

Obituary

In memoriam – Carl W. Rettenmeyer (1931 - 2009)

Dr. William H. Gotwald, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Biology, Utica College, 1600 Burrstone Road, Utica, NY 13502, USA. E-mail: wgotwaldjr@aol.com

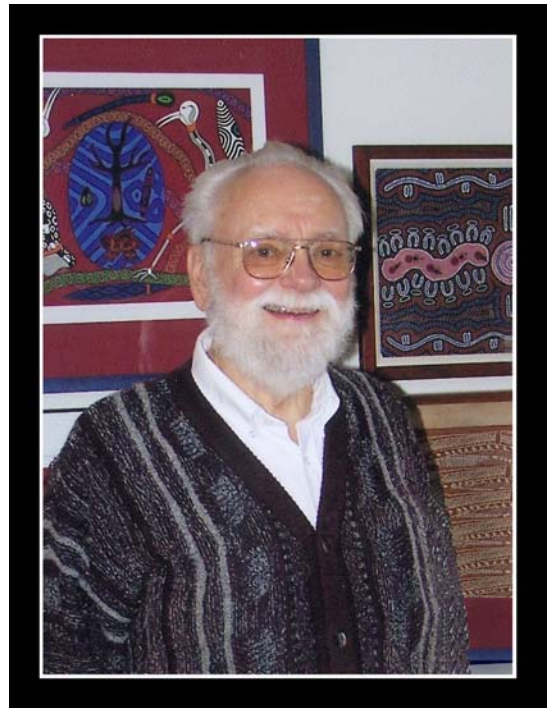
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Carl W. Rettenmeyer was endowed with enormous energy, at least equal to that of the creatures he pursued – frenzied army ants, primarily of the New World tropics and subtropics, and their vast menagerie of arthropod guests. Sadly, on 9 April 2009, Carl died at age 78, his legacy of scholarship and field research assured. Those in the community of myrmecologists who knew him will miss Carl scurrying about at professional meetings promoting an idea or two or his DVD, *Astonishing army ants*. A photographic tour de force, the DVD comprises a career's worth of Carl's outstanding field photography. Our paths crossed less frequently in recent years than in the past at earlier stages of our respective careers but it was always a pleasure to see him.

Army ants entered my life in 1965 while on a Cornell University expedition to Mexico, under the leadership of the late Dr. Bill Brown, internationally renowned ant taxonomist. Soon after our return from Mexico, Carl Rettenmeyer also became part of my life. His monograph, *Behavioral studies of army ants* (1963, University of Kansas Science Bulletin 44: 281-465), inspired me to eventually pursue army ants myself. This I did in the Old World tropics. Carl and I would see each other at meetings, especially those of the Entomological Society of America. He always had something to offer about his work and his advice was always welcome.

Carl and his gracious wife of 54 years, Marian, who assisted him in producing *Astonishing army ants*, visited us at our home in upstate New York in November of 2005. In true Rettenmeyerian form, he thought it a good idea to assemble a small group of my colleagues from Utica College to view the DVD. It was not yet in its final form and Carl wanted it critiqued by other biologists and educators. The appraisal was resoundingly positive! I did not see Carl again until the 15th International Congress of the IUSI, in the summer of 2006 in Washington, D.C. Of course, there he was on a Monday evening showing his DVD in a social insect film session. He appeared quite frail to me, and I did not know that he was in the grips of a 10-year battle with Waldenström's syndrome, i.e., macroglobulinemia.

Carl earned an undergraduate degree in 1953 at Swarthmore College, near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and a PhD from the University of Kansas in 1962, where he taught from 1960 until 1971, when he moved to the University of Connecticut. In addition to teaching Biology, Social In-



Carl W. Rettenmeyer in 2005 (photograph by Dr. Lois A. Fisch ©).

sects, and Photography for Biologists, at the University, Carl was responsible for convincing the University Board of Trustees to resurrect the Connecticut State Museum of Natural History, an institution, on paper only, that had lain moribund since its founding in 1881. The Connecticut State Legislature officially established the museum in 1985 and Carl was named its Director. Carl retired from university in 1996.

Carl's research was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the University of Connecticut Research Foundation, and his field studies took him to various countries, including Ecuador, Panama, and Costa Rica on numerous occasions. His presentations at national and international symposia were abundant, his publications numbered more than 50 and his photographs of army ants and their guests were widely praised. They not only illustrated his papers but appeared in more than 100 other publications. When I began writing my book on army ants, I asked Carl if he would share some of his photos with me. Soon a package arrived in the mail containing hundreds of photos, of which thirty found their way into my book. His kindness was exceptional.

Carl had an engaging smile, a gift of gab, an insatiable curiosity, and a generous personality. We are fortunate to have counted Carl among our friends and colleagues.