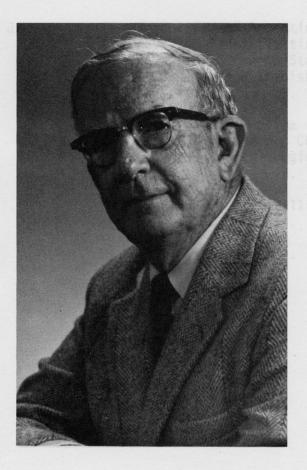
# THE MAN WE HONOR



# DR. WILLIAM R. HORSFALL

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### Autobiography of William R. Horsfall

One is a product of his genetic and cultural background, so I begin with these essentials. Three of my grandparents came to USA as children or adults from England. Their distant heritage was Viking-Saxon and Saxon. The other grandparent was Norman-French of the distant past. Genetically, then, I have adequate mixture to qualify as an American. Culturally, I have clerical, academic, medical and agricultural influences.

I came into this "vale of tears" in 1908, at Mountain Grove, Missouri, where my father was employed as horticulturist at a branch experiment station. While the site of birth was not a log cabin, I, as well as my siblings, was born at home as was the custom at the time. A year or so after birth my father left experiment-station life for the academic one in western Oklahoma at Stillwater. Another change took the family to a high-school environment when the state of Arkansas opened four area schools, one of which was located near Monticello. The school and I grew up at the same time; the former became first a junior college then a 4-year college between the time of my first memory and my departure to the state university.

The high school era was unusual for the time. Courses in botany, zoology, entomology, physics and chemistry were required along with the standard fare which included four years of language and courses in shop and field practice.

The course in entomology in the 10th grade turned my interest toward insects. What a wonderful world was opened. That interest caused me to be selected for a mosquito-control project involving abating a *Culex* problem of unbelievable intensity. Some miscible creosote concoction (called Panama larvicide) was put in water to kill the larval stage. My small size and tendency to be disinclined to unnecessary labor caused me to study the mosquito involved and logistics of placement of caches of the toxicant. I reduced the time of walking to and from barrels of the larvicide to a minimum; further, I found the sources of the target mosquito were limited to linear (ditches) and small (puddle-size) larval sites. The latter made possible the use of a small pail to carry the toxicant and a three-inch paint brush as the dispenser. I could go for a half day between refills. Besides I used only one barrel of toxicant during the summer instead of 15 barrels used formerly. This summer's work taught me that one could study the insect and use the information pragmatically.

At the University of Arkansas I had the good fortune to become the assistant to Dwight Isely who took a personal interest in my progress and became, in effect, a personal tutor in taxonomy, morphology and ecology. We spent most summer afternoons in the field where I learned how to recognize insects by sight, sound and activities. Along with this instruction, an insect artist, David G. Hall, taught me skills in techniques of illustration both photographic and manual. Two papers involving laboratory and field observations were completed while still an undergraduate. By the time for entry into graduate school, I was well grounded in the basics.

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At Kansas State University, I had the good fortune to work with J. W. McColloch, a field man *par excellence*. He directed my efforts in studies of soil-inhabiting insects. Taxonomy occupied much of my time because little was known about recognition of larval scarabaeids and elaterids.

In 1929, I went to Cornell arriving while most of the old-timers were still there; Dr. and Mrs. Comstock, while retired, were present. G. W. Herrick, a premier teacher and my major professor was a pleasure to work with. Robert Matheson put me through the medical-entomological paces. My work at Cornell caused me to depart from insects to study the mode of action of chemicals in line with the lively fad of the time. However, being Herrick's teaching assistant kept me in full swing of insect identification. In 1930, I was married to Annie Laurie Ellis to form a life-long attachment of untold benefit.

I left Cornell with a Ph.D. in 1933, at the depths of the great economic depression. I did get a job as a teacher in the small college of my association as a child and youth. There I began research on mosquitoes as a kind of return to my earlier employment. This time, though, a formal study of the species present in a countywide area was undertaken. Floodwater mosquitoes were dominant and provided a means to obtaining a National Research Council grant (1935) for this study. Taxonomy occupied much of my time as little was known of the species in the area.

My interest in mosquitoes grew as I joined the faculty of the Universtiy of Arkansas where much time was devoted to rice-field mosquitoes. About this time WW II called for my services as entomologist involved in malaria control in a theater of war in the Pacific. Again taxonomy took center stage because virtually nothing was known of the *Anopheles* species of the area. For a time I even used code designations as M1, 2 ... in lieu of proper names. At this time W. V. King and Harry Hoogstraal entered my world and helped in my converting numbers to species names.

After the war I joined the faculty of the University of Illinois where I was allotted much time to begin extensive and intensive studies of floodwater mosquitoes. Most work centered around prairie, floodplain and melt-water species both domestic and foreign. Several years were devoted to study of the morphology of the eggs which resulted in describing and associating the eggs with larval and imaginal names. In this connection I had the good fortune to work with a contemporary, H. H. Ross, and a number of very bright graduate students.

Additionally, I worked on the effect of thermal stress on inducing imaginal anomalies in holarctic aedine mosquitoes. Much field and detailed laboratory work was involved. Again I was helped by a series of bright assistants. The work led to several domestic and foreign awards and citations. Somewhere along the line time was found to write three books and a number of research papers. Currently I am retired but maintain an active life as consultant, manuscript critic and scrounger for information gathering dust in libraries. Entomology and particularly the taxonomic aspects have added much to my personal enjoyment.

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