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1993 PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS  
76th Annual Meeting  
Florida Entomological Society  
ENTOMOLOGY: THE NEXT GENERATION

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Looking back over the presidential addresses to the Florida Entomological Society and to the Entomological Society of America for the past several years, I found that several topics consistently emerged. Two of these are the public's lack of recognition of entomologists and concern about the source of our future entomologists.

You may be familiar with some of the information that I will discuss today if you heard these from addresses and talks from past-presidents and speakers of the Florida Entomological Society and the Entomological Society of America. I do not take credit for their ideas, but just want to reemphasize the importance of these issues for us today. They are by no means all-inclusive and may not even be the most important to some people, but I feel that they are just as relevant today, maybe more so, as we celebrate our 76th year of the Florida Entomological Society.

Several old western movies have as their theme a hero who rides into town, usually wearing a white hat, and then rids the town of the bad guys who have been terrorizing the townspeople. One such movie ended with all of the bad guys being done away with and immediately before the last one was sent to his grave, he asked of the good guy, "Who Are You?" The hero never told anyone his name nor where he was from, but just went about the business at hand and then left town. This scenario all too often describes the entomologists role in society.

As professionals, entomologists have made great contributions. Many of these should be told to the public at every opportunity. Where would mosquito control be today without entomologists? And how far would the development of a state like Florida be without mosquito control? What about the development of the citrus industry? A few insects could devastate it very quickly. The identification of insects, knowledge of their basic biology and life history, and the development of control methods have all been made possible because of entomologists. For example, control of insects transmitting arthropod-borne diseases, grasshoppers, boll-weevils, termites, whiteflies, loopers, and cockroaches has taken place because members of our profession have worked long and hard and made great contributions that have enabled others to control these pests. We could add to this list numerous other insects injurious to our health and crops. But I wonder how many people outside of entomologists know about these contributions. I venture to say, very few.

Although entomology is still not a household word, nor is it as well known as some other professions such as medicine, engineering, and law, entomology has progressed from the days when our colleagues were considered eccentrics with funny hats and butterfly nets. The Nature program series on public television which discusses insect life has helped a great deal. The public's concern over reports of lyme disease, mosquito borne-encephalitis, Africanized bees, Formosan termites, and Asian cockroaches, to name a few, has increased their consciousness of entomology. Members of our profession are now sought out for answers on many insect problems. This increase in the public awareness, even if it is related to pest insects, can be helpful for our profession providing

we are willing to devote part of our time to discussions of insects in public forums and with the media. One thing that we should not do is allow others, non-entomologists, to take the lead in providing answers, giving talks, and discussing insects. We should jump at the chance to tell people about insects, and what we do as entomologists. We should be willing to give our time to teach the public, especially school children, about our profession and our interest in insects. No other group in the world knows more about insects than entomologists. All we need to do is speak up and not let others do it for us.

Recently, I read an article in which the term "insect science" was used instead of entomology. Also, I have on occasion overheard discussions by individuals who, although they were actively involved in entomology and had graduated from departments of entomology, did not like to be called entomologists. They want to be known as behavioralists or ecologists, sometimes combining these two names into behavioral-ecologists, or some other "ologist." I guess they believe these names are more impressive, eye-catching, intellectual sounding, or make for better public relations. That's fine, and I am definitely not trying to demean the fields of ecology or behavior, however, if we as professionals continue to think that entomology is not a word we want to use to describe our profession, before long, the name entomologist will have less and less meaning and an even lesser future. I am aware of the "in vogue" term "interdisciplinary research" and have no problem with team research. This approach to research is not new. I also realize that in order to solve many of today's complex scientific problems, scientists from different fields must cooperate in joint efforts. My concern is that an entomologist should be one of the main components of the team—not just a spectator. As Alan Cameron remarked in the 1989 Summer issue of the *American Entomologist*, he wants entomologists to work cooperatively and effectively with scientists from other disciplines by bringing a broad and deep knowledge of insects to the joint effort. As he states, "we have vital roles to play; we are needed by our collaborators as much as we need them."

What is an entomologist? Tom Turpin, Past-President of the Entomological Society of America and one of the most enthusiastic entomologists today, believes that an entomologist should be able to name common insects, understand what makes insects different from other living things, understand the behavior of insects, and the basic principles of insect control. He believes that if we stray too far from our roots of a broad-based training in entomology, we will lose our justification for being. We will just become another in the mass of physiologists, biotechnologists or biochemists. I could not agree more with his remarks.

I think that all entomologists, especially our young graduate students and professionals, should read the commentary "Entomology: Tradition with Vision" by Richard J. Sauer which was published in the 1991 Spring issue of the *American Entomologist*. Dr. Sauer's remarks hit home when he mentions that we are already the Rodney (don't-get-no-respect) Dangerfields of the world in regards to salaries and other rewards. He goes on to say that while moving ahead, we must treasure our traditions but, and I quote, "if we refuse to change and remain bound by the tradition of the past, we are doomed to increasing irrelevance and obsolescence." Have no doubt, we must be willing to make changes and to keep up with the changes in science or we will surely be left behind.

Florida Entomological Society Past-President Abe White said in his 1983 address that entomology suffers from a lack of recognition by the general public and he, like many others, including myself, believes that this lack of public status affects the salaries paid to entomologists, especially in universities and private industry. He went on to explain that as entomologists, we may not see the extent of our anonymity; after all, we all know plenty of entomologists.

Several other past-presidents of the Florida Entomological Society have been concerned that members of our profession do not communicate with the public. Jim Price

addressed the issue of communicating with the public and the public's lack of knowledge of what an entomologist does. Dale Habeck said we need to start telling others about insects and about entomologists. And Lewis Wright challenged us to organize public relations efforts and to make every effort to promote our image and elevate our position as a professional in society.

The public's perception of science is not what we would like it to be, or what it could be. Several recent polls have shown that the public's distrust of science has increased. No one can really point to one reason, but the rush to give preliminary data to the media in hopes of drawing attention to a particular project can be detrimental. We have all witnessed incidents where the first "press release" indicated a major discovery but later turned out to be nothing more than a huge overstatement and embarrassment. The damage done is difficult to overcome. All of us probably know of such an occurrence. As scientists, we must caution against this rush to spread the good news based on preliminary research. Another possible reason for this public distrust of science may be because we are not getting involved, not volunteering to speak to the public because "we don't have the time." We had better make the time or others will. Fred W. Knapp, President of the Entomological Society of America (April 1993 Newsletter) mentioned an idea that should be considered—capitalize on the tremendous talent available in the pool of emeritus members and retired entomologists. Many of these individuals, if contacted, would welcome the opportunity to volunteer their services by giving talks on entomology to schools and youth groups. Perhaps our professional societies should maintain registries of available retired entomologists who would be willing to give their time to promote entomology to our youth. Whatever way we decide to do it, we must begin to educate the public more about who we are and what we do. All of us must be willing to volunteer some of our time to give talks at schools, local clubs, and government meetings and be available to the media. Take pride in being an entomologist.

Where will our future entomologists come from? The Entomological Society of America has recently established a special award for recognizing outstanding contributions to entomological education at the grade school level. In May of this year, the Florida Entomological Society established a similar award to recognize an outstanding K-12 teacher in Florida who incorporates insects into their curricula.

This past year, the Florida Entomological Society contributed over \$6,000 in a cooperative effort with the University of Florida Department of Entomology to construct a large number of insect posters and distribute them to grade school teachers. The use of insects in the classroom is a first step in creating the interest and fascination which could very well lead to a life's work in entomology.

In fact, the theme of our program this year is the education of the public about insects and our keynote speaker will touch on this very topic. We also have other individuals on our program this year who have contributed a great deal to increasing the public's awareness of insects, all of which improves the recognition of our profession. Our future as a profession is dependent on stimulating interest in our young people to consider entomology as a profession.

It is exciting to see that several Natural History Museums in the United States have finally become involved in displaying insect exhibits in which children can see, hear and touch insects, see videos and hear entomologists present lectures on entomology. This is something that has been long overdue and I hope that all entomologists and, especially our younger members, will show the enthusiasm for this new recognition of our profession. In July, the Florida Entomology Society contributed \$900.00 in support of an insect zoo that will open this year at the University of Florida Museum in October.

The Florida Entomological Society, like the Entomological Society of America, has experienced a decline in membership. Although the decline has leveled off recently, we still must be concerned about our future membership and the possibility of other de-

clines. As Harold Denmark, the keynote speaker at the Florida Entomological Society annual meeting last year mentioned, the future is ours only if we make it ours and we must do a better job of promoting entomology in order to attract bright young students.

Recent information published in the *American Entomologist* (Feir 1990) mentions some of the following facts: by the year 2000, just 7 years away, 80 percent of the new entrants into the work force will be females and minorities; however, only about 16% of the Entomological Society of America members are women and very few are involved in leadership positions. The number of women and other minorities who belong to the Florida Entomological Society or serve in leadership roles is even more scarce. Only one woman has served as president of the Florida Entomological Society. However, we do have one in the wings. As for the representation of African-Americans and other ethnic minorities in the Florida Entomological Society and Entomological Society of America, the numbers are even smaller. And yet we continue to hear that both professional societies have lost a number of members from their rolls. Is there a membership that is being overlooked? I think that we should be recruiting as many women and minorities into entomology as possible. We need to be leading the scientific professions in this area. One final note, at last years Entomological Society of America meeting in Baltimore several entomologists were wearing buttons that said "I support women in science." Although a commendable display, it is disturbing that women in science must still struggle for acceptance. The scientific professions should lead in encouraging ethnic and gender diversity. Ethnicity and gender must never be considered when any individual in our profession is seeking a position.

I want to thank the Executive Committee and all of the members of the Standing and Ad Hoc Committees for their hard work, cooperation and support during the past year. I will always be proud of being an entomologist and a member of the Florida Entomological Society. I am very honored to have served as your president. Like Past-President Dave Schuster, I also challenge each of you to become actively involved in the Florida Entomological Society and to make it even better. Thank you very much.

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