

AN IRREVERENT HISTORICAL NOTE ON EBBA
By C. Brooke Worth

The recent appeal by President Dater for early issues of our sparkling journal (see EBBA NEWS, Vol. 24, No. 4 - July-August 1961) contained some incidental historical information pertaining to the status of our organization at the time when the newsletter first appeared. Unfortunately I no longer possess my file of these leaflets, but I do happen to remember certain events and circumstances that may be of interest to our present membership, most of whom have joined EBBA at a much later date.

It requires someone like Beecher Bowdish, Raymond Middleton or William Pepper, Jr. to go back into really ancient history, for my first contact with EBBA was as recent as the early 1930's. Just prior to this era, something rather odd must have happened for the society had dwindled to practically nothing as regards geography, membership or any sort of constructive program for meetings or exchange of information on a broad basis. Officers, as I recall, consisted solely of Philadelphians: Dr. William Pepper, Sr., President, and William Pepper, Jr., Secretary-Treasurer. Meetings were called when someone had the urge, and this was once or twice a year, perhaps, and at these times a handful of people, some of whom I have forgotten, met at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia to exchange local banding anecdotes. I remember scarcely any formal papers except the Secretary-Treasurer's report, and I believe that none of these communications was recorded in a recognized publication.

Besides the Peppers and Ray Middleton, we could always count on John Gillespie and a Mr. Bailey (both deceased) to give us a solid Philadelphia majority. Mabel Gillespie was another anchor then as now. A foreign intrusive element consisted on rare occasions of Beecher Bowdish, Jeff Gill or Mrs. Marie V. Beals and her inventive husband, all of whom must often have felt that their trips from the New York region had been scarcely worthwhile, although we profited immensely by them.

I confess that I was quite content with the set-up, for I was a new local bander, and among these experienced Philadelphia giants I could always be sure of authoritative answers to questions. EBBA would have continued to slumber so far as I was concerned.

But then Carlton M. Herman appeared. In 1938 Carl was completing his work on blood protozoa of birds under Dr. Hegner at Johns Hopkins University at nearby Baltimore. He had just spent a summer at the Austin Ornithological Research Station on Cape Cod, where he came to appreciate the value of studies coordinated between the laboratory and marked or banded forms of wildlife in the field.

Cigar between young lips, he came up to one of our meetings at the Philadelphia Academy, frankly to "case the joint" for its potential usefulness to ornithological science. By the end of the comfortable and

soporific session he had concluded that the outfit was dead and had already singled out his dupe - a young biology teacher at Swarthmore College only a stone's throw away, namely me! Over a couple of beers afterwards, he outlined his instantaneously envisioned strategy. The "sewing circle" needed more youthful leadership, people who could conceive and direct co-operative projects, which meant a closely-knit membership along the entire Atlantic Seaboard south of New England, which meant a chatty newsletter to non-members to spark a membership drive, which meant a new slate of officers, which meant politics.... By this time I was lost, but Carl had it all figured.

Sure enough, he quickly superceded Dr. Pepper as President and created new posts. Newspaperman Jeff Gill became his editor (of the original NUS), while I was primed to take over from Carl as a figurehead when he left Johns Hopkins the next year to rise to greater heights. I dropped out of the scheme pretty fast myself, but Carl's diagnosis proved to be lastingly correct. Under Jeff's persuasive aegis membership soared, annual meetings began to be held elsewhere than in Philadelphia, also became more exhilarating. A succeeding editor, Albert Conway, even came along to dignify NUS as NEWS. Candidates for occupying office, with pledges for action during tenure, became commonplace.

I must add that Carl and I felt most conspiratorial in upsetting the benign Philadelphia applecart of 1938. In retrospect, however, I suspect that Dr. Wm. Pepper, Sr., who had been my Dean in Medical School at the University of Pennsylvania (again demonstrating the close-knit aspect of EBBA in those days) was probably amused at my subversive alliance with the upstart from Johns Hopkins, feeling that he could have quashed these unsavory plots in one minute by convening a Philadelphia Troika. For his own reasons he withheld his mild veto and we got away with our shattering maneuver.

It is unquestionable that the spirit of our organization ever since that time was conceived by student-President Carlton M. Herman.

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WORKSHOP COMMITTEE REPORTS . . . that the popularity of sessions (outlined in previous issue of Ebba News) is as follows:

- 1st. Net Instruction and Examining Live Birds are running neck & neck.
- 2nd. The two Aging and Sexing sessions are tied with Project Planning.
- 3rd. Dissection and Preservation.

Have you sent in your preference to the committee? If not, read over the article and rush your vote to David Bridge, 8A Ridge Rd., Greenbelt, Maryland. ***