

# CELEBRATION OF BILL RICKER'S LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PLECOPTEROLOGY

## Foreward

As indicated on the facing page, our colleague Bill Ricker died on September 8, 2001, at the age of 93. He remained actively interested in our science until his death, evidenced by his attendance at our XI International Symposium in Treehaven (1992), the North American Plecoptera Symposium in Montreal (1997), and our XII Symposium in Lausanne in 1995.

He wrote to me in 1998, sending me maps of the *Bolshecapnia rogozera* type locality in British Columbia, and indicating that at age 90 he was not "in physical shape" to go on a collecting trip there with me, and that although he would be delighted to present a Lifetime Achievement Award to Lidija Zhiltzova in Tucumán, he should probably stay near home because of some health problems. I have this 1998 letter framed and in a prominent place at my desk. Bill honored me by being co-author of our chapter on stoneflies in the book "Insects of the Yukon", published by the Biological Survey of Canada in 1997. Bill made substantial contributions to our scholarship fund although he did not want it known to the membership.

As a fortunate stroke of luck and timing, I asked Bill during his convalescence after a Feb., 2001, diabetic coma, if he would record on cassette his recollections of his research career and in particular relate some of his experiences and remembrances about early and mid-20th Century stonefly workers. He graciously agreed, and with the help of his two sons, Eric and Karl, he recorded some invaluable bits of history on 3 tapes with a recorder I sent to him, just weeks before his death. I hope to make a transcript of these tapes and condense Bill's thoughts into a "recollections" article for PERLA in the near future. Following are various items, photographs and Bill's stonefly bibliography, sent to me by him and by his sons, Eric and Karl. The first is a reprint of "Milestones in Bills Life" from the family service on Sept. 22, 2001, followed by a Tribute, written by Gordon Hartman and Neil Bourne for the Nanaimo Field Naturalist (Nov.-Dec. 2001/Jan. 2002) and reprinted here with permission of Eric Ricker.

Ken Stewart

## *Milestones in Bill's Life*

- Born* In 1908, in Waterdown, Ontario, the second child of Rebecca and Herry. Greeted by sister Evelyn and soon joined by sisters Isabell and Helen
- Educated:* In the schools of North Bay, Ontario and at the University of Toronto, where he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1936
- Married:* In 1935, to Marion Horrance Cardwell, a public health nurse with a love of the outdoors. They met at Cultus Lake, B.C., where Bill conducted research for the International Pacific Salmon Commission
- Children:* Four Sons: Karl and Jhoh, born in North Bay and Vancouver, respectively; Eric and Angus, born in Bloomington, Indiana
- Career:* Junior Scientist with the International Pacific Salmon Commission in the 1930s; Professor of Zoology at the University of Indiana in the 1940s; Editor, Research Scientist, Chief Scientist and Acting Chairman, Fisheries Research Board of Canada, from 1950 until retirement in 1973.
- Selected Awards And Honors* Officer, Order of Canada; Flavelle Medal, Royal Society; Eminent Ecologist, Ecological Society of America; Gold Medal, Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada; Award of Excellence, American Fisheries Society; F.E.J. Fry Medal, Canadian Society of Zoologists; Murray Newman Award, Vancouver Aquarium; Honorary Doctorates from the University of Guelph, the University of Manitoba and Dalhousie University. (Also our Lifetime Achievement Award, 1992)

## **Dr. W. E. (Bill) Ricker**

### **Tribute from “Nanaimo Field Naturalist”**

Dr. W. E. Ricker, a member of our Club and an internationally renowned scientist, passed away on September 8, 2001. He was 93 years old. It is a rare privilege to have had a person like Dr. Ricker amongst us and it is not possible to adequately describe his accomplishments in a brief article.

Bill was born at Waterdown, Ontario in 1908 but the family soon moved to North Bay, Ontario where his father was principal of the Normal School. Bill received his elementary and secondary schooling in North Bay with studies in ornithology and astronomy. He enrolled in science at the University of Toronto and received his Bachelors degree in 1930. Although he could easily have become a botanist, mathematician, physicist or geologist, he was encouraged to enter the field of fisheries science by Prof's. W. J. K. Harkness and J. R. Dymond who were leaders in the field. He obtained a Masters degree from U. of T. in 1931 and his Ph.D. under Prof. E. M. Walker in 1936. All this work led him to areas of special achievement in population analysis and statistical biology, as well as stonefly, Plecoptera, biology and taxonomy. By the age of 27 he was a highly respected limnologist, aquatic entomologist and bio-statistician.

On completion of his Masters degree Bill took a position as junior scientist with the International Salmon Commission. Thus began his abiding love of the west coast of Canada. He undertook studies of Fraser River sockeye salmon and worked at Cultus Lake with Dr. R. E. Foerster who had started a comprehensive study of sockeye salmon nursery areas along the British Columbia coast. During the mid 1930's he spent time at Cultus Lake, the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo and also at the Fisheries Laboratory in Ontario. On completion of his Ph.D. he took a position with the International Salmon Commission continuing with work at Cultus Lake.

While at Cultus Lake he met and married Marion Torrance Cardwell in 1935, a public health nurse with a love of the outdoors that she shared with Bill. They had four boys, Karl, John, Eric and Angus. In 1939 he took a research and teaching position in the Biology Department at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, Indiana. He continued with his limnological studies in the State and, among other things, taught a course in Ornithology. He became interested in the work of the great Russian fisheries biologist and statistician Theodore Baranov and taught himself Russian as well as becoming familiar with Spanish. He recognized the importance of the Russian scientific fisheries work and went on to translate over 230 Russian fisheries papers into English. After he returned to Canada he wrote a Russian-English Dictionary for Students of Fisheries and Aquatic Biology that remains the only volume of its kind.

Bill continued his studies on biometrics at the University of Indiana that led to a series of books on biological statistics of fish populations. These are often referred to as the “Green Books” and were widely used by students of fisheries science throughout the world. The first green book was published by the University of Indiana in 1948. He returned to Canada in 1950 when he moved to Nanaimo, B.C. and joined the staff of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada. He assumed the job of editor of the Journal of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada and soon made it into one of the premier aquatic scientific journals in the world. He later became the senior scientist of the Board.

Bill continued his studies of biological statistics and was one of the first to discover that fish populations responded to fishing in a measurable way. Fisheries

Nanaimo, B.C. and joined the staff of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada. He scientists could estimate the maximum number of fish that could be caught without endangering stocks and this became known throughout the scientific world as the "Ricker Curve". He completed two monumental Handbooks on Methods of Assessment of Fish Populations, one published in 1958 and the other in 1975 that became standard texts for scientist working in the field of fisheries biology. During his career he published 296 scientific papers and translated 235 Russian to English papers.

Bill retired from the Fisheries Research Board in 1973 but he continued to work as a volunteer scientist at the Pacific Biological Station for another 28 years going to the Station almost daily and publishing papers almost up to the time of his death.

Bill received many awards in recognition of his outstanding scientific contributions, primarily in fisheries biology, which are too numerous to list here. He was awarded the Order of Canada in 1986 in recognition of his achievements. He received honorary doctorate degrees from the University of Manitoba, Dalhousie University and the University of Guelph. He was a member of the Royal Society of Canada and received its prestigious Flavelle Medal. The road at the Pacific Biological Station is called "Rickers Curve" in his honour. Probably the honour he appreciated most was having the Biological Station's research vessel, the W. E. Ricker, named after him.

Although most known for his achievements in fisheries science, Bill was an excellent scientist in other fields. As previously mentioned, he taught a course in Ornithology and was a keen birder. He was not a lister but had a life list of 642 birds, 332 from Canada, 216 from B.C. He was an excellent botanist. He was a world authority on stoneflies, Plecoptera, and identified and named 88 species. He was also keenly interested in astronomy. He found the first tailed frog, Ascaphus trueid, recorded in B.C.

Bill had many interests outside the scientific field. He had a keen interest in music, played the violin and bass violin and was a member of the Nanaimo Symphony for a while. He was an avid fan of Sherlock Holmes and wrote a Sherlock Holmes mystery. He also prepared a manuscript of early travel routes through the Fraser Canyon.

Bill was a keen golfer and belonged to the Nanaimo Course for many years. He was part of a foursome from the Biological Station that world problems were discussed while on the course or at the 19th hole.

Bill's great and lifelong interest in birding is of special interest to members of the Nanaimo Field Naturalists. He began his observations of birds while in high school in North Bay and carried out by himself the played regularly on Saturday mornings and he continued to play until his late 80's. The golf game was important, but it was also a social occasion and many biological and world problems were discussed while on the course or at the 19th hole.

Bill's great and lifelong interest in birding is of special interest to members of the Nanaimo Field Naturalists. He began his observations of birds while in high school in North Bay and carried out by himself the first Christmas bird count there in the mid 1920's. It was a bitter cold day and he counted 12 species and 20 birds. The North Bay Christmas count now brings out >1,000 people and the count is about 60 species. While he was at the University of Indiana he led regular weekend field trips around Bloomington.

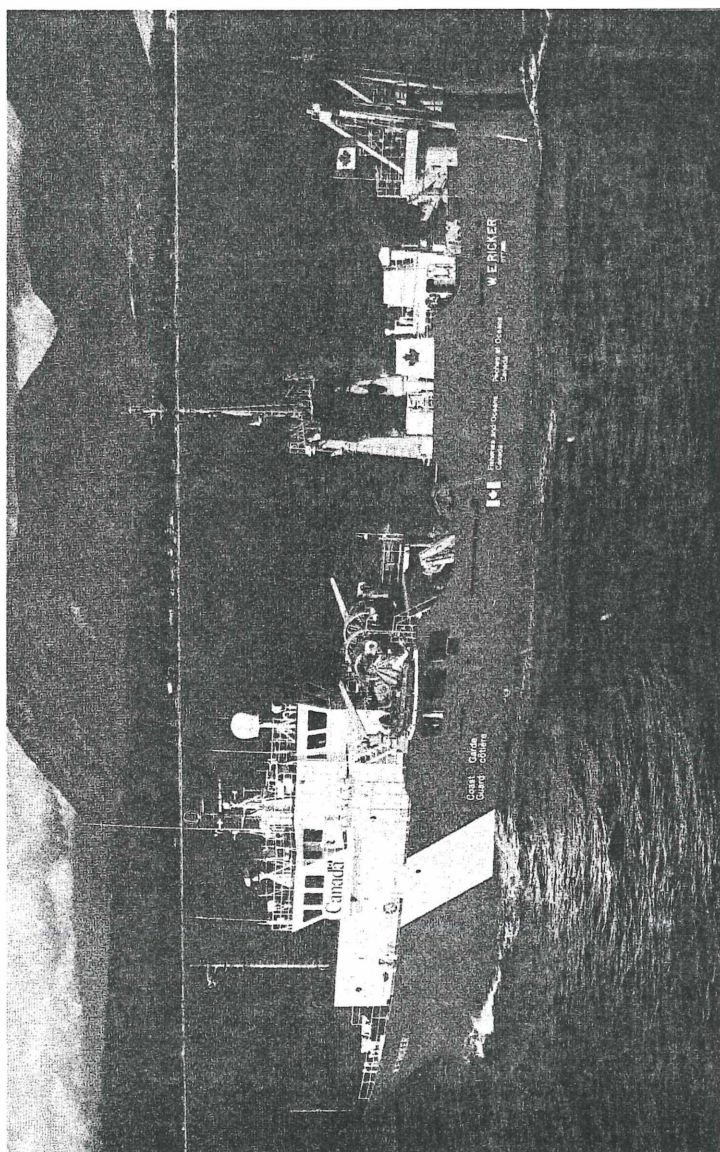
Bill was a founding member of the Nanaimo Field Naturalists and took part in many Christmas bird counts in Nanaimo. Bill, Mike Sheppard and Neil Bourne carried out an early Christmas bird count in 1965 but unfortunately the data have been lost. When the club began undertaking regular annual Christmas bird counts Bill along with

Jean and Neil Bourne did their part by doing the Departure Bay area and this continued until the present. In 2000 the walk had become too difficult for Bill so he carried out a feeder count at his home in Hammond Bay Road. Bill also helped with Christmas counts in the Whistler-Squamish area. He particularly liked doing counts with his grandchildren and did his last count in Whistler at 89 years of age.

Bill was a kind, humble and gentle humanitarian. Many people were surprised by his humbleness when they first met him. He spent his life studying and learning and his example encouraged fellow scientists to do the same. He led a rich, full and productive life and he enriched the lives of a great many people that he touched. By Gordon Hartman and Neil Bourne

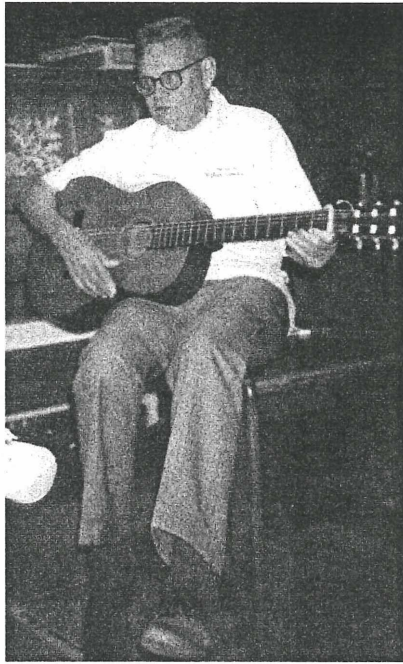


Bill Ricker, Adams River, BC 1993, described by son Eric as "the last stonefly chase".

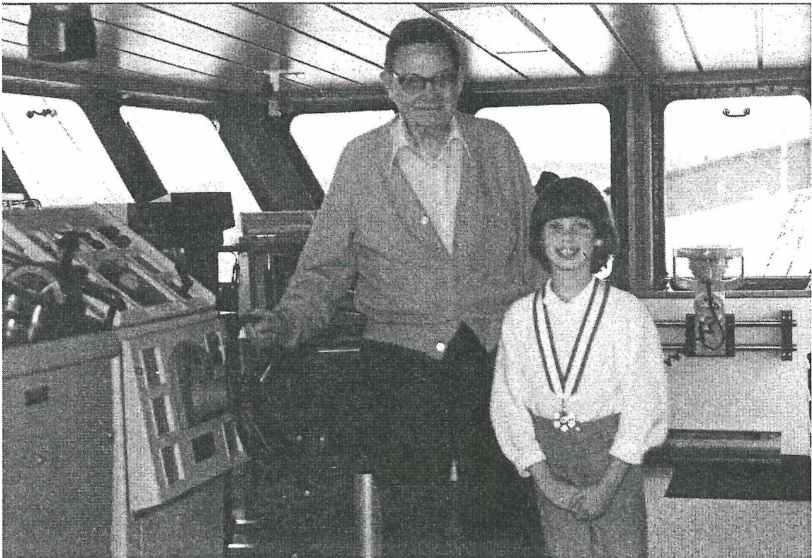


One of Bill Ricker's proudest honors - the offshore  
Fishery Research and Canadian Coast Guard Vessel, named the W. E. RICKER





Bill Ricker serenading participants at Treehaven (1992)



Bill with granddaughter Andrea on board the W. E. Ricker.  
Andrea wears Bill's order of Canada medal.

## The Plecoptera Publications of W. E. Ricker

(Listed in chronological order)

- Ricker, W.E. 1935. Description of three new Canadian perlids. The Canadian Entomologist 67: 197-201.
- Ricker, W.E. 1935. New Canadian perlids (Part 2). The Canadian Entomologist 67: 256-264.
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- Ricker, W.E. 1965. New records and descriptions of Plecoptera (Insecta). *Journal of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada* 22(2): 475-501.
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- Ricker, W.E. and H.H. Ross. 1969. The genus *Zealeuctra* and its position in the family Leuctridae (Plecoptera, Insecta). *Canadian Journal of Zoology* 47(6): 1113-1127
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