the Smithsonian Institution, who published with Norm (Forster, Platnick & Coddington 1990;

Platnick *et al.* 1991; Platnick, Griswold & Coddington 1991; Griswold *et al.* 1995, 2005; Wheeler *et al.* 2017). Norm's early work, including the influential 'Blue Book': *Systematics and biogeography: Cladistics and vicariance* (Nelson & Platnick 1981), coauthored with Gareth Nelson, and seminal papers on cladistic methods in systematics, biogeography and linguistics, and on the history and philosophy of systematics (e.g. Platnick 1976a,b, 1977a,b, 1978a,b,c, 1979, 1981a,b, 1982, 1985; Platnick & Cameron 1977; Nelson & Platnick 1978, 1980a,b; Platnick & Gaffney 1978a,b; Platnick & Nelson 1978, 1984; Platnick & Rosen 1987), were instrumental in disseminating Hennigian tree-thinking and phylogenetic classification, profoundly influencing systematic biology, historical biogeography, and evolutionary biology more generally. The concept of using monophyletic groups, or clades, sharing evolutionary novelties, or synapomorphies, for classification 'was the most important event in the discipline since Darwin, and I would rank Norman as one of the three or four most important scientists who expanded, refined and explained these ideas to the world' remarked Quentin Wheeler, former Cornell University professor, Keeper of Entomology at the Natural History Museum, London, and director of the International Institute for Species Exploration, State University of New York, who published with Norm (e.g. Wheeler *et al.* 2012), and worked with him while an NSF Program Director. Later works in systematics addressed controversies such as species concepts, three-taxon statements, DNA Barcoding and the PhyloCode (Nelson & Platnick 1991; Platnick *et al.* 1996; Platnick & Wheeler 2000; Wheeler & Platnick 2000a,b; Lipscomb, Platnick & Wheeler 2003; Platnick 2012, 2013a), among others.

In arachnology, the study of spiders and their kin, Norm laid the early framework of spider classification and the Tree of Life (Platnick 1975, 1977c; Platnick & Gertsch 1976). He continued to play an active role in resolving spider phylogeny throughout his career (Forster & Platnick 1984; Platnick & Goloboff 1985; Forster, Platnick & Coddington 1990; Platnick *et al.* 1991, 2012; Griswold *et al.* 1999, 2005; Wheeler *et al.* 2017), culminating in the NSF Assembling the Tree of Life (AToL): Phylogeny of Spiders grant (2002–2006), which he prepared but from which he ended up recusing himself on account of his concurrent service as an NSF Program Director. Along the way, Norm introduced new techniques, such as scanning electron microscopy, and morphological character systems, such as spinneret morphology (Platnick 1974, 1990; Platnick *et al.* 1991, 2012), which changed forever the course of spider systematics. Norm's prodigious monographic revisions and many smaller papers, often coauthored with former and current AMNH Scientific Assistants: Mohammad U. Shadab, Louis Sorkin, Nadine Dupérré, and Lily Berniker, who meticulously prepared dissections, illustrations, scanning electron micrographs, and so on, added 158 new genera and 2023 new species of spiders, an average of 50 names and 46 species annually, making him the second most prolific arachnologist in history, after Eugène Simon (Platnick & Raven 2013). This monumental contribution vastly

increased knowledge of spider diversity on a global scale, especially the poorly known fauna of the Southern Hemisphere, to currently more than 48,455 species (World Spider Catalog 2020). An authority on at least ten spider families, Norm named taxa in 49 of the 120 families, across all suborders and infraorders, as well as the arachnid order Ricinulei Thorell, 1876 (hooded tick-spiders), in which he described a new genus and 12 new species. The names of many taxa express Norm's characteristically wry sense of humor, such as *Neato* Platnick, 2002, *Oreo* Platnick, 2002, *Queenvic* Platnick, 2000, *Notnops* Platnick, 1994, *Nyetenops* Platnick & Lise, 2007, *Taintnops* Platnick, 1994, *Tisentnops* Platnick, 1994, *Paradysderina righty* Platnick & Dupérré, 2011, and *Paradysderina lefty* Platnick & Dupérré, 2011. In 2005, Quentin Wheeler remarked that Norm 'is the best arachnologist of his generation, has published more monographs and nomenclatural contributions than anyone, period'.

Norm's singular contribution to arachnology, his copious descriptions of arachnids notwithstanding, is undoubtedly the *World Spider Catalog*, which he created as a unified nomenclatural and taxonomic resource, and updated annually over the course of two decades (Platnick 2000–2020).

Work on this project began in 1986, with the untimely death of Paolo M. Brignoli, formerly at the University of Aquila, Italy. Spider students had come to depend on Brignoli's (1983) *Catalogue of the Araneae described between 1940 and 1981*, itself continuing the monumental cataloguing efforts of Roewer's (1942, 1955) *Katalog der Araneae von 1758 bis 1940* and Bonnet's (1945, 1955–1959, 1961) *Bibliographia Araneorum*, for essential guidance to the enormous taxonomic literature on spiders. Brignoli (1983) filled many of the post-Roewer gaps through 1980, with scattered coverage of later papers, and intended to issue supplements at periodic intervals until that was prevented by his departure. Fortunately, Norm accepted an invitation from the British Arachnological Society and Manchester University Press to take on the challenge of preparing the first supplement to Brignoli (1983). Over the next decade, three volumes of *Advances in Spider Taxonomy* (Platnick 1989, 1993, 1998), collectively 2500 pages, were published, covering the literature from 1981 through 1995 and including all synonyms, transfers, and redescriptions from 1940 to 1980. These indispensable volumes became known as the 'Platnick Catalogs'.

By the end of the 20th century it became obvious that the increasing quantity of taxonomic information on spiders could no longer be managed in printed volumes. An internet-based solution was required to handle the annual influx of over 300 taxonomic publications with descriptions of *c.* 900 new species. Norm began this task with the first online version of his *World Spider Catalog* in 2000 and continued through 2014, with two updated versions per year from 2002, a total of 28 updates (Platnick 2000–2020). The catalog was hosted at the AMNH and served as HTML files per family. Wayne Maddison recalled Norm's legendary attention to detail when, around 2013, he wrote a script to process Norm's HTML code from the *World Spider Cata-*



Fig. 2: Norman I. Platnick, arachnologist, field biologist and research scientist. **A** New Zealand, sorting spiders from leaf litter with his son, Will Platnick, and Raymond Forster (1987); **B** Ecuador, sorting spiders from leaf litter with Ligia Benavides (2009); **C** with Herbert Levi at a meeting of the American Arachnological Society, California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco (1976); **D** Goblin Spider PBI expedition to Ecuador (2009), left to right: Cristina A. Rheims, Cristian J. Grismado, Dimitri Forero, Ligia Benavides, Nadine Dupérré, Matías A. Izquierdo (front), Elicio Tapia (back), Norm Platnick, Peter Michalik, Barbara C. Baehr, Facundo Labarque (front), Adalberto J. Santos, Alexandre B. Bonaldo (back), and Mauricio Vega; **E** live spider display at Brook Avenue Elementary School, Bay Shore, NY, where his son, Will, attended school and his wife, Nancy Platnick, worked for 20 years (2008); **F** teaching at George Washington University, Washington, DC (2005); **G** working at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador, Quito with Martín J. Ramírez (2009). Photos © N. I. Platnick/W. D. Platnick (A–B, E, G), Martín J. Ramírez (D), G. Hormiga (F).

log, to generate lists of species and genera in a different format. Although Norm wrote the code by hand with a basic text editor, XyWrite, ‘it was so regularly formed’ that the script parsed the file ‘error-free’.

The next step was taken as part of the Goblin Spider PBI, when a relational database of Version 8.5 of the *World Spider Catalog* (Platnick 2008), prepared with the assistance of Robert J. Raven, Head of Terrestrial Biodiversity and the Senior Curator at the Queensland Museum, Australia, AMNH George Willett Curator Emeritus, R. Toby Schuh, and staff from the AMNH Information Technology Department, was released as a beta version. Upon Norm’s retirement in 2014, the Naturhistorisches Museum Bern, Switzerland, took over the *World Spider Catalog* and converted it to a relational database with a fully searchable bibliography of over 12,000 taxonomic citations, most with links to PDFs (World Spider Catalog 2020). Unlike most other non-vertebrate taxa of comparable diversity, spiders now enjoy a completely up-to-date, online, species-level taxonomic database since 1757 when the first 68 spider species were described by Carl Clerck.

In recognition of his many contributions to science, and especially to arachnology, Norm was made Honorary Member of the Arachnologische Gesellschaft, the British Arachnological Society, and the International Society of Arachnology, and Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, among other honours (Appendix). He received the Pierre Bonnet Award for Devoted Service to the Advancement of Arachnology from the International Society of Arachnology in 2007. Five spider genera: *Normplatnicka* Rix & Harvey, 2010, *Platnickia* Jocqué, 1991, *Platnickina* Koçak & Kemal, 2008, *Platnickinia* Özdiçmen & Demir, 2009 (= *Modisimus* Simon, 1893), and *Platnickopoda* Jäger, 2020, and 50 species of spiders, other arachnids, and a millipede are named in his honour.

Norm’s international fieldwork (Fig. 2A–B), which focused on temperate austral forests, and the realization that for many taxa, the temperate zone is more biodiverse than the tropics (Platnick 1991a, 1992), made him keenly aware of the loss of biodiversity caused by human-induced habitat destruction and degradation. Describing in 2014 his experiences in Chile, he recalled with shock and sadness returning to field sites, years later, to discover that ‘where there used to be a forest ... it’s no longer there’. From the 1990s onwards, as part of a growing concern for the threats facing biodiversity, Norm became actively involved in initiatives to address the taxonomic impediment by accelerating the pace of species discovery and description, including programs such as Systematics Agenda 2000: Charting the Biosphere (Platnick 1999; Wheeler *et al.* 2012), and received major grants implementing automated methods of species identification and description, e.g. SPIDA-web (Russell *et al.* 2007), and training the next generation of taxon specialists, e.g. the NSF Partnerships for Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy (PEET) program. This vision culminated in the Planetary Biodiversity Inventories (PBI) and Revisionary Syntheses in Systematics programs which he co-developed during his tenure as Program Director for Biodiversity Sur-

veys and Inventories in the NSF Division of Environmental Biology (2002–2003).

In 2006, Norm put his approach to targeting megadiverse groups (Platnick 1999) into practice on a global scale with his PBI grant on the megadiverse, microdistributed goblin spider family Oonopidae Simon, 1890 involving, for the first time in history, 54 collaborating arachnologists from 19 institutions in 12 countries (Fig. 2D), dedicated to advancing the systematics of Oonopidae, worldwide. Over the course of 11 years, using custom-built cyberinfrastructure, the rate of species description increased in a manner unprecedented for any spider family: 1056 new spider species were described in 103 papers and 5344 pages, increasing global spider diversity by 2.5% and moving Oonopidae from the 21st to the 8th most speciose family of spiders. In the Neotropical Region alone, where only 212 oonopid species were known when the project began, more than double the number of species were described than in the preceding 127 years (Santos *et al.* 2017). The success of the Goblin Spider PBI, as it became known, has been attributed to the combination of detailed global planning and division of labour among team members, which facilitated specimen sharing and access to material, along with the implementation of cybertaxonomic tools for generating automated descriptions, keys and distribution maps from centralized online-accessible databases. These procedures resulted in intensive sampling of existing spider collections, complemented by freshly collected material. Some descriptions of new taxa by project collaborators were based on unsorted and unidentified specimens already available in museum collections, particularly specimens collected in spider diversity inventories, but many new species were discovered by sampling poorly explored and or hyperdiverse places for the first time. For example, a single expedition to Ecuador in 2009 resulted in the discovery of three new genera and 42 new species (Santos *et al.* 2017).

In between his productive research program, Norm took an active role in serving the scientific communities of arachnologists and systematic biologists, and training the next generation of systematic arachnologists (Fig. 2A–B, D–G), throughout the course of his career. He was a charter member of the American Arachnological Society (1972) and served as Membership Secretary (1976–2002) and editorial board member for the *Journal of Arachnology* (1974–2013), as well as Vice President (1986–1989) and President (1995–1998) of the Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique (which later became the International Society of Arachnology). He was founding fellow (1980) and President (1990–1992) of the Willi Hennig Society, and served as an editor for *Systematic Zoology* (1976–1982) and *Cladistics* (1988–2004). In addition to his role as fellow, president or councilor of scientific societies, and his service on copious editorial boards and scientific panels (Appendix), Norm leaves a rich legacy in education. He delivered almost 100 scientific lectures in the US and abroad (Figs. 1B, E, H, 2C), and advised or served on the committees of over 20 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows from countries including Argentina, Australia, Germany, Peru,

and Russia (Appendix; Fig. 2G), many of whom went on to illustrious careers in arachnology and systematics, around the world.

The original spider man, Norm promoted the old adage ‘if you wish to live and thrive, let a spider run alive’ via diverse media, including the highly successful Spiders Alive! exhibition (2012–2013, and again in 2015; Fig. 1C–D, G), two children’s books on spiders (Platnick 1995, 2004), several popular magazine articles, and online videos, such as *Seeking Spiders – Biodiversity on a Different Scale*, where he noted: ‘if we wish to conserve as much biodiversity as possible, then we need to pay attention not just to the things that are easy to see, but also to the ones that are not so easy to see and tell us much more about the planet’. This, indeed, was Norm’s rationale for undertaking a global inventory of the minute Oonopidae, which typically measure less than 2 mm in length and have, on average, the smallest distributional ranges, per species, of any group of spiders. The microdistributions of goblin spiders renders them extraordinarily valuable for defining areas of endemism (Platnick 1991b), harbouring species that occur nowhere else; for understanding the relationships among those species and the history of the areas they inhabit (on time scales ranging from continental drift to relatively recent climate change); and, by extension, for identifying areas of conservation priority. The completion of the Goblin Spider PBI and successful transition of the *World Spider Catalog* to its new home, as well as the recent publication of a full color volume, *Spiders of the world: a natural history* (Platnick 2020), coauthored with long-term arachnologist collaborators Rudy Jocqué (formerly at the Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgium), Gustavo Hormiga (George Washington University, Washington, DC), Robert J. Raven (Queensland Museum, Brisbane, Australia), Martín J. Ramírez (Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales, Buenos Aires), and Peter Jäger (Senckenberg Forschungsinstitut und Naturmuseum, Frankfurt, Germany), several of Norm’s former trainees among them, are fitting conclusions to a life’s work researching and disseminating knowledge of the incredible diversity of spiders.

According to Will Platnick, Norm ‘had three passions in life: my mother, spiders, and collecting’. In his spare time, Norm enjoyed another life as an art aficionado, the origins of which, like his obsession with spiders, were ‘entirely Nancy’s fault!’ When the family moved to Long Island, Nancy began visiting yard sales, antique shops and shows, collecting vintage (pre-1967) eggbeaters, electric mixers and other mechanical kitchen devices. She ultimately acquired over 300. Considered by many to be ‘the god-mother of the current mixer movement’, Nancy was a member of Kooks (Kollectors Of Old Kitchen Stuff) and started an online news group called WACEM (We Actually Collect Electric Mixers) in 1999, which has grown to over 2400 active members. While frequenting antique shops in search of eggbeaters and mixers with his wife, Norm realized he needed something of his own to hunt for. He has traced his interest in the illustration art of magazine covers, advertisements, and articles from America’s Golden Age of

Illustration, c. 1905–1920 (Parks 2006; Platnick 2013), back to a Maxfield Parrish print he and Nancy purchased for their Manhattan apartment in the 1970s. Introduced to the work of Coles Phillips through advertisements from old magazines discovered in Nancy’s parents’ house, Norm added another artist to his study and collections. While learning about Phillips, Norm discovered there were dozens of other artists from the period who did equally beautiful work, and immersed himself deeply into collecting and researching the ones he liked, eventually developing his own collection of over 6500 pieces through visits to dealers and shows. Between 1998 and 2020, Norm wrote 27 full-colour books and three articles on the work of various artists from this period (Platnick 2014–2020), a labour of love, demanding considerable time and energy to publish under the imprint Enchantment Ink, and was planning ‘at least as many more’. Norm’s approach to his art books adapted his methods from the *World Spider Catalog*. Each book, periodically updated and assigned a new version number, synthesized all that is known about the printed work of its subject, including full-colour images of all known calendars and prints, along with the magazine items (covers, illustrations, and ads), book illustrations, fans, sheet music, jigsaw puzzles, postcards, menus, tradecards, leaflets, needlecases, packets, blotters, boxes, posters, store displays, and die-cuts featuring their work, as applicable and available. Norm also intended ‘to produce the book on mixers Nancy always wanted to do’.

Norm’s generous personality, fierce intellect, and indomitable can-do approach won friends and admirers across the globe. His motto, ‘The best is none too good’, long hanging on his office wall and still seen on his Facebook page, speaks volumes about his attitude to his pursuits. When Norm first moved to New York, he and Nancy rented a ground-floor apartment, on what was then a seedy West 80th Street, a block from his office at the AMNH. His friend and colleague, R. Toby Schuh, recalls ‘many a day when Norm would come to the AMNH at 2 or 3 am, do several hours’ work, and return home to have breakfast with his beloved wife before she left for work, returning to complete what for most would be a whole day’s effort’.

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Appendix

Timeline of selected events relevant to the impact of Norman I. Platnick on arachnology

1964–1968	B.S., Concord College, Athens, WV
1968–1970	M.S., Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
1970–1973	Ph.D., Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
1972	Charter Member, American Arachnological Society (AAS)
1973–1975	Committee on Systematics Collections, AAS
1973–1977	Assistant Curator, Department of Entomology, American Museum of Natural History (AMNH)
1974–2013	Editorial Board: <i>Journal of Arachnology</i>
1976	The suborders of spiders: A cladistic analysis.
1976–2002	Membership Secretary, American Arachnological Society
1977	The hypochiloid spiders: A cladistic analysis.
1977–1982	Associate Curator, Department of Entomology, AMNH
1981–1982	Eppley Foundation for Research Grant: Spider Biogeography in Western South America
1982–1998	Curator, Department of Entomology, AMNH
1983	Postdoctoral Supervisor: R. J. Raven, American Museum of Natural History (AMNH)
1984–1986	National Science Foundation (NSF) Grant: Biogeography of Chilean Spiders
1984–1989	NSF Grant: Systematics and Biogeography of Chilean Spiders
1986–1989	Vice President, Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique (CIDA)
1987–1988	Postdoctoral Supervisor: C. E. Griswold, AMNH
1988–2010	Adjunct Professor, Department of Entomology, Cornell University
1989	<i>Advances in spider taxonomy 1981–1987.</i>
1989–1994	Major Professor, Ph.D.: P. A. Goloboff, Cornell University
1990–1993	NSF Grant: Cataloging Spider Biodiversity; National Geographic Society Grant: Systematics, Phylogenetics, and Biogeography of New Caledonian Spiders US-Israel Binational Science Foundation Grant: Gnaphosid Spiders of Israel (with Y. D. Lubin)
1991	Spinneret morphology and the phylogeny of haplogyne spiders.
1991–1995	NSF Grant: Insect and Arachnid Biodiversity in Southern South America (with R. T. Schuh)
1991–1996	Major Professor, Ph.D.: K. Catley, Cornell University
1992–1994	NSF Grant: Molecular Phylogeny of Spider Families (with W. C. Wheeler and R. DeSalle).
1993	<i>Advances in spider taxonomy 1988–1991.</i>
1993–2000	Postdoctoral Supervisor: V. I. Ovtsharenko, AMNH
1994–2001	Major Professor, Ph.D.: D. Silva-Dávila, Cornell University; X.-P. Wang, Cornell University
1995–1998	President, CIDA
1995–2000	NSF Grant: Spider Biodiversity: A World Catalog NSF Grant: Partnerships for Enhancing Expertise in Taxonomy (PEET): Biodiversity of Australasian Ground Spiders
1995–2009	Editorial Board: <i>Journal of Venomous Animals and Toxins</i>
1996–1998	Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS) Grant: Biodiversity of Australian Ground Spiders
1996–2015	Honorary Editor-in-Chief: <i>Acta Arachnologica Sinica</i>
1998	<i>Advances in spider taxonomy 1992–1995.</i>
1998–2000	Postdoctoral Supervisor: B. Huber, AMNH
1998–2010	Peter J. Solomon Family Curator of Spiders, Division of Invertebrate Zoology, AMNH
1999	Towards a phylogeny of entelegyne spiders.
1999–2001	Postdoctoral Supervisor: M. J. Ramírez, AMNH
2000	<i>The world spider catalog, version 1.0.</i>
2001	First Honorary Member, Arachnologische Gesellschaft
2002–2003	Program Director, Biodiversity Surveys and Inventories, NSF
2002–2005	ABRS Grant: A Monograph of, and Automated Identification Systems for, the Australasian Ground Spiders of the Family Prodidomidae (with B. C. Baehr) Postdoctoral Supervisor: K. N. Russell, AMNH
2002–2006	NSF Grant: Assembling the Tree of Life (AToL): Phylogeny of Spiders (W. C. Wheeler, Principal Investigator)
2003–2006	Comité Científico: <i>Revista Ibérica de Aracnología</i>
2005	Atlas of phylogenetic data for entelegyne spiders.
2006–2011	NSF Grant: Planetary Biodiversity Inventory (PBI): The Megadiverse, Microdistributed Spider Family Oonopidae Postdoctoral Supervisor: M. Burger (AMNH)
2007	Pierre Bonnet Award, International Society of Arachnology
2010–2020	Senior Scientist and Curator Emeritus, Division of Invertebrate Zoology, AMNH
2011	Honorary Member, British Arachnological Society
2013	Honorary Member, International Society of Arachnology
2014	<i>The world spider catalog, version 15.</i>
2017	The spider tree of life: Phylogeny of Araneae.
2020	<i>Spiders of the world: A natural history.</i>
