

William E. Miller (1930–2013)

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WILLIAM E. MILLER

(1930–2013)

William E. Miller was curious about what made the natural world tick, particularly when it came to Lepidoptera. Although he lived much of his life in the North, he never lost the warm, southern charm acquired from his birthplace in Texas and early years in Louisiana. This tall, thin gentleman with beard and jaunty beret was a fixture on the St. Paul Campus at the University of Minnesota. Spring on campus brought him the pleasures of seeing the magnolia trees in full bloom. Little did the students in the Student Center nearby know that this emeritus professor had once sung in a barbershop quartet!

Bill's academic career began at Louisiana State University where he obtained his B.S. in Zoology in 1950. He then migrated north to study, receiving both his M.Sc. in 1951 and his Ph.D. in 1955 at The Ohio State University under the guidance of his major professor Alvah Peterson, who is best known for his seminal two-volume work *Larvae of Insects*. Bill enjoyed the rural setting of the Wooster Campus while working on his dissertation research titled *The biology*

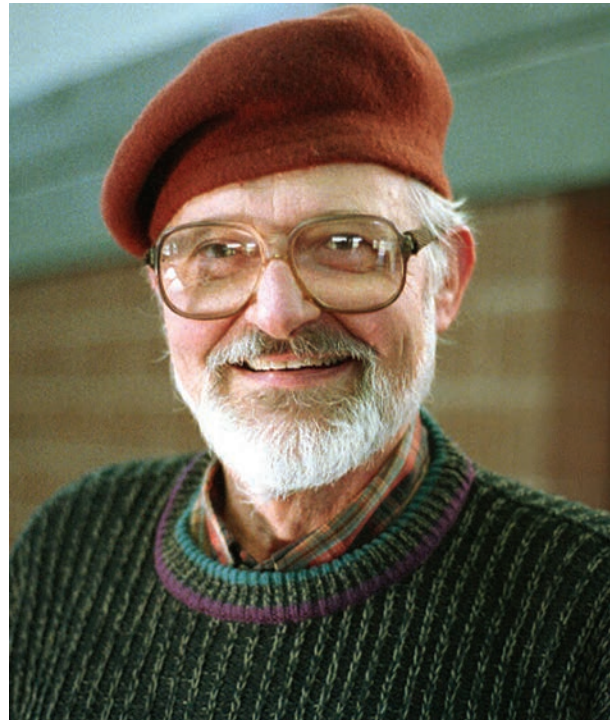
and control of the European pine shoot moth. He was a research assistant at the Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station in Wooster until 1954, when he joined the U.S. Army Division of Communicable Diseases at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

A fellowship from the West German Government (1957–1958) at the Forest Zoology Institute of Göttingen University, Hann. Münden coincided with Dr. Miller's appointment as Project Leader at the Lake States Forest Experiment Station in East Lansing, Michigan (1956–1964) on the campus of Michigan State University. Upon his return state-side, he worked at the experiment station while obtaining a second M.Sc. in Forestry from Michigan State (1961).

Dr. Miller was a Project Leader at the North Central Forest Experiment Station on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota from 1964 until he retired in 1982. He became an adjunct (and later emeritus) professor in the Department of Entomology, Fisheries and Wildlife (now the Department of Entomology) in 1976, where he generously contributed to teaching,



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mentoring of graduate students, and departmental service for more than 20 years. Bill was reserved but influential to the intellectual and social fabric of the department. He was a major professor and favorite mentor of graduate students even after his “official” retirement. His thoughtful and positive encouragement was not limited to students, as he mentored faculty as well. Many a faculty member sought his advice on everything from statistical analyses to balancing the demands of a personal life with work. Bill was a favorite editor of manuscript drafts, leaving his carefully penned comments, which were rigorous, thorough, and never harsh, in green ink. For many years, he taught a special course on Lepidoptera he titled *Lepidopterology*, which included a potpourri of information such as atypical examples of strange biologies, life histories undergirded by his copious knowledge of evolution, and systematics of this prolific insect order. When Bill stepped away from daily university activities in the early 2000s due to health issues, he remained active in his research and contributions to the Minnesota Department of Entomology.

During his career, Dr. Miller authored 137 publications, including several monographs; his complete bibliography follows this article. In the realm of systematics, Bill was a specialist on the Tortricidae, subfamily Olethreutinae. He described many new taxa (2 genera and 43 species), proposed new synonymies, and elucidated features of their life histories, becoming recognized as an authority on the North American members of this difficult group. His in-depth knowledge of systematics dovetailed nicely with his work responsibilities in the U.S. Forest Service, particularly for economic pests such as the European pine shoot moth, a species he published on extensively. Bill was especially interested in documenting or describing tortricid species that were introduced into North America, and many of his publications focused on these taxa. He also had an interest in documenting the “true” distribution of Holarctic species, many of which were considered different species in the Palearctic and Nearctic regions. His interest in past North American tortricid workers resulted in detailed catalogs of the species described by J. B. Clemens and C. H. Fernald, which became foundations for stabilizing the names proposed by these two early lepidopterists. Dr. Miller’s vast knowledge of Olethreutinae was partially summarized in his monograph *Guide To the Olethreutine Moths of Midland North America* (1987), a publication that greatly influenced many of the current Olethreutinae experts in North America. However, Bill did not limit

his studies to tortricids. In his ecological work on Lepidoptera he researched and published on a diversity of topics such as body size and its relation to geography and altitude, the correlation between adult feeding and oviposition, the diversity and life-histories of gall-forming Lepidoptera, and many others. His research explored and documented the interplay of systematics, ecology, evolution, and behavior in an experimental framework.

Dr. Miller was an avid reader, and he enjoyed fleshing out information from the literature by reanalyzing published data. For example, in his work on the population dynamics of Lepidoptera, he and his graduate student used published data on populations of multiple species from the same locality over at least a seven-year period to find that their fluctuations were often correlated. In more recent years, Bill compiled various literature sources of day-degree data and reanalyzed them using a more accurate analytical method that had been previously published but largely ignored. Just before his death, he worked to exhumate and correct Professor Alexander Hodson’s data set that detailed the past 51 years of spring development by woody plants on the St. Paul campus, and to make this data available to phenology researchers through the University of Minnesota’s Digital Conservancy.

As an academic advisor and experienced editor, Dr. Miller stressed the importance of writing every day and challenged students to make the most of their creative faculties. He did this by example with his 1978 publication of *The facile mind: an annotated bibliography for enhancing creativity and problem solving*. Some of his other favorite topics included the use of multiple induction in hypothesis testing and various ideas on how to explain low probability events.

Bill was a dedicated member of the Lepidopterists’ Society. Among his contributions to the Society was his service on the Executive Council. He served as editor of the Society’s journal from 1985 to 1988, an important period of time where he was able to steer the journal back on track in his collected and methodical way. His thoughtful approach to giving critical but kind reviews and his organized system for keeping manuscripts moving served as a model for subsequent editors of the Journal. Bill became a life member of the Society and served as editor of the Society’s *Memoirs* for over a decade, which culminated in an all-consuming effort to complete David Winter’s *Basic Techniques for Observing and Studying Moths & Butterflies* in 2000. Bill put a number of his own projects on hold in order to complete this important manual and ensure the book was published. Thankfully, he was able to complete many of his postponed projects. The last paper for

which he read galleys was published just prior to his death in the March 11, 2013 issue of the Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society and another is in press.

Bill encouraged students and young professionals to go to the Lepidopterists' Society annual meetings, which he himself was able to attend for many decades uninterrupted. Bill would often converse with students and new members, taking an interest in their passion for Lepidoptera and making them feel welcome to the Society he loved. For all of these reasons and more, he received one of the Society's highest honors, the William D. Winter Service Award, at the 2007 meeting in Bakersfield, California.

In the last couple of years of his life, Bill continued to be a presence in the Department of Entomology as often as his health permitted and worked on his manuscripts from home and at his beloved cabin in Ely, Minnesota. His wife Jocelyn persuaded him to substitute his habitual walk with a car ride from their home in a nearby neighborhood. Bill is survived by Jocelyn M. Muggli, his wife of 35 years, and his six adult children. We were privileged and thankful to have the talents, contributions, and scholarly spirit of William E. Miller in the service of entomology and lepidopterology for over six decades. His legacy will live on in his publications, students, and friends.

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