

MEMORIES OF CYRIL F. DOS PASSOS (1887-1986)

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The magnitude of "d.P.'s" accomplishments, as chronicled in the preceding article by R. S. Wilkinson, will attest that he was an unusual individual. Some of my memories of him, and experiences with him as a correspondent, collaborator and friend, perhaps will add to the picture of the kind of person who could live so full a life, with outstanding success in so many varied endeavors.

Quite inevitably he had to be an energetic worker, but in addition he carried methodical procedure and time budgeting almost to the status of an art form. When he was in his prime, few if any random intrusions crept into schedules determined days or weeks in advance. Usually there was a brief nap after lunch, followed by a half-hour's walk; aside from this, very little else in the way of relaxation except at meals. Those were ceremonious, especially at dinner, and served at the precise times appointed. He had uncompromising ideas about how things should be done, including the conduct of his own life and the running of his household. When you dined with him you wore a coat and tie. I used to describe him (jokingly, and never within his hearing) as "the last of the barons". Indeed he was more the Old World aristocrat (in the best sense) than the American businessman.

My first contact with him came shortly after he had begun studies at the American Museum. He wrote to me for information on collecting Maine butterflies. I learned that he had a summer camp at Rangeley, where he came to escape his perennial troubles with hay fever. This led to meetings, discussions, and the beginning of a lifelong friendship. Our first meeting probably left a lingering impression, to put it delicately, since I was on a manure cart at the time, spreading richness on my father's farm. Anyhow, he never forgot that I was his "very first entomological correspondent", and he came to be my closest associate among the amateur lepidopterists who, at that time, in the very early 30's, comprised a rather small fraternity.

On one of our earlier outings we collected *Oeneis katahdin* Newcomb. Cyril had reserved a cabin for us at a sporting camp on Daicey Pond, reached by a long hike from where we had to leave the car. The next day we paddled across the lake and struck out through the woods with only occasional glimpses of the distant mountain. The region then was almost as wild as in Thoreau's time, with few trails. We finally came out in a clearing where a major campground of Baxter State Park now is located; here we picked up Katahdin Stream which we followed

up to the steep slopes of the spruce belt, and from thence to timberline and up over the rocks to the tableland. I still remember how amazed I was that a city lawyer could find his way through the woods as well as a country native, and could endure the long day's ordeal without apparent discomfort. Worse yet, he caught more *katahdin* than I did, using the slow stalking approach while I was dashing hither and yon making wild swoops at anything arising from the tundra. Even the day's end had a lesson for me, when, in the evening back at our cabin, he spent a few minutes writing in a diary, advising me to consider the uses of such. For him, in future years, there would be no doubt concerning what he had accomplished during this particular day of his life, nor would there be any lack of details should he ever wish to refresh his memory about his series of *katahdin* butterflies and the place where he took them.

Subsequent occasions bore out the conclusion that Cyril was a tough physical specimen, which never would have been guessed in view of his small stature and rather delicate frame. But then, this seems to have been a family heritage, judging from stories told of his cousin, John, the well-known author. Apparently the latter had lead a wild life, soaking up "local color" in some of the most dangerous places on earth, a midget holding his own among giants. As one commentator put it, "John actually did the things Hemingway bragged about doing". This was a clue and key to much of Cyril's success and also to a reputation he gained at the Museum of being difficult to get along with, namely, the trait which psychologists term "overcompensation". He always was aggressive when challenged.

In retrospect I marvel that we remained friendly, since I ventured to argue with him rather hotly on various issues. Predictably, he was laissez-faire capitalist in philosophy, often in a rage against the socialist trends of the day. In view of our present national debts and deficits I am becoming convinced that his opinions made far more sense than mine.

Certainly our entomological relations always were very cordial. A mountain of correspondence passed between us as we worked out details of a major joint project, a study of nearctic "*Argynnis*". This was for several years a shared labor, with results which at that time proved to be somewhat controversial. As Scott has pointed out, in the latest *Butterflies of North America*, we made a break in tradition toward synthesis, away from the (European-fueled) tendency to finer and finer splitting. Cyril's role in all of this sometimes has been underestimated. He was in every respect the senior author. He did a lion's share of the work and definitely was the "maker-possible" for my contributions. A bit of review may be of historical interest:

I can pinpoint the exact moment when this project was born. It was sparked by our shared exasperation that nobody seemed able to identify our western material, and ignited one day when Cyril was showing me some California specimens which he had purchased with the understanding that they were to have been identified by the collector. But they arrived minus names, aside from one specimen which bore a label stating "this looks like an oddball". So it did, and to our eyes so did all the rest.

From that time onward we each began a serious study of those enigmas, Cyril working with the literature and with the problems of nomenclature hinging on locating and identifying type materials, while I accumulated specimens and solicited all my collector friends for locality data. Apparently we each had intuitively analyzed our respective strengths and adapted to integrate them. He trusted and never questioned my developing ideas concerning the speciations, while I certainly was in no position to question his grasp of the literature or his plans for organizing our subjects. It made for a smooth-working partnership.

Wilkinson has noted some of the instances of Cyril's quiet philanthropies. I suspect Cyril derived considerable enjoyment in introducing me to the world beyond my native turf. He paid my way for trips to Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, where I expanded our argynnid data and was able to see numerous types. An incidental but priceless feature of those journeys was the opportunity to meet and talk with people such as Andrei Avinoff at Pittsburgh, Vladimir Nabokov and Nathan Banks at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, and of course the entomologists then at the American Museum, including Lutz, Mitchener, Klots, and that very gracious gentleman, W. P. Comstock. Also, Cyril took me to meetings where I heard lectures by such legendary figures as "William T. Davis of Staten Island" (the two are inseparable) and Robert Cushman Murphy, the great authority on oceanic birds. All in all, quite an education for a youth from the backwoods! These debts are gratefully acknowledged.

Also, I should express my appreciation for his cautious guidance as we came nearer to our goal of revising the North American argynnids. It had become apparent fairly early that the records seldom indicated more than 6 or 8 distinct kinds of populations of those butterflies in any single general area, a fact of significance when compared against the listings then current, which ran to 100 "species" or more. Collations of local data sets also indicated numerous instances of intergrading. I felt that we were on the verge of solving the puzzle, but Cyril then urged that we had a duty to enlarge the perspective to include whatever might appear when native argynnids were compared with those on the other continents. A fairly comprehensive genitalic survey of the Nearc-

tic species had been completed, but the task of studying the world argynnines was slowed by difficulties in procuring the needed material.

Thus, it was 1947 before our Systematic Catalogue of *Speyeria* finally was published. A few corrections have been required, both to Cyril's nomenclatorial and other data and to my concepts of the speciations, but these have been gratifyingly few considering the tangle we were dealing with. It was, indeed, as Scott has noted, a turning point in the philosophy of butterfly "species", but unfortunately we were too much captives of the times to have broken loose from the addiction to "sub-species". In fact, back at that time it would have been unwise to have reduced the number of such taxa, even though many are hardly more than unstable local color forms. As Cyril had warned me, we encountered considerable resistance to our radically altered classification, the big difficulty lying with our downgrading of many taxa traditionally hallowed as "species". To help soften those outrages to custom we thought it essential to retain numerous subspecific names and even to propose some new ones for the same purpose of indicating some of the connecting links and the widespread continuity of intergrading within the series discriminated as constituting polytypic species.

After those prolonged associations it seemed only natural that we should remain close and affectionate friends. When failing health forced him to curtail his entomological activities he presented me with the entire contents of his laboratory. I remain surrounded by reminders of his kindness.

In closing, it seems fitting to recall one of Cyril's most striking mannerisms. He never lingered when the time came to part—a wave of the hand, a "bye-bye" and he would turn abruptly and walk away. Fond recollections remain.