

EDITORIAL

Persona of Roy

Volume 18, Issue 2 (2009) of this Journal was dedicated Roy R. Snelling, with an introduction by Longino and Snelling (2009) highlighting his life, some of his scientific adventures, and a bibliography of his publications. This issue of the Journal of Hymenoptera Research continues the dedication with seven more papers honoring Roy. Many of the contributors in both issues penned comments of inspirations Roy had given throughout their careers. On the personal side, everybody who knew Roy has one or many stories. Here we share a few of the stories exemplifying the essence of Roy.

Who Would Think The Name "Roy Snelling" Could Save Your Hide! – Almost four decades ago I was a graduate student working on my dissertation on the chemical ecology of Nearctic *Camponotus* species. In spring of 1973, I embarked on a collecting trip across the southern United States. After southern Texas, I headed westward collecting in West Texas, New Mexico, around Portal, Arizona, and westward to the Huachuca Mountains. Roy Snelling, a friend of my advisor, Murray Blum, had given directions to a location where I might be able to collect *Camponotus ulcerosus* Whr. I drove the rather desolate road to the Huachuca National Monument and remember thinking that I hoped my old car would not break down. When I found what I determined to be the collecting locality that Roy had given, I pulled off the road and began looking for foraging workers. I was probably a quarter to a half mile south of the dirt road when I located the entrance to a colony of *C. ulcerosus* under a rock and began to excavate. I probably dug a two foot deep hole 2-3 feet in diameter.

Preoccupied with the excavating, I didn't notice the approach of a pick-up truck that had driven close to me through the scrub. Two men had gotten out of the truck and were heading toward me. One was an older rugged looking cowboy and the other looked about twenty. The older one said "Stand up!" They surprised the daylight out of me. As I got up I could see that the younger one was wearing a holster with the largest revolver I had ever seen. It looked like the barrel was 18 inches long and the guy had his hand on its handle. The older guy asked me what I was doing. When I said I was digging up an ant colony, he asked "Why here?". I said a friend had told me about this location and that there was a particular species of ant that I was hoping to collect. He then demanded, "Who told you to come here?". I told him that he would not know the person, but I could see he was getting agitated. When he growled "I asked you who told you to collect at this location?", I blurted out 'Roy Snelling'. Immediately the older cowboy's demeanor changed. He turned to the younger guy who still had his hand on the handle of the revolver and said "He's OK, he is a friend of Roy's!" They had known Roy for some time and were friends. The rancher explained that he had been told that there was someone exhibiting suspicious behavior on his property. He further explained that drug dealers would cut his fences that parallel the US/Mexican border and drive trucks across the border loaded with marijuana. His cattle would inadvertently wander over the border into Mexico and were rustled or slaughtered as soon as they

crossed the border. It was costing him hundreds of dollars. The rancher thought I might have been a spotter for these people, or that I was digging up drugs buried at that location. The name Roy Snelling had a very long reach.

– Richard M. Duffield, Howard University

Roy and Big and Haires – In the 1990s I was out many nights alone in Willcox, AZ working on vinegaroon behavior. I was slowly walking around with a headlight scanning for vinegaroons – that is, acting exactly like a sick or disabled prey. To make matters worse, I would crawl under trees or in brush to examine critters or holes. Several nights I saw mountain lions in the beam of the headlight that was a fixture on my forehead. Mountain lions have a beautiful green eyeshine; all other North America cats have yellow eyeshine. One night I looked to the right and saw two large green eyes, and a little later looked to the left and saw two small green eyes about half the height above the ground. Needless to say these night adventures became less pleasant and more anxious. It is amazing what one's mind can do when alone for hours at night in a quiet environment.

Roy Snelling called a few days later and I relayed my story and asked how to deal with this situation. He matter of factly commented that the Indians in the US West routinely had that problem that they solved by making full neck-length chokers of closely fitting elk rib bones. They worked because the cats have rather short teeth, cannot puncture through the rib bones, kill by piercing the cervical spinal cord, and will flee if the prey is not quickly killed and puts up much of a fight. By blocking the success of an initial surprise attack, the warrior could turn and punch the cat in the belly or elsewhere and it would flee. I never had to test Roy's theory, but did run around thereafter with a thick roll of towel around my neck and a bicycle helmet. Roy's wisdom gave me piece of mind and I never became cat food!

– Justin O. Schmidt, Southwestern Biological Institute

Roy on the Phone – When I was a post doc at the Smithsonian, I had no phone, and my rare calls came to Arnold Menke's phone. One day Arnold stuck his head out in the hall and yelled gruffly "Chris, that Indian's on the phone." Well, it was kind of like being in England and hearing someone call "God save the Queen". I wouldn't ask which queen, and in this case it didn't occur to me to ask which Indian. So, I walked down the hall, picked up the phone and asked "You send-um smoke signal?", to which Roy responded "Ugh."

– Christopher K. Starr, University of West Indies

Horse – This final story was known to many. In 1973 Roy was attending the funeral for William S. Creighton, the great North American ant taxonomist of the middle of the 20th Century. Creighton had died of a heart attack. While at the service Roy found himself in the same hospital as Creighton had been in, in the same bed, with the same doctors, and with the same diagnosis. Having seen how Creighton ended up and sizing up the competence of the doctors, he decided it best to check himself out and return from Missouri to California, against the protests of the doctors who said he would never make it alive. Once

back, he sent the doctors a post card featuring the south end of a horse to assure them he had arrived safely. That was Roy!

– The editors

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