

Dr. Jerome Keuper

1921–2002

Dr. Jerome Keuper, seventh president of The Palm Society (which later became the International Palm Society), died in Melbourne, Florida, on 25 March 2002, after a long illness. He was 81 years old. Jerry Keuper could be called a 20th century Renaissance Man. He was a scientist who founded a university, a lover of palms and a scholar of Chinese linguistics. An Army intelligence officer in World War II, he returned from service in China and Burma (Myanmar) to earn degrees at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University and a doctorate in nuclear physics from the University of Virginia. In 1958, he came to Florida to be the chief scientist for a defense contractor at what is now the Kennedy Space Center and to establish the Florida Institute of Technology (Florida Tech). Keuper served as the university's first president from 1958 until retirement in 1986. In 1997, Keuper published a dictionary of colloquial and idiomatic Mandarin Chinese, the culmination of 50 years of study.

Jerry Keuper joined The Palm Society in 1967 and served as its vice-president from 1968 to 1970 and president from 1970 to 1972. A good friend of Dent Smith, Keuper set out to make the Florida Tech campus luxuriant with palms, many of which still survive. To honor the society's founder, Keuper created the jungle-like "Dent Smith Trail" in a hardwood hammock on the campus. Described as a major palm collection by Nixon Smiley in an illustrated article in *Principes* (19: 39–64. 1975), the collection comprised more than 2000 palms – over 100 species – planted throughout the campus in the span of seven years. In its heyday, it was the largest collection of palms in Florida outside of the Miami area. The Biennial was held at Florida Tech in 1970 and 1976.

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