



ARCHIVES – FINDING AID

Collection Title: Komarek Family Papers

Creator: Komarek, Betty (1/29/1914-4/16/2002)
Komarek, Edwin V., Sr. (6/4/1909-5/6/1995)
Komarek, Roy V. (9/24/1911-12/18/1989)

Dates: 1914-1989, bulk 1932-1946, 1963-1989

Extent: 1.5 Linear Feet (4 manuscript boxes)

Level of Description: Folder Level

Repository: Natural History Collections and Archives, Chicago Academy of Sciences /Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

Access Conditions: Open for research.

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Citation: Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item], [folder], [box], Komarek Family Papers, Chicago Academy of Sciences / Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

Acquisition Information: The original acquisition of this collection is unknown.

Processor and Date: Amber K. King, October 2010; updated by Jessica Weller, February 2018; updated by Alexandra Katich, November 2019.

Processing Note: Organization not based on original order as documents moved repeatedly before final processing.

Biographical Sketch: Edwin V. Komarek, Sr. (1909-1995) was a mammalogist and a leading advocate for fire ecology. Born in Chicago and raised in suburban Oak Park, his interest in fire ecology began as Boy Scout by volunteering to combat wildfires in nearby prairies and forest preserves. After graduation from Oak Park High in 1927, Komarek joined the Chicago Academy of Sciences and studied zoology at the University of Chicago. Specializing in mammalogy, he conducted the Smoky Mountains Faunal Survey and authored several scientific journal articles. In 1934, he met Herbert Stoddard, Sr. and became his assistant at the Cooperative Quail Study Association, but he continued his affiliation with ChAS as a collector. In 1935, he married Betty Barker and they raised two children, E. V. Komarek, Jr. and Betsy, at Birdsong Plantation. From 1945-1988, Komarek was employed as general manager of Greenwood Plantation, which was widely recognized for its part in developing the first hybrid corn fully adapted for the southeastern Coastal Plain. At Greenwood, Komarek gave lectures on ecological studies and the plantation quickly became a hub for university groups involved in natural resource management. During this time, Komarek also served with the Georgia Game and Fish Commission and helped found the Tall Timbers Research Station where he organized a fire ecology conference series (1962). Throughout the remainder of his career, he continued to organize ecology conferences on a wide range of subjects, lectured in 24 U.S. states and 14 different countries, authored more than 80 papers, and received an honorary doctorate from Florida State University. In 1981, Birdsong Plantation began operating as a Nature Center and the Komareks used the plantation to investigate land management techniques and share their love and knowledge of nature with the public. Following Komarek's death in 1995, his wife Betty, also a scientist and educator, continued their work at the Birdsong Nature Center until her death 2002.

Roy V. Komarek (1911-1989), brother of Edwin Komarek, Sr., was the assistant curator of mammals at the Chicago Academy of Sciences from 1934-1937. After resigning in 1937 to join the North Carolina Division of Game and Inland Fisheries, Komarek continued his relationship with ChAS as a collector, including working alongside his brother Ed in the Great Smoky Mountains. In 1939, he moved to a job with the Florida Game Commission and soon embarked on a study of ticks in South Florida, which had caused great economic loss for the cattle industry. During this time, tensions rose between the Department of Agriculture and the Seminole Indians, who refused to cooperate with the tick eradication campaign. Komarek, who tried to conduct a fair test of the tick's status on the reservation, was caught in the middle. As an accomplished photographer, Komarek captured rare images of Seminole culture but these negatives were forgotten or misplaced for decades. In 2015, long after his death, these images were published in the book *Ticks and Politics in South Florida*. In late 1944, Komarek became head of Birdsong Plantation and an assistant at the Farm and Game Service. He also became one of the founders of the Tall Timbers Research Station, along with his brother, and published articles in fire ecology. Komarek died in 1989.

Landers, Larry J. "About E. V. Komarek." Uploaded talltimbers.org on September 3, 2018.

https://talltimbers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/3-Landers1991a_op.pdf

Vasile, Ron and Mary Hennen. 1998. "Recent Mammalogy and the Chicago Academy of Sciences." *Transactions of the Illinois State Academy of Science* 91 (1-2): 109-114.

Bondurant, Mark. 1993. "The Birdsong Center Teaches Love of Nature." *South Florida Sun Sentinel*, August 8, 1993. <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1993-08-08-9301280594-story.html>

Scope and Content: The collection contains papers from three members of the Komarek family: Edwin V. Komarek, his wife Betty Komarek, and his brother Roy V. Komarek. The materials are split between their communication and relationship with the Chicago Academy of Sciences and publications produced through the Tall Timbers Organization.

Additionally, the Academy's collections include numerous specimens collected by the Komareks, including birds, insects, amphibians and reptiles, fish, mammals, and minerals. The collection also includes historic images of the Komareks during field expeditions with the Academy.

Series Description:

Series 1: Correspondence (1932-1989, undated)

This series contains cards and letters to members of the Komarek family. It is divided into three sub-series. The first sub-series, "Betty Komarek," contains a few letters between Ed's wife Betty and Howard K. Gloyd regarding a species of toad she had collected. The second sub-series, "Edwin V. Komarek, Sr," contains Christmas cards and letters primarily with staff members from the Chicago Academy of Sciences. It includes information from sponsored collecting trips undertaken by himself and other collectors with a focus on the east coast, primarily in the southeast, particularly in the Great Smoky Mountains. The third sub-series, "Roy V. Komarek," includes letters between Roy and staff members of the Chicago Academy of Sciences. While this series contains some specimen collecting information, it is primarily composed of more generic professional correspondence.

Series 2: Collecting (undated)

This series contains information regarding various specimens collected by the Komarek brothers. It is a small series with only one list detailing all the natural science specimens collected by either Ed or Roy Komarek and deposited at the Chicago Academy of Sciences.

Series 3: Personal (1914)

This series contains a printed publication, *Land Birds Bird Guide, Part 2: Land Birds East of the Rockies From Parrots to Bluebirds*, that Roy Komarek gave to his mother on May 31, 1914.

Series 4: Writings (undated)

This series contains copies of writings of Edwin V. Komarek, Sr. Included are two corrected copies of articles on mammals as well as incomplete papers from other writings.

Series 5: Publications (1963-1989)

This series contains publications authored or edited by the Komarek brothers. The majority of the publications surround the Fire Ecology Conference organized by the Komarek brothers. There is one bulletin from the Tall Timbers Research Station as well.

Container List:

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Box 1 | | | |
| Series 1: Correspondence (1932-1989, undated) | | | |
| <i>Sub-series 1: Betty Komarek (1939, 1943)</i> | | | |
| | 1 | Howard K. Gloyd | 1939, 1943 |
| <i>Sub-series 2: Edwin V. Komarek, Sr. (1932-1934, 1936-1956, undated)</i> | | | |
| | 2 | Christmas Cards | 1951, 1956, undated |
| | 3 | Miscellaneous | 1934 |
| | 4 | Chicago Academy of Sciences – Various | 1933-1934, 1941-1942, 1946, 1948 |
| | 5 | Alfred M. Bailey | 1932-1934, 1936 |
| | 6 | Nathan S. Davis | 1934, 1936 |
| | 7 | Ruthven Deane | undated |
| | 8 | Francis R. Dickinson | 1933, 1936 |
| | 9 | Edward R. Ford | 1933-1934, 1942-1943 |
| | 10 | Howard K. Gloyd | 1936-1940 |
| | 11 | Howard K. Gloyd | 1941-1956, undated |
| <i>Sub-series 3: Roy V. Komarek (1937-1938, 1940-1942, 1988-1989)</i> | | | |
| | 12 | Miscellaneous | 1936-1937 |
| | 13 | Chicago Academy of Sciences – Various | 1937-1938, 1941-1942 |
| | 14 | Howard K. Gloyd | 1937-1938, 1940-1942 |
| | 15 | Mary Hennen | 1988-1989 |
| Series 2: Collecting (undated) | | | |
| | 16 | List – Specimens in Chicago Academy of Sciences | undated |
| Series 3: Personal | | | |
| | 17 | “Land Birds Bird Guide”: from Roy Komarek to Mother | May 31, 1914 |
| Series 4: Writings (undated) | | | |
| | 18 | “Mammals of the Indiana Dunes” – Edwin V. Komarek, Sr. | undated |
| | 19 | “Preliminary Report on Mammals of the Smoky Mts.” (corrected copy) – Edwin V. Komarek, Sr. | undated |
| | 20 | Incomplete | undated |
| Box 2 | | | |
| Series 5: Publications (1963-1989) | | | |
| <i>Sub-series 1: Proceedings Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference</i> | | | |
| | 1 | Second Annual | March 13-14, 1963 |
| | 2 | Third Annual | April 9-10, 1964 |
| | 3 | Fourth Annual | March 18-19, 1965 |
| | 4 | Fifth Annual | March 24-25, 1966 |
| | 5 | Sixth Annual | March 6-7, 1967 |
| | 6 | Number 7 | November 9-10, 1967 |
| | 6 | Number 8 | March 14-15, 1968 |
| Box 3 | | | |
| Series 5: Publications (1963-1989) | | | |

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|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | <i>Sub-series 1: Proceedings Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference</i> | | |
| | 1 | Number 9 | April 10-11, 1969 |
| | 2 | Number 12 | June 8-9, 1972 |
| | 3 | Number 13 | March 22-23, 1973 |
| | 4 | Number 14 | October 8-10, 1974 |
| Box 4 | | | |
| Series 5: Publications (1963-1989) | | | |
| | <i>Sub-series 1: Proceedings Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference</i> | | |
| | 1 | Number 15 (2 copies) | October 16-17, 1974 |
| | 2 | Number 16 | February 22-24, 1979 |
| | 3 | Number 17 | May 18-21, 1989 |
| | <i>Sub-series 2: Bulletin of Tall Timbers Research Station</i> | | |
| | 4 | Number 19 | May 1975 |
| | <i>Sub-series 3: Program of Activities of the Chicago Academy of Sciences</i> | | |
| | 5 | <i>Mammals of the Chicago Region</i> by Tappan Gregory | 1936 |