

PAUL W. OMAN—AN APPRECIATION

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ABSTRACT.—The contributions to professional entomology made by Paul W. Oman are reviewed. A bibliography of his published contributions to this field from 1930 to 1987 is included.

I first met Paul Oman in December 1950 in Denver, Colorado, at the national meeting of the Entomological Society of America. He was in the uniform of the U.S. Army with the rank of major, having been called up again to serve in the Korean War (or "ruckus" as Paul preferred to call it). I was a graduate student at the University of Kansas, working with H. B. Hungerford. Dr. Hungerford encouraged me to attend the meeting, as did the other faculty members. He took special care to introduce the graduate students to other entomologists at the meeting, including Paul Oman, himself a graduate of the University of Kansas. My recollection of that meeting was that Paul took special interest in each student he met, even though his time was limited and he was quite busy with society affairs. He still takes time to meet and work with students. Now, thirty-eight years later, we share the same department, coffee room, Systematic Entomology Laboratory (OSU), and a good many hours of collaboration and discussion in and out of the field.

Paul Wilson Oman was born in Garnett, Anderson County, Kansas, on 22 February 1908. He grew up on a farm about five miles outside of Garnett. His early education was in a rural school close to his home. He had to commute the five miles when he later entered Garnett High School. While growing up, he made the usual collections of natural history objects, including insects. A high school biology teacher was particularly influential in keeping alive Paul's interest in the natural sciences.

He first attended the University of Kansas at Lawrence to strengthen his background in mathematics and English, since he was considering the possibility of a career in the Navy,

including attending Annapolis. He took a course in entomology to satisfy a biological science requirement and soon transferred to that department. Among the departmental faculty were H. B. Hungerford, chairman, K. C. Doering, P. B. Lawson, R. H. Beamer, and P. A. Readio. It is interesting to note that Hungerford (my own major professor in 1950) worked on aquatic Hemiptera, Readio on the Reduviidae, Kathleen Doering was a morphologist but worked on Homoptera, and both Lawson and Beamer worked not only on Homoptera but also on leafhoppers. Not surprisingly, Paul's interest in this group of insects was kindled at K.U., and he has continued to work on the family during his entire scientific career.

Paul Oman made a fine academic record at the University of Kansas, being elected to Sigma Xi, Phi Sigma, and Phi Beta Kappa in 1930. Prior to that date he had been elected to the Pen and Scroll in 1927—an honorary society in the English Department. Those who have read Paul's papers or corresponded with him know that this award was well deserved and know too that he likes to communicate via the written memo. He graduated from the University of Kansas with an A.B. in entomology in the spring of 1930.

Paul joined the recently organized Taxonomic Unit of the Bureau of Entomology, U.S. Department of Agriculture, in October 1930. This was to be a long association, for he retired from the USDA in 1967 when he joined the faculty of the Department of Entomology at Oregon State University. His responsibilities included the auchenorrhynchous Homoptera and the Psyllidae. Thus, his interests in the Homoptera, fostered by the faculty at the University of Kansas, provided

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Fig. 1. Paul W. Oman.

his entrée into his profession. The need for a specialist in the "hard" Homoptera was prompted by the extensive ecological work being done on the beet leafhopper and associated insects, especially in the Twin Falls, Idaho, region. This fortuitous association with *Circulifer tenellus* (Baker), a vector of "curly-top" of beets in the western United States, also provided a basis of his lifelong interest in applied systematics—the application of systematic techniques toward the solution of problems of concern to society. His ultimate discovery that this insect was native to the Middle East (rather than South America as some thought) (Oman 1936, 1948) led to explorations for biological control agents from the Middle East. Further, this discovery strengthened his conviction that systematics should play an important role in biological control. Some years later, when he assumed charge of the entomological taxonomic unit of the USDA, he was instrumental in adding the biological control unit, resulting in the joint

organization we see today.

During his early years in Washington, D.C., he attended evening classes at George Washington University where he majored in entomology. He had extra courses from the University of Kansas, and these, together with his course work transferred to Lawrence from George Washington, plus a thesis, resulted in an M.A. degree in entomology from the University of Kansas in 1935. Not surprisingly, his thesis was on the leafhoppers and entitled "A Generic Revision of American Bythoscopinae and South American Jassinae," later published in the well-known University of Kansas Science Bulletin (Oman 1938). He continued his academic work at George Washington University as time permitted and received a Ph.D. degree from that institution in 1941. His thesis, somewhat revised, appeared under the title, "The Nearctic Leafhoppers (Homoptera: Cicadellidae), a Generic Classification and Check List" (Oman 1949). As Z. P. Metcalf stated (1950, Ann. Entomol. Soc. Amer. 43: 458), "This is one of the most outstanding recent contributions to the study of one of the most difficult families of the Homoptera," and indeed it was. Paul produced this landmark publication by working quietly, steadily, and efficiently, and accomplishing a great deal—a Paul Oman hallmark. He was working as a taxonomic specialist at this time, and so the courses and thesis work were done largely after hours. He was the scientist responsible for research on the Auchenorrhyncha. The hiatus between the completion of his dissertation and the appearance of the published version was caused by World War II.

Paul Oman entered the U.S. Army as a first lieutenant in the Medical Corps in October 1942 and was assigned to the South Pacific and the Far East commands. He served in that area, being promoted to captain, until he returned and left active service in February 1946. While in the South Pacific, he was responsible for the organization and direction of entomological activities on Guadalcanal (November 1943–February 1945) and Okinawa (April–June 1945). Although other medical entomology problems were involved, the control of malaria vectors was the chief effort in both locales. The details of some of these activities can be found in Oman and Christenson (1947) and Harper, Downs, Oman, and

Levine (1963). At the time of his discharge from the U.S. Army and his return to the Division of Insect Identification, USDA, he could hardly anticipate that the experience gained in medical entomology would be used again—in 1950, when he was recalled into the Army to serve three years in the Korean War.

During the four years following his return from the South Pacific, Paul was deeply involved in the auchenorrhynchous Homoptera. He became project leader in the Hemiptera and ultimately assistant division leader of the Division of Insect Identification. He published a number of papers, including his 253-page generic classification of the Nearctic leafhoppers, as well as an account of some of the medical entomology work done in the South Pacific. His interest in applied systematics is reflected in the papers of this period.

In September 1950 he was reactivated to regular duty in the U.S. Army at the rank of major and assigned to the Far East during the Korean War. His first assignment was as entomologist, Headquarters, 3rd Army. Later he became chief of the Department of Entomology, 406th Medical General Laboratory in Tokyo, and then commanding officer, Far East Medical Research Unit, the position he held until his discharge in August 1953. He published several papers dealing with medical entomology during this time, and, of special note to homopterists, a paper describing three new species of *Errhonus* with a key to the species. I doubt that he ever thought he would devote many of his later years to an intensive study of the genus *Errhonus* (Oman 1987), but we are glad he did.

Once again he was discharged from the U.S. Army and again returned to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, this time as the head of what became the Insect Identification and Parasite Introduction Research Branch, Agricultural Research Service. His systematic work continued, as did his deep involvement in all aspects of entomology, entomological administration, and the Entomological Society of America. Gradually, his writing began to reflect his increased responsibilities and his ever-broadening interests, but always there was a deep interest in the leafhoppers.

Part of his administrative responsibilities involved increased international activities. He was the leader of the United States entomological delegation to the USSR in 1959 un-

der the U.S.-USSR Scientific and Cultural Exchange Program. In October 1960 he moved to New Delhi, India, to become the director, Far East Regional Research Office, Foreign Research and Technical Programs Division, ARS, USDA. There he was responsible for all technical and administrative aspects of agricultural research studies in Asiatic countries where Public Law 480 funds were available for research of mutual interest to the United States and the foreign country.

Paul returned home from India in December 1962 to become assistant to the director, Entomology Research Division, ARS, USDA. A year later he was appointed assistant director of the Entomology Research Division, a position he retained until he retired from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1967. Paul's responsibilities included all extramural research programs, chairman of the Division Committee for the evaluations of research personnel, administration of divisional laboratories, and an active role in the planning and development of programs and policies of the Entomology Research Division. Still he continued to publish, chiefly on topics related to his responsibilities with the Division, but he found time to initiate and participate in the first conference under the new U.S.-Japan Cooperative Science Program. This conference, held in Japan, dealt with arthropod-borne plant viruses (Maramorosch and Oman 1966). He was responsible for another U.S.-Japan Conference held in Washington, D.C., in 1967. This time the subject matter was "Systematics in Relation to the Geographical Distribution of Insects in the Pacific." Paul Oman and Karl V. Krombein were the organizers for the United States. It was obvious that Paul was held in high regard by his Japanese colleagues. I was pleased to have been a participant in that gathering; it was a special occasion. By this time Paul had retired after 37 years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and had joined the faculty of the Department of Entomology at Oregon State University, and yet another chapter had begun in his productive career. He still maintains active connections with the USDA, and, even as this is being written, he is assisting them to resolve a problem dealing with the Homoptera.

Paul W. Oman, now Professor Paul W. Oman, joined the departmental faculty in the

fall of 1967. He assumed many of my responsibilities in systematic entomology when I moved into administration. Characteristically, he launched into his new career with great energy. He developed his own course in systematic entomology, developed a course in advances in pest management, and began to direct graduate student studies. His enormous experience in all aspects of entomology made him a highly valued member of the department, and his advice was sought (and still is) on many topics. As program director at Oregon State University, he participated in the NSF-funded Inter-University Program in Pest Population Ecology that ran from July 1969 until August 1975, a forerunner of the IPM programs at OSU we know today. Most of the leading ecologists of the world were brought to our campus (and other campuses as well) under this program. It was obvious that pest problems were universal problems, and solid science was required to solve them. During this time educational turmoil was everywhere, but these well-organized programs provided some academic stability during unstable times. The Pest Population Ecology program provided a solid core upon which was built a revised curriculum.

It took him less than a year to obtain funding from the National Science Foundation for his work on the systematics of the leafhoppers. This funding extended from 1968 until he retired in 1975. Again, his publications reflected his efforts and interests as he published a series of leafhopper papers. At the same time, he was publishing papers dealing with other aspects of his activities. He also renewed his interest in the genus *Errhonus* and spent many seasons in the field carefully documenting the complex systematic and biogeographical problems associated with that taxon. The result, of course, is the superb monograph on *Errhonus* that appeared in 1987. While many people would be content to stop there, even before the publication was in press he took up the world catalog project with Bill Knight and Merv Nielson. Completeness is not a characteristic of Paul Oman.

Paul was curator of the Entomology Museum from 1967 to 1971. It must have seemed like child's play after having been responsible for the entire systematic operation of the USDA, and yet he took it very seriously and made major strides in establishing sound pro-

tol for the management of the collection. He added many needed books and sought out reprints from major systematists. An active effort was made to acquire, mount, label, and accession thousands of specimens. He made a special effort to develop the Homoptera collection that had languished. During the years since his release as official curator, he has added literally tens of thousands of specimens to the collection, and still continues to add more. These specimens are all mounted, labeled, and, if leafhoppers, identified, and curated. Talk about a curator's dream! We all know that collections become major scientific resources because of the work of many people with a common goal. Paul is the epitome of such a person.

During the ensuing years he served entomology in many ways. He was on the editorial board of the Annual Review of Entomology from 1972 to 1976. He was chairman of the ad hoc Committee on Entomological Collections in the United States. He was a member of the Entomological Society of America Advisory Committee on Systematic Resources in Entomology from 1973 to 1975. He was a member of the National Policy Advisory Committee (NSF) for the National Drosophila Species Resource Center in 1975. He was secretary of a study team that prepared a 138-page report in 1978 entitled "Biological Agents for Pest Control: Status and Prospects" for the USDA in cooperation with land-grant universities, the State Department of Agriculture, and the Agricultural Research Institute.

When his long-time friend and colleague, Knud Swenson, then chairman of our department, was forced to step down because of a tragic illness, Paul took over as acting chairman. He served in that capacity from 1973 to 1974 while the department sought a new department chair. His long experience in science administration was most evident during that time, and we were able to experience yet another facet of his skills. He was a low-key, but a most efficient and effective, administrator. He paid attention to detail and provided leadership and stability that created an atmosphere of professionalism. He rarely complained and favored working out a solution to a problem. Because his dedication to the job at hand was always evident, people responded in a similar fashion. He was especially effective in getting the most out of the resources available to him.

Paul Oman retired in 1975—again. There was only an imperceptible change before and after this date—occasionally he would head for the golf course if the afternoon was especially nice. Although I have never played golf with Paul, I know some who have—be prepared for a fierce competitor and don't wager very much on each hole. During the past 13 years of his "retirement" he has averaged six to eight hours a day in his office, has spent hundreds of hours in the field throughout the West, has given many reading and conference courses to many students, has served on numerous graduate student committees, has hosted foreign scientists and freely shared with them his vast experience with the Cicadellidae, and has identified thousands of leafhoppers for many individuals and institutions.

One of my most recent interactions with Paul occurred on 16 March 1988, when he participated in the program planning session for Adam Asquith, one of my new doctoral students. Paul had given Adam a reading and conference course in zoological nomenclature during the preceding three months. In fact, one of the other graduate committee members brought a particularly knotty problem on nomenclature to the meeting. Ultimately, the problem was resolved by Paul and Adam. Paul brought several current articles from science that were appropriate to the graduate program and the proposed thesis topic. He has always given help freely to the students and faculty, and he did so again on 16 March 1988. His eightieth birthday had been celebrated three weeks earlier, and he had supposedly retired in 1975, but for Paul Oman it was just a regular day.

As one who has known him since 1950, I can attest to his many contributions and deep devotion to entomology. He joined the ESA in 1929, served as president in 1959, was elected an honorary member in 1975, and received the Woodworth Award from the Pacific Branch in 1982. He joined our faculty in 1967, and while he holds the title Emeritus Professor of Entomology, his efforts are indistinguishable from those of regular faculty members. He is one of those rare scientists whose influence has extended far beyond his office and laboratory. I cherish our friendship.

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