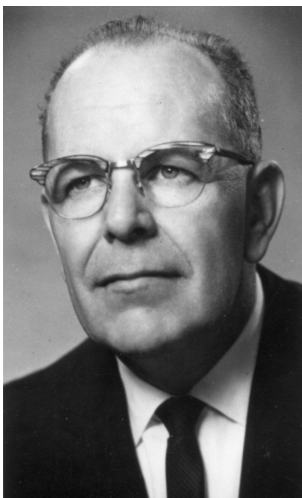


OBITUARY

George F. Edmunds, Jr. (1920–2006)



The Seventh International Conference on Ephemeroptera held August 1992 at the University of Maine, Orono, was dedicated to the greatest of living North American researchers on Ephemeroptera, Dr. George F. Edmunds, Jr. On this occasion, W. P. McCafferty prepared a dedicatory address 'George Edmunds, Ephemeropterist Par Excellence' which is included in the Proceedings of that Conference edited by Lynda Corkum and Jan J. H. Ciborowski published as *Current Directions in Research on Ephemeroptera* (1995, Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press). Dr. McCafferty's presentation covered the significant professional accomplishments of George Edmunds and provided a list of his Ephemeroptera publications to that date. We can add little to this thorough work by McCafferty; instead, we supply here some biographical notes, some supplementary information, and some personal comments. Papers published subsequent to those listed by McCafferty are given at the end of this note.

George was born April 28, 1920, in Salt Lake City, the eldest son of George F. Edmunds and Fern E. Barratt Edmunds. He grew up in Salt Lake City and received a B.S. degree in 1943 and an M.S. in 1946 from the University of Utah; in 1941 he had joined the U.S. Naval reserve and attended Midshipman School at Northwestern University (Chicago) but was given a medical discharge. He then attended the University of Michigan Biological Station in 1947 and went on to the University of Massachusetts where he earned a Ph.D. in 1952 working with Jay R Traver. He had been an instructor in the University of Utah Biological Department starting in 1945, and returned to the faculty there where he remained until his retirement in 1989. He continued to work on Ephemeroptera after retirement until his death on

March 4, 2006, and spent many hours curating and arranging the deposition of the University of Utah mayfly collections at Florida A&M University and Purdue University.

We know George because of his contributions to the study of taxonomy, evolution and biogeography of mayflies. Like many distinguished scientists, he had a second specialty – coevolution of scale insects and their hosts. Starting before 1973, his studies on the biology of the black pineleaf scale led to research on pest–plant relationships and later the demic adaptation hypothesis which was published in the journal *Science* in 1978 (1999: 941–945) with his then graduate student Don Alstad. This joint collaboration continued until his retirement and resulted in several more publications on scale insects and their ecology. A personal note from Alstad follows: ‘George was a great mentor, and a grand old man. He was as close to me as my own father, and I can hear his voice in my ear as clearly as if he were standing beside me now’.

A few other personal notes. George and his wife Christine spent a month with the Peters family collecting mayflies in New Caledonia in 1972 and another few weeks in Florida watching the emergence of *Dolania*. On these trips he was always reading, collecting or talking. He had a tremendous memory and a natural interest in just about everything, and was the source of a wealth of stories – many entertaining and some even true. He suffered a fall on the New Caledonia trip and suggested that he was too old to travel, but that sentiment could not last. A few years later he was back in the field, returning to Sabah, Korea and Taiwan for more field research.

It was not just travel but an intense interest in people and places that attracted him. He actively sought out other experts and their ideas, and it was through George’s international contacts that we first met Vladimir Landa from Czechoslovakia and Edgar Riek from Australia. As a biogeographer, he recognized that his work encompassed the whole world. However, as an outdoorsman, he couldn’t leave Utah because of his love for hunting. He loved his family even more and treated many ex-students as children, sending fatherly communications to the effect that ‘family comes first’.

George Edmunds promoted international communication and was a founding member of the Permanent Committee of the International Conferences on Ephemeroptera. He gave the invitational lecture at the First Conference devoted to what he saw as two priorities (ecology and habitat conservation) and his remarks about regulated rivers and aquatic productivity anticipated by almost a decade the first Regulated Rivers Symposium. He was an active participant in the first three Ephemeroptera conferences, even earning the coveted Purple Plastic Worm award in Winnipeg (given to frustrated fishermen posing as aquatic entomologists). He had plane tickets for the Fourth but a medical emergency put him in a hospital instead of on a plane. By the time of the Seventh Conference, he was well enough to participate and received the living tribute from Pat McCafferty. At this, the 12th Conference, the passing of this outstanding scientist was marked and memorialized by Michel Sartori. We can expect more great researchers, but there will never be another quite like George Edmunds.

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