

## One person's BIG impact on Science in Kentucky – a short history of KAS' Athey Funds

When you look at the Treasurer's report and see Athey Funds, what do you think of? What are these funds for and where did they come from?

Raymond Athey was the owner of the Paducah Service Company<sup>1</sup>. He married Marcia Richardson in 1949<sup>2</sup> and they had 2 children. She died in 1980.<sup>3</sup> Raymond Athey died in 1991.<sup>1</sup>

He was self-taught and was widely recognized as an expert on the flora of western Kentucky, discovering many new state records [*sic*] and rare species, and amassing a private herbarium of about 10,000 specimens. He also shared many specimens with Vanderbilt University and Memphis State University. He collaborated with E.T. Browne, which eventually led to several journal articles, and, more significantly, the publication of "Vascular Plants of Kentucky, An Annotated Checklist" (Browne & Athey 1992). This was the first published checklist of the Kentucky flora in almost 50 years.<sup>4</sup> At least one journal article was published in the Transactions of KAS.<sup>5</sup>

The Atheys were strong supporters of KAS. In 1974, it was announced that "through the generosity of an anonymous donor, the Kentucky Academy of Science is authorized periodically to award a cash grant of \$500.00 to any student who is a member of the Kentucky Academy of Science and who is enrolled in a course of study with emphasis in botanical science at any college or university within the Commonwealth."<sup>6</sup> There was a set of restrictions on the grant, but mainly it was designed to be "in support of research to survey and document the flora of any county in the state that had not had a published county flora within the last 50 years."<sup>7</sup> The expectation was a minimum of 500 different plants, with an additional \$1.00 for any over the 500.

In 1976 it was announced that "There will be increased funds for the distribution of research monies for floristic studies, because that same donor has established an endowment of \$10,000 to be administered by the Academy for the 'Kentucky Academy of Science Foundation for

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<sup>1</sup> Obituary, Howard Raymond Athey, The Paducah Sun, July 6, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> "Sunday Afternoon Bride" (wedding announcement), Mrs. Howard Raymond Athey, The Paducah Sun, Feb. 1, 1949.

<sup>3</sup> Obituary, "Mrs. Athey rites Tuesday," The Paducah Sun, Aug. 25, 1980

<sup>4</sup> The Recovery Period of Kentucky Botany (1948-Present) (Excerpts from *Plant Life of Kentucky* by Dr. Ronald L. Jones) <https://herbarium.eku.edu/recovery-period-kentucky-botany-1948-present> accessed 11/27/2024.

<sup>5</sup> Browne and Athey. "The 'Lost' Liliaceae of Kentucky: A Reevaluation." Transactions of the Kentucky Academy of Science, 38 (1-2) March, 1977, pp. 95-96.

<sup>6</sup> News and Comments – Florist Survey Grant of the KAS. Transaction of the Kentucky Academy of Science, 35 (3-4) Dec. 1974, pg. 84

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

Botanical Research in Kentucky.”<sup>8</sup> The donor was described as a “dedicated scientist who continues to make anonymous contributions to the Academy for the purpose of scientific research.” According to Ted George, “Eventually it became known that the anonymous donor was Mr. Raymond L. Athey of Paducah, Kentucky.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1982, he and the family of Marcia donated \$50,000 to set up an endowment. The earnings were to be used only for scientific research in Kentucky and was named the Marcia Athey Fund in honor of Mrs. Athey. KAS developed guidelines for the use of the funds.<sup>10</sup>

Current KAS grants for members include the Marcia Athey and Botany Fund for research in any of the physical, biological, behavioral, or engineering sciences, and the Athey Science Education and Outreach Grant for the development and/or distribution of science education materials, supplies, or programming to serve elementary and secondary schools in Kentucky.

At Mr. Athey’s suggestion, “a separate organization was established to keep the money that he and the Athey family had donated separate from the day-to-day operation of Academy affairs. Therefore, in 1980, the Kentucky Academy of Science Foundation (KAS Foundation) was established.”<sup>11</sup> In 1987, the Governing Board of the Academy assumed control over this foundation. In 1991, the treasurer reported that the Foundation had over \$99,000 in funds and had distributed \$8,607 in research grants.<sup>12</sup> Today, the KAS Foundation is valued at around \$1 million.

Raymond Athey died in 1991. In his will, he set up a trust fund which contained all his assets (estimated at over a million dollars). One-half of the earnings from this trust fund go to the Academy.<sup>13</sup> Today, the Athey trust (with KAS as beneficiary) is valued at \$800,000, and the interest from this investment funds research grants to members. Reportedly, when Mr. Athey was asked why he was giving so much money to KAS, he replied “By God, I want future generations of Kentuckians to have the opportunity to know something about science.”<sup>14</sup> KAS is continuing to fulfill this vision.

Kentucky is fortunate among our counterpart academies for this wonderful asset. We’ve used it to build the Academy of Science, to offer services and programs for members like you, and make a positive contribution to science in the Commonwealth.

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<sup>8</sup> News and Comment: President’s Remarks. Transactions of the Kentucky Academy of Science. 38 (1-2), March 1977, pg. 110

<sup>9</sup> George, Ted M. Forum: History of the Kentucky Academy of Science, 1914 – 1992. Transactions of the Kentucky Academy of Science, 54 (3-4), Sept. 1993, pg. 120.

<sup>10</sup> Winstead, Joe, Report to the Board of Directors. Transactions of the Kentucky Academy of Science, 45 (1-2), March 1984, pg. 83

<sup>11</sup> George, pg. 121

<sup>12</sup> Hartman, David. Treasurer’s Report. Transactions of the Kentucky Academy of Science, 53 (1-2), pg. 63.

<sup>13</sup> George, pg. 121

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

If you'd like to make a lasting impact on science in Kentucky, remember the Kentucky Academy of Science in your will or trust. KAS Taxpayer ID is 61-1135572. Find more information at our website [kyscience.org](http://kyscience.org)