

OBTUARY

Vernon Everett Thatcher (1929-2011)



Dr Vernon E. Thatcher and his wife, Dr Betsy Thatcher during his 80th birthday.

The South American fish parasitology community was struck by the news of the passing of Dr. Vernon Everett Thatcher on the morning of October 13th, 2011. With his distinct personality, Vernon captivated everyone that came close to his personal or professional life as his incredible sense of humor would rapidly break the ice of the first impression.

Native of Medford, Oregon (USA), he had a typical north-western childhood, with activities closely associated to the nature of the region. Early in his youth, Vernon became a butterfly collector and a competent taxidermist. At 14, he became interested in South America through readings and enrolled in a Spanish course in school, which he continued at the University. This would later define his professional choices.

Vernon graduated in 1952 at the Oregon State University (OSU) and found time, between 1952 and 1954, to get his master's degree under Dr. Ivan Pratt on the helminths of the Pacific Terapin. I meant "found time" because he was drafted by the Army

at the same time, as a member of the medical core. After several years working in the Army in Europe, he returned to the States and worked at the Texas A & M Research Foundation in Grand Isle as an oyster biologist. Vernon then enrolled in the PhD program at Louisiana State University, in Baton Rouge.

In 1961, he completed his PhD program under Dr. Harry J. Bennett with studies on the trematodes of reptiles from Tabasco, Mexico when he stepped into the tropics for the first time! After completion of his studies, despite being offered positions in the States, Vernon decided to step back into the tropical Americas and became an employee of the Gorgas Memorial Institute in Panama City, where he studied the cycle of leishmaniasis and echinococcosis.

In 1967, with Dr. Paul Beaver, Vernon moved to Colombia, where he worked at the Universidad del Valle, in Cali. There, he married Leah, who passed away over 20 years ago. He taught in Colombia until 1975, when they moved to Rio de Janeiro,

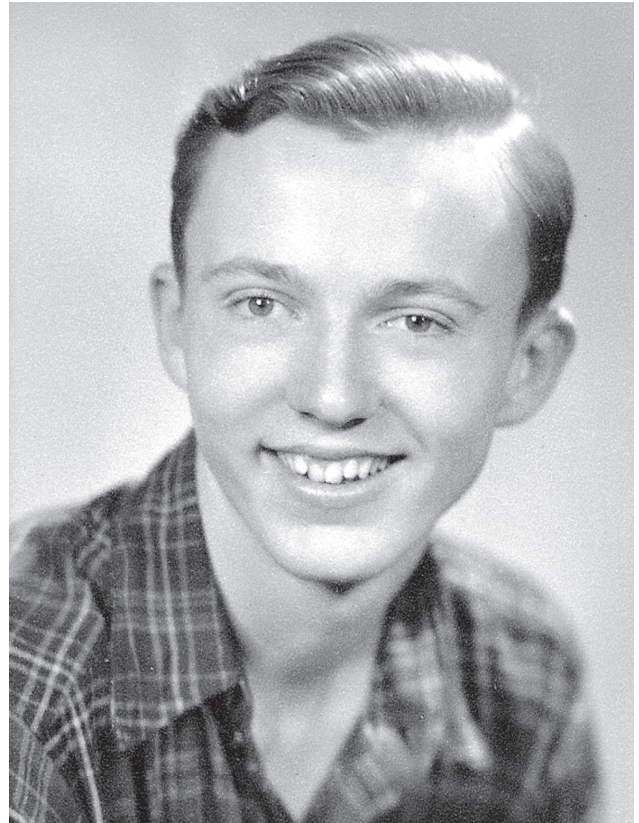
Brazil where he taught at the Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro for two years. Vernon had been a field person in the tropics all these years, an adventurer, indeed, hunting and fishing for parasites under difficult conditions that only people that worked in the tropics know and most would consider unbearable. After two years in Rio, Vernon was hired by the Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazonia (INPA) as the PI of the Laboratory of Fish Parasitology in Manaus.

The time at INPA was his most prolific years. Vernon's contributions to the parasitology of wild animals, especially fishes, in the tropics added more than 150 papers in the area of taxonomy of parasitic Protozoans, Platyhelminthes, Nematoda, Acanthocephala, and Crustacea. He authored several books, including "Amazon Fish Parasites" (two editions), "Isopods of South American Fishes", and "Trematódeos Neotropicais". Vernon was also responsible for the first extensive efforts in the understanding of the fauna of Monogeneoidea/Monogenea, Ergasilidae (Copepoda) and in the Neotropical Region in collaboration with many other scientists including, Dr. Delane Charles Kritsky, Dr. Brent Nickol, Dr. Michel Jegú, Dr. F. Moravec, among many others. In Manaus, Vernon re-encountered and married Dr. Betsy Dutary, a world known virologist that he knew as a colleague and sweetheart during his time at Gorgas Memorial Institute in Panamá City.

Since he considered that a parasitologist should be capable of working with many groups, Vernon was always looking for something new to work on. He completed his contributions to fish parasitology studying Isopoda of marine and freshwater fishes from Brazil. After retirement from INPA in 1999, Dr. Thatcher moved to Curitiba, Brazil, where he acted as a visiting professor until his last days.

Dr Vernon Thatcher leaves no kids but many scientific sons and daughters and a great number of friends that learned to love him and his always well-placed jokes. He will be missed as a friend and as an exciting scientist who contributed greatly to the understanding of tropical zoology.

More about his unique life experience is available in the



Young Vernon Thatcher became fascinated by South America and this defined his professional future.

book by Jeanette Thatcher Marshall, his sister, entitled "Jaguars, Fish and Microscopes: An Oregon Zoologist's conquest of Tropical America" Thatcher Publications Inc., 263 pp. Contact Marie Marshall Garsjo, Texasgarsjo@sbcglobal.net for additional information.

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