

## resolution of respect

John R. Olive, 1916-1974

John Ritter Olive, zoologist, limnologist, and Executive Director of the American Institute of Biological Sciences died of congestive heart failure, March 30, in Scottsdale, Arizona, while visiting Arizona State University in connection with making final preparations for the 1974 meeting of the AIBS. His death, while unexpected, was the culmination of a series of respiratory and blood chemistry difficulties that stemmed from a severe illness with pneumonia two years earlier.

Dr. Olive was born in Richwood, Ohio, May 26, 1916, the son of a greek and latin scholar serving as Superintendent of the Richwood Public School and sometimes Methodist minister. Later, the family moved to a wooded farm between Somerset and Glenford, Ohio, where John grew to young manhood and his father was Superintendent of the Glenford Public School until retirement. During World War II the elder Olive came out of retirement to teach latin in the Somerset School and tutor less gifted students in greek and latin. The unusually close relationship which obtained between John and his father was ended by the latter's death a few years ago. John treasured and kept in his desk at the AIBS the last letter received from his father. Indeed, as if he had a premonition of impending events, John insisted on taking the letter with him on the ill-fated visit to Arizona.

It was in this scenario that Dr. Olive developed his love for the beauty and mysteries of Nature. It was within this setting, too, that the seeds of humility, love and compassion for his fellow man, gentleness, kindness, patience, and deep loyalty to his associates and to his country were sown and nurtured. These qualities, in abundance, were to characterize him throughout the remainder of his life and make him loved and respected by nearly every one of the thousands of people whose paths he crossed. But there were those who took advantage of Dr. Olive's trust and gentleness for their own immediate personal gain. Knowledge of these infractions hurt this usually mild mannered man deeply for he deplored underhanded or deceptive behavior in anyone. Despite these enviable qualities, John was not perfect and he would have been the first to say so. However, he was as good a man as a few and considerably better than most of us.

Like many others at the time, Dr. Olive spent several post-high school years work-



ing to accumulate enough money to attend college. During the summer of 1938, he met Marguerite Petty, a (then) recent graduate of Somerset High School. Both attended Ohio State University that fall and, in 1940, they were married. In subsequent years they became the parents of two sons, Craig and Kent, who survive as does Marguerite, and a daughter, Marilyn. Born with a birth defect so severe that she was given no chance of surviving beyond a year or two, this lovely, vivacious, cheerful and very talented child, the apple of her dad's eye, lived for some 16 years though bedridden the entire time. Perhaps a lesser man would have considered his daughter's health to be a personal tragedy but John Olive looked upon her well-being as a personal challenge and her presence in the family as a God-given blessing.

Dr. Olive's formal education was interrupted by active duty in the U.S. Army Air Force during 1943-45. He returned to Ohio State University to obtain B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in 1946, 1947 and 1949, respectively, under the guidance and instruction of such able biologists as E. N. Transeau, Joseph N. Miller, John N. Wolfe, Charles A. Dambach and Dan Leidy. During this time he also served as an Instructor of Zoology at Ohio State (1946-48) and at Capital University in Columbus (1948-49).

In 1949, Dr. Olive began a happy and productive association with Colorado State University, reaching the rank of professor. The period spent at Fort Collins was possibly his most enjoyable and personally satisfying experience for he dearly loved the nearby high mountain lakes in which he was able to pursue the research activities relative to energy budgets and potential productivity, the use of artificial fertilizers to enhance their productivity, the structure of their plankton populations, and the vertical migration behavior of these organisms.

The Fort Collins period was the time, too, of intensive and close association with undergraduate and graduate students—an experience which John Olive valued and enjoyed above all else. Colorado State University was to provide still another memorable experience for Dr. Olive at a later time when, on June 2, 1973, the University awarded him an honorary Doctor of Science degree for his services to biology. This was only the second such degree conferred by the University.

Soon after being appointed Assistant Director for Biology of the C.S.U. Research Foundation in 1959, Dr. Olive was given a leave of absence to “spend a year or two” as Deputy Executive Director of the AIBS in Washington, D.C. The new assignment was to permit Dr. Olive to obtain an indepth understanding of the mechanisms of research funding by the Federal government. One suspects his decision was influenced as well by the hope that the large research hospitals of the east U.S. might be the source of new procedures to improve his daughter's health.

His plans for only a relatively brief stay in Washington were not to materialize for, within a few months after his arrival, the earlier AIBS-NSF irregularities came to light. Dr. Olive would not abandon the AIBS at this most delicate stage in the organization's history. Further, by this time he had become convinced of the need of biologists for a central, unified voice on the Washington scene. He was a source of strength and stability during the difficult and prolonged negotiations with the NSF. The Governing Board recognized his capabilities and appointed him Executive Director of the AIBS in 1963.

Dr. Olive still wished to return to Colorado as soon as the rebuilding of AIBS was well under way and confidence in the Institute's fiscal management had been restored for he had contracted neither Potomac fever

nor illusions of grandeur. Within a few more years, however, the honeymoon between science and the Federal establishment began to deteriorate and, before long, the entire scientific community was being influenced. Strange developments were occurring vis a vis science policy in the Federal government. Surely that was not the time for him to accept one of the several other positions offered to him in the academic community or to return to C.S.A. There was much work to be done if the AIBS was to achieve the position of leadership he believed the biological community deserved and needed. So, he continued his efforts to mold a stronger, healthier AIBS despite expanding restlessness among biological societies, growing indifference of individual biologists, ever increasing difficulty of obtaining sufficient funds to operate the Institute effectively in the face of escalating costs, and the sometimes ill considered proposals and demands of obstreperous officers and members of the Governing Board. On occasions when events threatened to destroy even his strong confidence and hopefulness, he would return briefly to the family farm in Ohio to “see what the sane people are doing” and think things through in a less chaotic atmosphere.

Earlier this year, the AIBS Governing Board approved certain constitutional changes and new programs that should contribute significantly to the achievement of the goals Dr. Olive believed to be the Institute's mandate. Although his health had quite obviously deteriorated, he continued to exhaust his remaining energies for the welfare of the AIBS. The fatal trip to Tempe is an example. His family and colleagues believed the trip was not essential under the circumstances and attempted to persuade him to take a rest. However, he insisted on seeing for himself that everything possible was being done to assure the success of the (then) forthcoming AIBS meeting.

The Ecological Society has lost a loyal member. The biological community has lost one of its most dedicated servants and leaders. Even more distressing, thousands of biologists have lost a superb friend and understanding colleague.

Donations in Dr. Olive's memory may be sent to either the AIBS John R. Olive Memorial Fund or the Marilyn K. Olive Memorial Fund for Birth Defects. The contributions should be sent to the AIBS, 1401 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, Virginia.

George Sprugel, Jr.