IN MEMORIAM

Cluff E. Hopla

1917 – 2008

The Society for Vector Ecology and the field of medical entomology lost an important part of their foundations and an icon in the research on zoonotic diseases with the passing of Dr. Cluff Hopla on 30 October 2008. Cluff was a past president of SOVE (1987), a member of the Board of Directors, and recipient of our society’s Distinguished Achievement Award (1994) and Distinguished Service Award (2004). Cluff joins Moyra, his wife of 56 years, and is survived by his daughter (Dr. Anna Hopla), his two sons (Dr. Daniel Hopla and Dr. Rick Hopla), and two grandsons (Michael Hopla and Alistair Wilton).

Cluff was born in Mapleton, Utah, a small community nestled within the Wasatch Mountains, where he developed a love of nature and the outdoors that persisted throughout his life. At the age of ten, after reading how Sir Ronald Ross discovered the transmission cycle of malaria, Cluff set out to become a malariologist—a dream that came true during WWII when he served as a Navy malariologist in the Pacific from 1942–1946. Following the surrender of Japan, he returned to BYU where he received an MSc in 1947. With new pharmaceuticals and the recent discovery of DDT heralded as tools that would rapidly eradicate malaria, Cluff entered the University of Kansas where he reluctantly switched his focus to zoonoses. His research on the tick transmission of tularemia was the basis of his Ph.D. dissertation in 1950. Over the next decade Cluff published a definitive series of publications on the transmission of tularemia bacteria by ticks and other arthropods. In 1951 he joined the Department of Zoology at the University of Oklahoma where he remained for his entire career. From 1952 through 1972 he conducted detailed studies on the ecology of tularemia and other zoonoses in Alaska that resulted in his being awarded the prestigious George Lynn Cross Research Professor of Zoology by the University of Oklahoma in 1971. In addition, from 1962 – 1970, Cluff served as Chair of the Department of Zoology and was chair of the faculty senate in 1970–1971. During the 1970s he also served as president of the International Council for Laboratory Animal Science, chair of the Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources, a member of the National Research Council, and on various review panels for NIH. After a decade of such service to the University and numerous professional organizations, Cluff again turned his focus to nature and began a long-term research project on the intriguing co-evolutionary interactions occurring between cliff swallows and their parasites and pathogens at his Caddo Canyon study site in western Oklahoma—research that continued through 2005 when he moved to Tennessee to be closer to his children and grandchildren. From 1988–1992 he served as co-editor of the Journal of Medical Entomology where he helped to expand circulation and content and secure its future as one of the major journals of our profession. In 1980 Cluff was elected to the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and in 2002 he was listed among the 100 Distinguished Oklahomans.

Among his international honors were those received from the Russian Academy of Science (1975), Polish Academy of Sciences (1975, 1979), Science Council of Japan (1976), Royal College of Surgeons, London (1979), and the Medical Research Council of Sweden (1977).

Perhaps due to his frontier upbringing and part Chiricahua Apache heritage, Cluff was a strong believer that patience, observation, hard work, and a little ‘suffering’ were necessary to forge a true appreciation for science, a philosophy passed on to the 29 of us lucky enough to have had him as a major professor. In the field, he was ‘one with nature,’ having a broad understanding of botany, zoology, microbiology, and their ecological intertwinings, knowledge that can only be gained through endless hours working in the field and at the laboratory bench. Perhaps his long career as a student of nature and teacher can best be summed up by a quotation from his interview for the entry honoring him in the book Distinguished Oklahomans that humility and success comes from “…being teachable and willing to share with others the knowledge that you’ve learned.” After 91 years, the circle has closed.

William K. Reisen
University of California Davis, Davis, CA

Kenneth L. Gage
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Fort Collins, CO