

## Thomas K. Wood

THOMAS KENNETH WOOD Ph.D., Professor of Entomology, University of Delaware, died of pneumonia on 7 September 2002 at his home in Newark, Delaware. Tom bravely fought cancer for a year and a half. It is testimony of his strength and courage that he lived with the disease three times longer than predicted by his physicians; and even throughout arduous treatment, he never missed a day at work (even on weekends) until two weeks before his death.

Tom was born in Cleveland, Ohio, on 12 June 1942. He received his B. A. degree from Wilmington College (Wilmington, Ohio) in 1964, with a major in biology and a minor in chemistry. He received his Ph.D. in entomology from Cornell University in 1968. That same year, he joined the faculty of Wilmington College and served as chair of the Department of Biology from 1970 to 1979. In 1979 he joined the faculty of the University of Delaware, in the Department of Entomology and Applied Ecology, with a joint appointment in the Department of Biology. Tom was a member of Sigma Xi, the Entomological Society of America, the Ecological Society of America, the Evolution Society, and the Linnaean Society of London, and an active participant in the Auchenorrhyncha community.

Tom looked back on graduate school at Cornell as one of the most important experiences of his life, though he claimed that he couldn't wait to get out, at the time. He credited much of his early intellectual development to his special committee (Robert L. Patton, LaMont C. Cole, and John G. Francelmont), other advisers (Bill Brown), and fellow graduate students (especially Glenn Morris and Warren Cothran). Tom was always particularly grateful to Bob Patton for accepting him as a student in the face of considerable political turmoil when he quit his first adviser, an unheard-of act of defiance at that time. Tom had many amusing stories from graduate school: accidentally breaking a huge cask of red wine in the hallway of the plant science building one night (while sneaking it out of the viniculture lab



Thomas Kenneth Wood (1942-2002)

for a party), raiding hospitality suites at ESA meetings, and many others.

It was during graduate school that Tom began his life-long fascination with and deep love of the Membracidae. He described sitting on his steps one day, pinning an incidentally caught treehopper for his general collection, when a neighbor's child saw the specimen and led him to a large aggregation on a tree next door. Tom was captivated and spent the rest of his life working with the insect family with unwavering dedication. Tom was devoted to understanding the Membracidae in all of its aspects, and his research spanned an amazing range of biological disciplines. He published work on their anatomy and physiology (including pronotal structure and histology), behavioral and social biology (including parental care and defense, ant mutualisms, mating behavior, and the evolution of sociality), biogeography (including latitudinal and altitudinal effects on species richness), life history patterns and evolution, genetics, and morphological and molecular systematics (including his last work-in-progress, a molecular phylogeny of the worldwide membracid fauna, using four genes and, at present, more than 250 taxa). Tom was not only a great biologist, but also a great naturalist in the most

classic sense. He loved membracids for their own sake, rather than as territory in an intellectual war game: put simply, he wanted to know everything that there was to know about them.

Tom is perhaps best known for his work on sympatric speciation in *Enchenopa* treehoppers. He suspected that *Enchenopa* "binotata" on different host plants were separate species when he studied variation in their egg froth chemistry as a graduate student; many later studies bore this out. His ideas on speciation in this complex started to crystallize during his time at Wilmington College. He noticed that populations on different plants in a local arboretum had different life-history timing, which correlated with the flowering phenologies of their hosts. Over the years, Tom amassed an overwhelming body of evidence supporting his hypothesis that speciation in the *Enchenopa* "binotata" complex has proceeded through shifts to new hosts whose phenologies promote mating barriers to populations in time, rather than space. When Tom began these experiments, sympatric speciation was generally considered a nonpossibility; now, it is recognized as a valid evolutionary process, and Tom's work is cited in textbooks as one of the first, the best, and the most rigorously documented examples.

Those who knew him will always remember Tom for his unparalleled dedication to his work, and the great energy and stubbornness, pioneering spirit and imagination with which he pursued it. No experiment was too demanding: If four replicates might suffice, Tom did eight. If dawn-to-dusk hourly observations for three months would bolster his case, Tom brought the coffee. If students tried to keep up with him in the field, they were seldom able to. No technique was too novel: If the pronotum was an underutilized source of morphological characters, Tom pioneered morphometric techniques to analyze its shape. When his data sets were too large, he purchased the first personal computer in the College of Agriculture. If a speciation mechanism couldn't be proven after the fact, Tom experimentally initiated host shifts in giant field cages he built himself.

And if he was told something couldn't be done, Tom did it anyway.

Tom will also be remembered for his mentorship, his integrity, and his generosity of spirit. He taught his students that there is no such thing as too much effort, and no excuse for sloppy work. He taught us that you aim for the best data possible, not the least data required; and after you proofread your data, you proof it again. In spite of his constant activity, Tom always had time to advise and support, or just plain talk with his own students or anybody who sought him out. At meetings, students never paid for food or drink in Tom's presence, even if there were a half dozen of them, and not his own. And though he was monumentally

tough on himself, Tom was also fundamentally kind, with deep sympathy for the underdog and compassion for the disadvantaged.

Tom Wood's death came as a shock, even to those who watched his illness progress because he had a quality of being larger than life, a force of nature, somehow unfettered by the same physical laws and limitations that bind the rest of us. He took up more space in a room than most people, though not in a physical way. No one worked harder, ate or drank harder, or had a greater passion for life or for his calling.

As one colleague put it, "I knew this day was coming...but somehow I thought he'd keep going until every treehopper in the

world had found its place on the phylogenetic tree, and every skeptic of sympatric speciation had been converted."

It sounds almost trite to say that someone will live on in our memories, but such was the power, the force, the integrity of this indomitable person, that he will always be a living presence in the lives of those who learned from him and those who loved him.

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