

Vernon Randolph Vickery (1921-2011)

Vernon Vickery, retired orthopterist and apiarist, passed away 30 August 2011 in the Valley Regional Hospital, Kentville, Nova Scotia. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Muriel, his sons William and Edwin, his daughter Susan, and his five granddaughters, Karen, Allison, Margot, Laura and Lexington. Vernon, 'Vic' to most, was born 6 June 1921 in South Ohio, Yarmouth County, Nova Scotia. He would be the first to tell you that working hard as a youth on his family's farm provided him with a solid foundation for later life. In his youth, he met a local lady naturalist who taught him about insects, how to collect them and how to pin and label them. She also showed him how to care for his collection.



After World War II started, he volunteered for the RCAF. In April 1941 he became an AC2 trained in the new ultra-secret radio direction finding equipment that became known as RADAR. He took further training in radio and electrical theory and the Mark IV AI airborne radar equipment. He graduated second in his class and was offered a commission of lieutenant and a position in Texas to teach the United States Forces about British RADAR. He turned it down in order to go to the front lines in Europe with his buddies as his father had done before him. He was transferred to England at the end of 1941. There he became an experienced radar technician, serving with the RAF in the United Kingdom, North Africa and Italy. He flew mainly with night bomber missions. When his service was finished in Europe, he returned to Nova Scotia and volunteered to serve in the Pacific theatre but the war ended there and he was discharged from the RCAF in August 1945. He was quite proud of his 4 year, 4 month and 4 days of service to his country.

After his service, he enrolled in the Diploma of Agriculture course in the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), Truro, Nova Scotia in 1945. He graduated in 1947 and started his career in entomology working for Malcolm Neary, collecting insects for NSAC and also for a forest insect survey. In the fall of 1947, he began his studies for 2 years at Macdonald College of McGill University, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec, and received his BSc in Agriculture in 1949 and the Lochhead Memorial prize for the highest marks and average in entomology. During the summers of 1948 and 1949, he continued his work with Malcolm Neary and spent most of his time in Annapolis Valley orchards. In 1949 he was hired by NSAC to teach entomology and to work on insect pest problems in crops and orchards. It was at this time that he became involved in bee counts and pollination in apple orchards. There was some major concern at the time that heavy pesticide use had decimated the natural pollinators. He also met Endel Karmo, an apiculture specialist, who became his mentor and friend. In the fall of 1950 he started his MSc degree at Macdonald College. In 1952 he became a beekeeper of his own for the first time and with the help of Endel, became quite proficient at it. During the next several years, he continued studies on using honey bees for pollination, his study of honey bee behaviour and becoming more proficient at orchard insect work. It was at this time that he, Endel, and others introduced the practice of transporting bees to orchards during bloom. With the publication of "Bees to the Rescue" in the American Bee Journal, Vernon and Endel brought together their findings on bee behaviour, pollen transfer and fruit production. Soon after, the practice of moving honey bees to berry fields, such as blueberries, for pollination began in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Maine and Quebec and was quickly adopted worldwide for fruit and nut production.

In 1957 he completed his MSc degree, his thesis being on the Orthoptera of Nova Scotia. After field work in Nova Scotia in 1960, he was advised to pursue his PhD degree so he returned with his family to Macdonald College. In 1961 he was offered the position of Assistant Professor. He was instrumental in bringing together several insect collections and, through the endowment of H.H. Lyman, formed the Lyman Entomological Museum and Research Laboratory. On his birthday in

1964, he was awarded his PhD, his thesis being on the orthopteran genus *Chorthippus*. By the time of his retirement in 1981, the Lyman Museum held nearly two million insects, mostly identified. On receiving emeritus status, he continued to work for the next 13 years on his studies of Orthoptera. During his career as an entomologist, he published 7 books and more than 400 scientific papers and articles mostly on Orthoptera systematics, zoogeography, and genetics, but also some on honey bees, his other love in the insect world.

In 1991, with help of his son Edwin, he published *The Honey Bee - A Guide for Beekeepers* in which he shared his 40 years of knowledge on bee behaviour and pollination. From work with Endel Karmo in Nova Scotia to the observation hive in the window of his office in the Lyman Museum and the bee yard he kept at Macdonald College, he cultured a major interest on the industrious honey bees and their major significance to agriculture in Canada, the USA, and around the world. His undergraduate and extension courses in beekeeping were immensely popular with students young and old.

Vernon's family was very important to him and he took them with him on many a collecting trip by car throughout Canada and the USA where they would stop many times a day to collect Orthoptera and other insects of interest. His expertise in grasshoppers also took him to five continents. In 1976 he was invited to attend a meeting of specialists in Orthoptera in Argentina. From this meeting, the Pan-American Acridological Society, an organization for grasshopper and locust research was formed. In 1985, at the beginning of his 4-year term as President, the organization was expanded worldwide and became known as the Orthopterists' Society. During his career, he earned two Fellowships, those of the Entomological Society of Canada and the Royal Entomological Society and several honorary memberships and teaching awards.

In 1999, Vernon and Muriel moved back to Kentville. He spent his free time growing flowers in the gardens he kept on his property. He loved to write. Although it took him many years, he completed the genealogy of his family that had been started by his brother, George, who passed away in 1984. He also wrote several travelogues, complete with pictures, of his visits to places in foreign countries such as Peru and Spain. He was a philatelist and had collected a significant number of the known insect stamps from around the world. In his later life, he once again showed an acute interest in the two World Wars and the contribution he and his family had in them. This led him eventually to join the local branch of the Legion.

Vernon's undergraduate and graduate students were well served by his knowledge, his wit and the unlimited support he gave to them. He will be missed not only for his academic accomplishments but as a husband, father, grandfather, educator, historian and gentle, generous man.

– Peter Arntfield
Winnipeg