

resolution of respect

ORLANDO PARK, 1901-1969

Born in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, in 1901, grandson of eminent Washington journalist Orlando Oscar Stealey, and the son of a railroad man, Orlando Park would blend in his lifetime the elegance of the literary world and the rhythm so characteristic of the pounding steam locomotives. By the time Orlando's bright young mind was grasping his surrounding cultural and physical environment, the Park family had ceased the early travels of a rising career, and was securely situated on a plantation in Ocean Springs, Mississippi. Here the young boy was free to roam the fields and woods of the property. His esteemed grandfather sharpened his imagination with excursions into literature, ranging from the Greek classics through Cooper and Thoreau to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Living with such a fine teacher, Orlando found the rural school dull and confining, and he often played hookey to go fishing or try working in the local coffee mill and other forbidden places. Jazz, New Orleans style, was becoming popular, and America was awaking to the fact that a unique art form had been born in the Southern United States. Living so close to New Orleans, Orlando sought first-hand contact with the new music. His free spirit caused his Victorian parents a good deal of consternation, and after many unsuccessful attempts to make him conform to the family style, they felt military academy might shape the man as they wished. But at the age of 15 Orlando, or Lan, as he preferred to be called, proved more than a match for the academy, and he did not stay long.

The prospering circumstances of the Park family took them to Chicago, where they settled in the then-posh near South Side, and Orlando completed his schooling at Hyde Park High and began his college career at the University of Chicago. The roaring 20's were in full swing in Chicago. Lan and his buddies would often sneak down to one of the local "hot spots" to listen to the evolving Chicago style of Dixieland music. While Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five were in Chicago, Lill Hardin, the future Mrs. Armstrong, took some time between shows to teach Lan how the chording and beat characteristic of

Chicago style was done on the piano.

After a nearly abortive beginning at the U. of Chicago, Orlando Park at length mastered the art of superior study. He also came under the influence of W.C. Allee, and was introduced to the science of Ecology. Here was the perfect outlet for his literary and naturalist interests. Entering graduate school, Lan threw himself into his work with characteristic enthusiasm, and soon became a top-rate field man. Spurred by the Successional Theory of Cowles and the documentation of Shelford. Lan and his fellow graduate student confreres scoured the Illinois country in search of observations on various successional stages. Beginning with observations on light intensity in the various serial successional stages, he became increasingly aware of the balance and rhythm of the maturing forest. The forest insects caught his fancy, particularly the beetles, and he followed their activities throughout the 24-hour cycle.



By the time he finished his graduate studies, Lan had become aware of another detail in his own environment that very much caught his fancy. He met Alberta Fritsche, a pretty childrens' librarian at the Chicago Public Library, and began to fit a rather lengthy courtship into the schedule dominated by finishing his graduate studies.

In 1928 Orlando began his long list of publications with a note in *Entomological News*. Upon completion of his degree, he married Miss Fritsche, piled his belongings and several needy students into his old car, and drove to Kent, Ohio, where the young Parks began their married life and first teaching job. Dr. Park's pen never ceased its work. His early publications reflected the diverse interests of a youthful naturalist, with topics ranging from osmotic regulation in *Paramecium*, to teretological antennae on a captured beetle specimen; but two main interests soon dominated his work: Coleoptera and Nocturnal Rhythms.

A move from Kent, Ohio to the University of Illinois at Urbana came soon, bringing new contacts with the personnel at that institution and the Illinois Natural History Survey. Men like Victor Shelford, Milton Sanderson and Herbert Ross became both friends and colleagues in the following years. During the rigorous Depression Days of the early 30's, a daughter, Patricia, was born to the Parks. Undaunted by new responsibilities and dire financial plight, the hard-working instructor carried on an unending number of investigations into the nocturnal ecology of the forest, and concerning myrmecocloous beetles living with ant colonies. In those days of script payment, payless paydays and debt, opportunity came in the form of a position at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. In 1934 O. Park and family made the pilgrimage from Urbana to Evanston.

Park's work in nocturnal ecology led him to spend several summers in the Panama Canal Zone studying the tropical rain forest on Barro Colorado Island. By 1940 he (with other co-authors) had produced a series of nocturnal ecology studies covering over a decade of research. Park temporarily summarized his efforts in this area with a series of papers in 1940-41 entitled, "Nocturnalism --- the Development of a Problem" (*Ecol. Monogr.*, 10:485); "Quantitative Determination of Rhythmicity in Organ-

isms" (*Ohio J. Sci.*, 41:39-45), and "Concerning Community Symmetry", (*Ecology*, 22:164-7).

The chief reason for the wane in Prof. Park's interest in nocturnal ecology was a waxing of his interest in the Pselaphidae. To the query of the uninitiated, "What are Pselaphidae?", Dr. Park would furrow his bushy eye-brows, fix the inquirer with the gaze of his penetrating green eyes (in a way that suggested knowledge, and mystery), and his deep voice would intone: "They are a very *large* family of very *small* predaceous beetles that inhabit the forest floor. Not too much is known of them!" Orlando Park intended to find out about these beetles, and for the rest of his career the tiny pselaphid beetles would figure prominently in his work and writings.

Park's return to the Chicago Area added strength to a development that was progressing there: the beginning of the Chicago School of Ecology. At first the Chicago school involved three institutions: The U. of Chicago, the Field Museum of Natural History, and Northwestern U. The Chicago School of Ecology had its own style, best characterized by the supra-organismal concept of the Community. The collaboration of the men in these institutions during the 1940's yielded one of the standard reference works in the field; in 1949 *Principles of Animal Ecology* by W.C. Allee, A.E. Emerson, O. Park, T. Park, and K. Schmidt. After the appearance of the book, a colleague playfully suggested that one of the P.'s be dropped from the initials of the list of authors, leaving A.P.E.S. as the creators of the work. The book was thus christened affectionately "The Great Apes", and is still so-called today by all who know of its origin. During the busy years of the forties, Dr. Park found time to be active in the leadership of the Ecological Society of America, finally acting as its President.

Another development took place during these middle years. Lan discovered that a number of his academic acquaintances not only played musical instruments, but knew and loved the Dixieland idiom. The academicians gathered for informal jam-sessions at the Park apartment and at the Chicago Academy of Sciences in Lincoln Park, since another constant member of the group was H. K. Gloyd, then Director of the Academy.

It was common for a pedestrian, walking by the Academy on a Wednesday evening, to hear strains of "Muskrat Ramble" floating out of its windows. Soon the word began to circulate that there existed a group of unusual intellectuals led by a piano-playing ecologist, that called themselves the "Academic Cats", and played Dixieland. The "Cats" began to receive invitations to play for various functions and were written up in the Evanston and Chicago papers.

During World War II O. Park wanted to enlist, but his age prevented this; so his service consisted of carrying strenuous teaching loads to fill in for younger colleagues who were at war, and featured his exhaustive coverage of the study of parasitology for men entering medical branches of the service.

Just after the war years Prof. Park was called into his country's service in a different capacity. One of his former undergraduate students, Edward Struxness, was deeply involved with the work at Oak Ridge, Tenn. The Atoms for Peace Program and atomic bomb testing had posed grave unanswered questions to the A.E.C., so Ed asked his former teacher to help him with the problems involved. After several years of ground work with Park as a consultant, the Ecology Section of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory was established under the directorship of Stanley I. Auerbach, another former student of Park's.

For some years Orlando Park had corresponded with European authorities on taxonomic aspects of his studies of the pselaphid beetles. Research took Park on a never-to-be-forgotten trip to the Paris and London museums in 1952, where life-long contacts were made in person that had existed only in correspondence before.

The professor's research now once more took ecological direction, particularly toward habitat questions concerning pselaphid beetles. Prof. Park and his students investigated isolated bits of original prairie, tree-holes, and caves, looking at the uniqueness of their existing fauna. By this time the dynamics of his classroom teaching and the quality of his field course in ecology were becoming well-known, both in the U.S. and abroad. Park's graduate students, spread across the country in colleges, universities and research institutions, helped to carry on

the work and the traditions begun at N.U. To take one of Orlando Park's field courses was to be exposed directly to the environment. Many times a coed has tried to climb the sand dunes of Indiana looking for the "mesophytic pocket", (but unfortunately clad in high heels) and has learned not only the principles of succession, but the practical aspects of being a field ecologist. Park's course became a model for new courses in other institutions. Prof. Park used every habitat available to him: forest preserves, ponds, streams, and every aspect of community symmetry and rhythm (i.e. all-night field observations, the rhythm of ant communities, Spring development of the forest canopy) to impress his students with basic ecological principles. His enthusiasm for his subject, his energies in the field, and his stews on the all-night field trip cook-out became legend.

The Professor loved his students and expected a great deal of them. He was particularly disappointed when they didn't perform up to his expectations and would often lecture his classes for poor performance like a reprimanding parent. Then he would make them repeat the exercise or test (thus eliminating the poor record). In a conversation with me he confided that, although he was pleased with his research and professional accomplishments, he felt his greatest contributions are his students, particularly his graduate students. "They are my academic children", he said. "I feel much the same way about them as I do my own daughter".

The 1950's saw the Parks' daughter finish college, marry, and later, the birth of the first baby in the new generation gave O.P. a grandson. These years also brought the acquisition of a piece of property in Central Wisconsin, near the historic village of Friendship. "Parklan" was the name given this half-section of land comprised of abandoned fields, woods, and a small but vital creek, which traversed a portion of the property. Parklan was far from the elegance of the plantation of his youth, but Lan's Wisconsin place provided fields and woods to roam and all their wonders to study. This was no vacation spot; the eye of the ecologist is keen to spot subtle differences in habitat. With field succession occurring as the owner watched, the property soon became an

island for ecological and taxonomic investigation. Field classes from Northwestern University spent a day each term tramping the fields, under the guidance of their knowledgeable teacher. At the present time the Wisconsin Conservation Department considers Park's property to have the most complete taxonomic records of any site of comparable size in the state.

The years flowed on into the 60's and the venerable professor continued to give his masterful lectures, conduct his field trips and guide the never-ending stream of graduate students. The study of beetles took more of his time, for now Orlando Park was one of three living world authorities on Pselaphidae, and there was constant demand for identification of specimens from many parts of the earth. As a senior member of the Department of Biology, and as its Chairman for a time, O.P. had ever-increasing demands upon his time in the form of administrative duties. The University called upon him as chairman, to guide his department through a particularly difficult transition period.

The 60's brought the realization of another dream — far removed from the world of the classes and research at N.U. For years he had read and re-read the tales of Sherlock Holmes. Sir Arthur's precise analytical approach to the solution of each mystery was a natural source of fascination to a scientist attempting to unravel, by similar processes, the mysteries of Nature. Over the years O.P. had made precise notes on each event and each object, approach, and character in every one of Sherlock Holmes' adventures. In 1962 he published these notes in a book entitled, *Sherlock Holmes Esq. and John H. Watson, M.D., an Encyclopaedia of Their Affairs*. The book found an instantaneous market, because, scattered through the United States and England, are clubs devoted to the study of Sherlock Holmes. These gentlemen, or Holmesians, are known as "The Baker Street Irregulars". They invited Lan to become a member of their corps. This association was one of his most enjoyable experiences of later years.

Papers and articles continued to appear at the rate of two or three per year during the

early 60's, and it looked as if he would never slow down. In 1965 he published the 16th in the series of papers on nocturnal activity with two of his students (*Amer. Mid. Nat.*, 74:57-66). Then, in 1966 tragedy struck in the form of the long illness and untimely death of his beloved wife, Alberta. Her passing shattered all the retirement dreams, and sadness seemed to take away his former enthusiasm for life. The Entomology text he had nearly completed lay untouched, his research lagged; his writing ceased. Only his teaching continued, becoming, if anything, more brilliant as he immersed himself in his classes.

Life began to take form once more in 1968 when O.P. retired from Northwestern, after over three decades of loyal devotion to that institution. The Spring before his last round of classes was a happy, busy time, highlighted by Lan's marriage to a young widow and former student, Betty Annan. For a time it seemed as if yet another productive period of work was opening up. But the years had taken their toll. A rapidly deteriorating kidney condition brought several months of failing health, and Orlando Park passed away quietly at his home on Sept. 23, 1969.

"The beloved O.P. is gone", wrote one of his former students. This was true only in the physical sense. Through the "Academic Children" of Orlando Park, ecology will continue to feel the roll and beat of the Chicago School of study. In his honor, his widow and his daughter have set up the Orlando Park Memorial Fund in the Department of Biology at Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. It is hoped that, from the fund, Graduate Fellowships will aid students of the future wishing to study ecology or entomology, thus continuing the work dearest to the heart of the great teacher.

Thus it is with regret that we mark the passing from our scene of Orlando Park, prolific author, inspired teacher, jazz pianist, Baker Street Irregular, and world-renowned Entomologist and Ecologist.

Manfred Engelmann
Michigan State University