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In memoriam

George Campbell Eickwort
(1949–1994)

George Eickwort, distinguished student of arthropod biology and well-known to members of the IUSSI, died in a car accident in Jamaica on 11 July 1994.

It may come as a surprise to those who knew George only as a scientist, that his greatest love was his children, his daughter Alex, and sons, Robert and Jeffrey. In a distant second were teaching, studying sweat bees, tennis, and bird-watching. While they still lived in Ithaca it was common for George to run home to prepare dinner, arrange doctor's appointments, and provide transportation. George would drop anything he was doing when his children called, and it was obvious that he was talking to one of them by the gentle tone of his voice. When his children had left Ithaca and gone to universities in Wisconsin and Colorado, George often drove cross-country to spend time with them on holidays and vacations, including a trip in January of 1994, to Arizona, where he had spent his sabbatical the previous year. George was a warm and loving father who devoted himself to his children, in spite of academic pressures. George combined his love of his children and his interest in biology by bringing them on field trips; several papers are co-authored by George and his children.

While George showed exemplary dedication to his family, his associates received the same sort of parental dedication. Here too, his commitment was unconditional and self-effacing, as if they were part of an extended family (The Eickwortians). In fact, George had to be reminded on many occasions by his own students not to over-extend himself on their behalf, and to do justice to his own needs. In such an atmosphere there was no room for strife, and he encouraged cooperation. Students became lifetime friends and part of the larger Eickwortian family.

As a mentor, George was an inspirational teacher, an immense source of knowledge, and an unfailing counselor. He formed mature scientists not only by tutoring, but also by an absolute belief in them. He fostered growth merely by believing that the difficult could be accomplished. There was a magic about being in George's lab that enabled growth beyond anybody's expectations, apparently just by association. As described by one former student in the acknowledgements of his thesis, George "demonstrated the rare qualities of a minimalist advisor, possessing the invisible hand that ushered me into productive research without conveying a sense of supervision and control. No one could have found a better advisor. No one could have found a more loyal friend."

At the time of his death, George was Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology at Cornell; associate curator for the Cornell Insect Collection; gave brilliant courses in insect morphology, insect biology, and acarology, and seminars in behavior and systematics; he also had responsibilities for agricultural extension work identifying mites, ticks, and bees. In the little time available for his own research, George was still able to wear several hats and published major studies under each. Although best known to readers of *Insectes Sociaux* for work on the social behavior of sweet bees, he was also one of the world's authorities on the systematics and taxonomy of halictid bees, and was the world's authority on the systematics and ecology of mites associated with native bees.

George used his broad knowledge to generously serve colleagues, and he frequently agreed to identify boxes and boxes of tiny green or black bees, and even tinier mites. He was especially accomplished and fascinated with sweat bees, and was working on a revision of an important and difficult group (*Dialictus*) at the time of his death. He was also working on behavioral and biogeographic studies of halictid bees in the West Indies, and was collaborating on molecular phylogenetic studies of the sweat bee genera.

In addition to the West Indies, George studied bees and other insects in México, Costa Rica, Brasil,and throughout the United States. Even as a child, according to his brother Jerry, George would rather look for insects than go to a swimming pool (apparently he had not yet taken up tennis). Field trips with George were simply fun (except if you were his brother, and then you had to carry the equipment!). You had to be energetic to keep up, although you inevitably learned an enormous amount of information while hunting for bees and their nests in the hot sun. George's outrageous sense of humor was most pronounced in the field and he would carry on extensive discussions about the Weather Gods (never plan collecting trips too far in advance or you will allow the Weather Gods time to foil your plans) and the ideal places to collect *Dialictus* (vacant lots, trash dumps, gas station parking lots). One of George's collecting axioms was that the best place to collect rare species of *Dialictus* was wherever you happened to sit down for lunch (and he was right). He had a fondness for digging bee nests, and had made extensive observations of numerous species. He laughed even louder in the field than he did in his office, and happily told the story of how he and two friends broke an underground water pipe in the Arizona desert, and how he convinced the guards at the Biosphere 2 reserve near Tucson that, although covered in mud, he really was a Cornell professor. He was modest, disliked formalities, and always corrected people who addressed him as "Professor Eickwort," with, "I'm George."

George served as President of the Acarological Society of America, and was the current President of the International Society of Hymenopterists. He served the IUSSI in many ways: Secretary-Treasurer for the Western Hemisphere section; President of the North American section; and organized several symposia, including one at the August, 1994 Congress in Paris. He was a Research Associate at the American Museum of Natural History, and a visiting faculty member at the Universities of Arizona and California at Davis; he also taught courses at the Organization for Tropical Studies in Costa Rica, the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, the University of Texas Breckenridge Field Station, and in El Programa Cooperativo sobre la Apifauna Méxicana. He served on various federal grant review panels, as a consultant for Time-Life Books, as a native bee expert for a law firm investigating an airplane crash, and he was editor of a series of books on insect biology from Cornell University Press.

George Eickwort was a proud and loving father, a distinguished colleague, and a priceless, loyal friend. We miss him.

W.T. Wcislo
Smithsonian Tropical
Research Institute
Unit 0948
APO AA 34002-0948 USA

B.N. Danforth
Department of Entomology,
Cornell University,
Ithaca NY 14853 USA

U.G. Mueller
Section of Neurobiology
and Behavior,
Cornell University,
Ithaca NY 14853 USA