francis c. evans, president

1983–1984

Our new president, Francis Evans, assumes the leadership of our society after a career which witnessed most of the significant developments resulting in the emergence of ecology as an experimental and theoretical science. Not a few of these developments were significantly advanced through Fran's own work or through his interactions with colleagues and students.

Fran Evans was born 2 December 1914 into a family which he describes as "old Philadelphia Quaker." As a boy he was fortunate to come under the influence of family friends at the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. These scientists first developed his enthusiasm for natural history, an enthusiasm which was further stimulated by collecting trips and summers spent with men such as F. E. Lutz of the American Museum. Following graduation from Haverford College in 1935 with a degree in biology and a Phi Beta Kappa, he went to Oxford University on a Rhodes Scholarship to study for the D.Phil. under Charles Elton. Fran worked on the ecology of small mammals and completed the degree in 1940, but his broad ecological interests were already apparent; on trips to the Faeroe Islands and to Iceland he helped collect data on seabirds which enabled Julian Huxley to support his concept of clines.

Fran's postgraduate work on small mammal ecology at the University of California, Berkeley was followed by a position as Assistant Zoologist at U.C.–Davis. This was, however, cut short when the Army Signal Corps took over the campus in the early days of United States participation in World War II. Fran spent the remaining years of the war teaching in an Army Specialized Training program at Haverford, where he remained after the war.

In 1948, a fortunate meeting with L. R. Dice resulted in an offer to take a position in Dice's Laboratory of Vertebrate Biology at the University of Michigan and begin studies in community ecology at the University's E. S. George Reserve. Thus began Fran's direct involvement with community organization and successional processes, one which has had a great effect on our ideas about plant/insect dispersion and diversity, as well as spawning fresh views of the ecosystem, plant productivity and trophic relationships, to name a few topics.

During the Michigan years, Fran's research has been concentrated on a successional old field within the George Reserve. This small field has been the site of so many studies by Fran, his colleagues, and his students, that it has come to be known as the Evans Old Field (EOF) and may well be the most intensively studied old field in the world. His most recent (and continuing) interests in the EOF include a study of diversity in the bee fauna of the field, and the flight periods of bees in relation to the flowering of the principal pollen and nectar sources.

Two research sabbaticals spent at institutions overseas contributed in a notable way to Fran's exceptionally broad view of the science of ecology. One of these, a Guggenheim Fellowship to return to Oxford in 1962–63 not only allowed him to become reacquainted first-hand with the state of ecological science in Britain, but also provided an opportunity to spend 18 days observing tropical African ecosystems in Uganda as the guest of a former

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student, Jennifer Owen, and her husband, Denis. This tropical experience was later augmented by a visit to the Galapagos Islands. The second important sabbatical, a Visiting Erskine Fellowship at Canterbury University at Christchurch, New Zealand in 1976, provided an entry into the fascination of another environment not experienced by many North American ecologists.

Fran Evans has always been extremely generous with his time, experience, and knowledge. As a teacher and major advisor, he spent much time with his students, yet still managed to foster such independence in research that the full realization of how much one owed him often took years to be realized fully. As coeditor (with H. Oosting) of *Ecological Monographs* for 6 years he performed a great service for the Society. It is hard to imagine the time spent on this job in those days when the editor did everything from receiving and sending manuscripts to reviewers to marking proof for the printer. Fran has also served on the editorial board and chaired the publication committee of the Ecological Society, and for 10 years edited the *Miscellaneous Papers of the University of Michigan Museum of Zoology.* He has delivered a number of invited lectures, and has been a consultant in ecology for publishers, universities, and foundations. In the late 1960's he had a very important impact on the future course of the International Biological Program in the USA through his participation in two early formative IBP meetings, one on secondary productivity held in Warsaw in 1966, and the second convened in Saskatoon, Canada in 1967. His research has been supported through the years by grants from the National Science Foundation, Atomic Energy Commission (now DOE) and other institutional and corporate grants.

We are indeed fortunate to have as president a scientist of solid scholarly achievement, with a broad perspective and diverse experience. If I could point to the one outstanding characteristic of Francis Evans the scientist it would have to be his unwavering concept of ecology as a science based first and last on explaining what is happening in the field. But it is Fran Evans the man who puts it best when he wrote me that "although officially retired I still enjoy the pleasures and privileges of academic life and look forward to more seasons in the field." The Ecological Society of America also looks forward to his year as president.

Richard G. Wiegert

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