

ALDEN HOLMES MILLER

(1906-1965)

It is the editor's sad duty to conclude this volume of *The Auk* by announcing the sudden death of Alden H. Miller at the latter's retreat at Clear Lake, California, on October 9, 1965.

Always courteous, quickly efficient, and helpful in details pertaining to *The Auk*, Dr. Miller possessed and freely made available the experience derived from his editing of *The Condor* with sustained and remarkably uniform excellence over the quarter century since 1939. During this editorship Dr. Miller carried on and built upon the traditions of that distinguished journal developed by the pioneer zoologist Joseph Grinnell from its inception at the turn of the century. In content and excellence it provided the most rigorous competition for its contemporary journals.

The complete contribution of Alden Miller to science, both intense and diffuse, has been very great and its careful assessment will demand the full powers of a future memorialist for *The Auk*, among other and inevitably numerous biographers.

His appreciation by the whole scientific world, of which zoology is but one of many parts, is amply evidenced by his election to the National Academy of Science; few ornithologists have been so recognized.

President of the A.O.U. from 1953 to 1955, he had in 1943 already received the Union's highest honor, the Brewster Award, for his pioneering work "Speciation in the avian genus *Junco*."

His monograph on *Junco*, following upon his earlier study of the American shrikes; his careful descriptive and analytical studies of the distribution of California birds; his patient work with the diverse contributors to the Mexican check-list; his extensive investigations in avian paleontology; and his interest in various aspects of avian physiology were all related to his obvious occupancy of a position near the center in the development of a new and dynamic period in ornithology.

Dr. Miller was, since 1940, Director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California at Berkeley, where he was a Professor of Zoology. There numerous students came under his influence. These students, many themselves now senior zoologists of the first rank, have additionally contributed to ornithology with an impressive collective and individual distinction possibly unmatched in ornithological history by the academic progeny of a single master.

Not long before his death Dr. Miller, the natural candidate, had begun the arduous task of organizing the work of the new committee charged with developing the sixth edition of the A.O.U. Check-List.

Rarely did Dr. Miller miss a meeting of the A.O.U. His opinions, usually definite and firmly rooted in law and history, were freely given in Council and business meetings, delivered in a deep and resonant voice in disciplined prose and were, during the period that the writer has been privileged to be present in those sessions, inevitably helpful, fair, and thoroughly considered. He had, too, although he concealed it at times with marked success, a quick and perceptive humor and wit unfortunately too much damped by what must have been an extreme shyness—an apprehension, perhaps, of being misunderstood or giving unintentional offense.

Both he and his abundant work must often have suffered, as is common with men simultaneously capable and dutiful, from crushing demands on his time and energies; yet there was never indication that he asked quarter or excused himself. He was a thoroughly responsible man.

It is difficult to comprehend that he will not be back.