

The entomological community suffered a great loss when Dick Vockeroth passed away on the morning of 16 November 2012. Almost everyone who studies flies knew Dick, and most of us have some hilarious Vockeroth stories that will undoubtedly continue on for several generations. His breadth of knowledge was unsurpassed and many of us owe him considerably as a mentor. He always amazed us by seeming to know something about virtually every fly species put in front of him. Of course, putting a fly in front of Dick was just the excuse to open the floodgates. For those who could concentrate for long enough, his stories



Richard (Dick) Vockeroth

2 May 1928 - 16 November 2012

always had a point. They could continue for a long time, but they always wound back to where they started, completing another lesson for those willing to listen. If only we had a way to save all of his immense knowledge. Fortunately, he was always willing to share. He published 120 papers on 27 families of flies over his career. His unpublished manuscripts and keys also fill many boxes in our collection. Copies of many of these are spread around the world with Dick's colleagues and will ultimately be incorporated and published as part of new studies. In addition to giving freely of his scientific knowledge, Dick was a true philanthropist. He seemed to donate virtually every penny that he had to anyone who stopped at his door or called. He was incredibly frugal with his own purchases and we all benefitted from/endured his purchases of cheap (or free) produce and bread that often had seen better days. His immune system seemed to enjoy these nutritional challenges although ours were perhaps not always up to it. We recall a few years ago when Dick had the first cold that he could remember having since he was a child, as well as the first headache in his life a year or two later. Diabetes was his primary health challenge and it was a significant one in his later life. It was likely a contributing factor to the Alzheimer's that eroded his mind over the last 3 years.

The following is excerpted from: Cumming, J.M., Sinclair, B.J., Brooks, S.E., O'Hara, J.E. and Skevington, J.H. 2012. The history of dipterology at the Canadian National Collection of Insects, with special reference to the Manual of Nearctic Diptera. *The Canadian Entomologist* **143**: 539-577. This paper is the introduction to a three volume Festschrift in *The Canadian Entomologist* honouring Dick and the other coordinators of the Manual of Nearctic Diptera. Picking through these papers, you will find some classic stories about Dick and expand your impression of the impact that he played in the Diptera community over the last 60 plus years.

Dick was born on 2 May 1928 in Broderick, Saskatchewan. He received his BA and MA from the University of Saskatchewan in 1948 and 1949, respectively, and his DPhil on the genera of Scathophagidae from Oxford University in 1954. He officially joined the Canadian National Collection of Insects (CNC) Diptera Unit in 1949. Dick retired in 1991, but contributed broadly to Diptera activities at the CNC as an Honorary Research Associate until 2009. He became a world expert on several families, particularly Mycetophilidae s.l., Dolichopodidae, Syrphidae, Scathophagidae, and Muscidae. He was an avid collector and contributed over 220,000 pinned Diptera to the CNC. Dick authored or co-authored 120 scientific publications, including 12 chapters in the Manual of Nearctic Diptera. He published 173 new Diptera taxa (1 family-group name, 42 genus-group names, and 130 species-group names). Dick was awarded the C.P. Alexander Award in 1997 by the North American Dipterists' Society. This lifetime award, which can only

be held by a single dipterist at a time, publicly acknowledges the most important and influential member of the North American Dipterists' Society. The Award reads: "*John Richard Vockeroth is recognized as our most knowledgeable dipterist, and for his critical and unique contributions in expanding our knowledge of flies, especially flower flies, educating and encouraging a cadre of world leaders for Systematic Dipterology*".

Evidence of the respect of Dick's scientific achievements can be seen in the 91 patronyms that have been attributed to him by the entomological community (http://www.canacoll.org/Diptera/Staff/Vockeroth/Vockeroth_Patronyms.pdf). This list will no doubt continue to grow as his collections live on and support new research on the flies that Dick was so passionate about. We have all missed his antics and contributions in the lab since he left in 2009. Let's hope that we can all leave even a fraction of the lasting legacy and legends that Dick has left behind.

If you wish to make a donation in Dick's name, he would no doubt be honoured if it went to the Canacoll Foundation (www.canacoll.org), which supports improvements to the CNC by visiting specialists. Cheques made out to the Canacoll Foundation can be sent to the Treasurer, Andrew Bennett, at the K.W. Neatby Building, 960 Carling Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0C6, Canada. Tax receipts will be issued.

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