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Important, usually tragic events are sometimes so impressed upon our consciousness that we never forget where we were when the events occurred: President Kennedy's assassination or the shuttle Challenger explosion. This impact upon the mind also holds true for personal tragedies. One shall never forget occurred at 7:55 AM, EST, 24 February 1986 when I received word by phone that Harry Hoogstraal had just died in Cairo, Egypt. To state it simply, we have lost one of the outstanding medical entomologists of this or any generation and, without question, the greatest authority on ticks and tickborne diseases who ever lived.

Harry was born 24 February 1917 in Chicago, Illinois. As young children, Harry and his sister Catherine were taken by their mother to Chicago's Field Museum for Saturday morning lectures for children on natural history. Mrs. Hoogstraal convinced the museum administrators to allow her two children to also listen to the Saturday afternoon lectures for adults. Here they were exposed to fascinating adventures by such speakers as Admiral Byrd and the wildlife film makers Martin and Osa Johnson. Harry was also allowed into the research area of the Field Museum, and this exposure to natural history kindled a passion and dedication to scientific research that remained with him for the rest of his life.

In 1934 Harry graduated from Fenger High School and 1938 he received the B. A. degree from the University of Illinois. While working on his M. S. at the same university, he conducted four expeditions (1938-1941) concerned with distribution of animals and their diseases in Mexico. Two other illustrous medical entomologists, Robert Traub and Kenneth Knight, participated in these expeditions.

On 20 June 1940 the brakes failed on a truck Harry was driving along a remote mountain road in central Mexico. The other members of the expedition were thrown clear when it rolled but Harry was caught beneath the truck body and dragged until the vehicle came to a stop. His back was broken in two places, a piece of lumber was driven through his pelvis, one of his ears was almost completely severed, and he received many other injuries. When he finally arrived at a hospital in Mexico City, he was not expected to live, and the physicians were certain that he would never walk again. Two of the physicians present were visitors from the University of Chicago who just happened to have with them one of the recently discovered sulfa drugs. Harry was treated with this drug, making him perhaps the first human ever to receive it.

In early September, Harry was transferred to Billings Memorial Hospital, Chicago, where in November he began to walk with the aid of crutches. By Christmas of 1940 he was using a cane and was able to return to his university studies.

After receiving his M. S. degree in 1942, Harry joined the U.S. Army and worked with the
renowned mosquito taxonomist and malarialogist Willard King on malaria and mosquito surveys in New Guinea and the Philippines.

During his wartime service, Harry developed plans for a Philippine zoological expedition. He convinced Karl P. Schmidt, Chief Curator of the Department of Zoology, Field Museum of Natural History, to join with the Philippine National Museum in conducting a faunal survey of Luzon, Mindanao, and Palawan Islands. Harry, Donald Heyneman, and Floyd Werner, together with their Philippine colleagues, collected under difficult and occasionally hostile conditions and presented hundreds of thousands of specimens — many new to science — to the two museums.

In 1948-49 Harry conducted surveys of host-parasite relationships in East Africa and Madagascar under the auspices of the U.S. Navy and the University of California Africain Expedition. In 1949 he became Head of the Sudan Subunit of Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3 (NAMRU-3) and conducted host-parasite studies in Equatoria Province, Sudan. These studies resulted in his 1956 monograph on the ticks of the Sudan. In 1950 Harry became Head, Medical Zoology Department, NAMRU-3, Cairo, a post he held until his death. With his new position at NAMRU-3, he returned to his studies and received the Ph. D. degree from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in 1959 and the D. Sc. from the same institution in 1971. He also received a Doctorate (honoris causa) in 1978 from Ain Shams University, Cairo, and the D. Sc. (hon.) from the University of Khartoum in 1983.

The professional honors awarded to Dr. Hoogstraal would fill pages but a few of his more prestigious awards and honors include the Henry Baldwin Ward Medal, American Society of Parasitologists, 1967; Capitain Robert Dexter Conrad Award for Scientific Achievement for 1971, Department of the Navy, 1972; Acarology Award for Superior Accomplishment, Ohio State University, 1975; Medal of Honor for Scientific Research, National Research Centre, Arab Republic of Egypt, 1976; Presidential Order of Merit, First Class, Arab Republic of Egypt, 1978; Walter Reed Medal, American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, 1978; Senior Scientist, NAMRU-3, 1984; Founder’s Memorial Award Lecturer, Entomological Society of America, 1984; Richard Moreland Taylor Award for Achievement in Arbovirology, American Committee on Arthropodborne Viruses, 1984; President, American Society of Parasitologists, 1984; Medallion, Kuwait Ministry of Health, 1985; and at the time of his death, President-Elect, American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

Those of us who knew Harry well and shared his interest in ticks knew his total devotion — even passion — for the subject. Some of us bring home a valise of work in the evening. Every night Harry would bring home four bulging briefcases that were unloaded from the trunk of his car and placed in his den. He would then take a brief walk around his large backyard garden in the Cairo suburb of Maadi where I have seen him, cigar firmly planted in the center of his mouth, on hand behind his back, the other holding a hose washing one of his palm trees. The grounds of Harry’s home were richly planted with trees and shrubs but were especially celebrated for their cacti, a group on which Harry was an authority. Immediately after yard work he would return to his tick studies with only a brief break for dinner on the patio. Seated at the desk in his den, Harry would work late into the night with only short periods of sleep. Some of his house guests thought this was just his regular routine. Routine is was, but one forced upon him because of pain that he never discussed. The truck accident in Mexico left Harry in constant pain and unable to sleep for any extended period of time. Partly because of this inability to sleep, Harry acquired the reputation of a workaholic — and he was — but he also had other interests. His knowledge was broad and deep on such subjects as ballet, Middle East politics, cacti and sculpture. His views on sculpture were expert; he was himself a fine practitioner of the art.

Harry was an extremely generous man with all of his possessions; his home was always open to friends and was almost always full of guests, his Maadi parties were legend, he gave freely of his
money, and I suspect that he was the support of many more than just himself.

Time was precious to Harry and to a large degree his highly successful scientific career was based upon the fact that he spent his time as if it were gold. Harry was constantly occupied with research, reading and intellectual inquiry into the systematics, biology, ecology, and geographical distribution of ticks and tickborne diseases. From the mid-1940's onward, he pursued these studies with single-minded dedication, producing over 500 research publications, an 8 volume bibliography of ticks and tickborne diseases and over 1750 translated books and research articles, primarily from the Russian. Harry was not only an expert on the systematics of the Ixodoidea but also an authority on ecology, zoogeography, arbovirology, rickettsiology, parasitology, and epidemiology; in short a man of superb scientific accomplishments. Harry said it over and over, "there's just not enough minutes in the day". Would that we had spent them so well.

Harry Hoogstraal died in his sleep, 24 February 1986, his 69th birthday. He will always be remembered as a complex but very private man, an author of prodigious talent, a brilliant medical entomologist, a gentleman, and the individual who set the standard of scholarship in Medical Acarology to which we all may aspire. It is truly the end of an era.

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