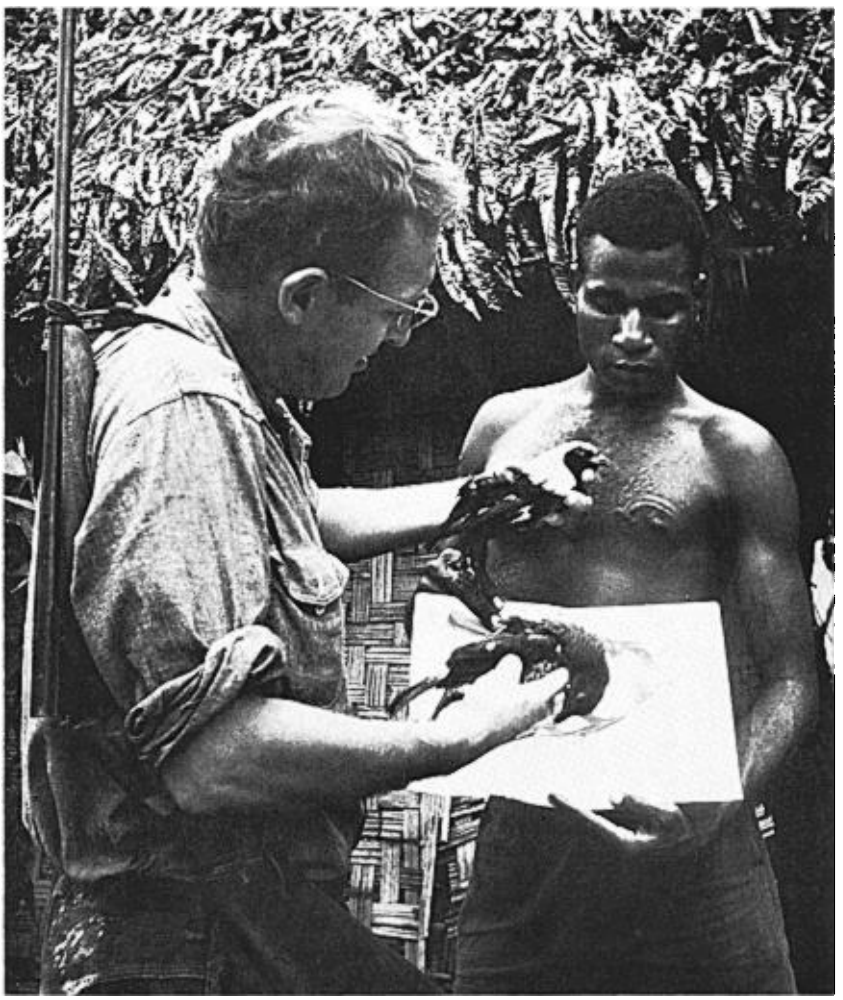

E. Thomas Gilliard

1912–1965

Photograph taken in Adelbert Mountains, New Guinea, in 1959,
by Margaret Gilliard.

IN MEMORIAM: E. THOMAS GILLIARD

ROBERT CUSHMAN MURPHY AND DEAN AMADON

E[RNEST]. THOMAS GILLIARD, who joined the American Ornithologists' Union in 1938 and was elected a Fellow in 1961, was born at York, Pennsylvania, on November 23, 1912, but spent most of his earlier years in the vicinity of Baltimore. As a boy he was interested in all outdoor sports and activities, the more adventuresome, the better. One such activity was natural history. One of his companions at that time, Brooke Meanley, writes me that Tom was always the most daring of the group in climbing to nests. Later, with the same companion, on Bonaventure Island, "Tom insisted on going over the high cliff to visit the Gannets. I sat on top holding the rope for dear life. Suddenly I felt a tap on the shoulder. It was Tom, who had climbed back up a rock chimney and, seeing the look of rapt concentration on my face, sneaked around behind me."

Gilliard won a Telluride scholarship to Cornell University, but about that time incurred a detached retina when struck in the eye by a hockey puck. Ordered to give up reading for several months, he decided to see the west, and went to California. Gilliard did thereafter complete college courses at various times and places, even while in the United States Army, where he served with distinction in New Guinea and the Philippines. In 1958 he was awarded a well deserved honorary doctorate by Wagner College, Staten Island.

I don't know what led Tom to the American Museum of Natural History. At any rate he began work, at first as a volunteer, in 1932. He spent his entire career there, rising to the rank of Curator. Frank Chapman liked him from the first and asked Gilliard to come along as his assistant to Barro Colorado Island, Panama. This was the beginning of other field work in the neotropics.

In 1937 Gilliard accompanied an expedition to Auyan-tepui, southern Venezuela, led and sponsored by a longtime friend and patron of the American Museum, Dr. W. H. Phelps, Sr., of Caracas. Gilliard's first major paper was on the birds collected on this expedition. Chapman later sent Gilliard to collect in the Macarena highlands of Colombia. The area proved terribly difficult to reach and much lower than anticipated, once there. Tom, years later, still smarted when he told me of how Dr. Chapman had merely glanced at the specimens and then walked off in disappointment, because of the absence of montane forms in the collection.

Perhaps this experience, perhaps his war service was responsible, but

at any rate Gilliard turned his back on South America[1] and his later scientific explorations were for the most part in the South Pacific and particularly in that most fabulous of all ornithological storehouses, New Guinea. He led five expeditions to that part of the world, including one to the Bataan Peninsula, Philippine Islands. On several of these he was accompanied by his wife, Margaret, an artist and explorer in her own right. Many discoveries came from these expeditions. (In the photograph accompanying this memorial, Gilliard is shown, with one of his collectors, comparing the only specimens of the bowerbird *Xanthomelas bakeri* to be secured since the species was described in the 1920's.) These discoveries were duly written up and published, sometimes in co-authorship with Tom's mentors in Papuan ornithology, Drs. Ernst Mayr and A. L. Rand.

To anyone as highly extroverted and active as Tom Gilliard, long hours in the cloistered halls of study did not come easy. Nevertheless, he was far above the level of those explorers and collectors who are content, or at any rate resigned, to let others write up the fruits of their labors. He worked as hard in the office as he did in the field and advanced several original and imaginative concepts, especially as regards his beloved birds of paradise and bowerbirds.

Gilliard's abilities as a photographer of professional caliber and a writer enabled him to reach a wide popular audience, in the pages of the *National Geographic*, in his book *Living birds of the world*, and elsewhere. He could easily have turned to more remunerative fields but ornithology was his first and only choice of a career.

Tom Gilliard died suddenly on January 26, 1965, after attending a meeting at the Explorers' Club of New York, of which he was Vice President. His loss was a grievous blow from which his many friends will not soon recover.—D. A.

The following remarks were made at a memorial service on January 29, 1965, by Robert Cushman Murphy.

The loss of a friend of any age can be nothing but hard. Most difficult of all our reconciliations is when the friend is taken, as we say, before his time.

Tom Gilliard was 52. He radiated youth in greater degree than most men of even earlier stages of life. In imagination, purpose, power, and drive he stood only on the threshold of his prime. Still greater things for him, his family, the Museum, and natural science lay in the offing, all of

[1] Actually, Gilliard went to British Guiana in 1962, made some wonderful films of the Cock-of-the-rock, and liked it so much he announced his intention of retiring in the Kanaku Mountains of that country.

them formulated in his plans. It was characteristic of Tom to think far ahead.

I clearly remember when he came to us thirty years ago and began to dig into the work and, quite unconsciously, into the hearts of his associates. Dr. Chapman, the head of the Department of Birds, was a kindly man but he certainly never bubbled with eagerness to be chummy with new acquaintances. On the contrary, he had tight reserve; one had to earn, and usually over a long period, a stake in the affections of the chief. I never saw anyone win this as quickly as Tom, or more lastingly.

The boy, it seemed to me, shared traits with travelling naturalists of earlier generations—men such as Banks, Solander, Steller, Hutton, Wallace, Bates, and Livingston. He loved the earth in its primordial guise, without the scars that overpopulated and over-technologized man has scratched upon it. We know how he sought out and lived in some of its wildest recesses.

Tom had style and flair that were highly individual. Everything he did was illumined by imagination. We saw this in 1936, when he went with a young comrade to dig the bone beds of the vanished Great Auk on Funk Island, off Newfoundland. On that very trip he showed it further by releasing in the Atlantic a considerable number of bottle messages to be carried away in the Gulf Stream drift. For the next two years replies came back to him from the Irish and British coasts, France, Spain, Portugal, and elsewhere. Most of them were eminently human, sometimes whimsical, messages. And all the oceanographically significant data were published by the Hydrographic Office. Tom showed it again in his repeated venturesome penetrations of New Guinea, expeditions which he carried off ably, yet with seeming lightheartedness. Let us not forget, also, that on his first foray into that reeking bush, he fought his way with a Garand army rifle, rather than a collector's fowling-piece.

Tom showed the same trait again—imagination—when he located in Australia, of all places, long-lost paintings by John James Audubon, together with a live descendant of the American artist-naturalist. And yet again when he sent to the court of Nepal a supply of confiscated millinery feathers which the United States Customs had deposited in the Museum. These paradise plumes were scientifically worthless, but at the time they proved to be a treasure of diplomacy. Who but Tom could have thought of it?

He had not been long with us when he married the young woman of whom we are equally fond and proud. She became the sharer of his field work. They have cooperated admirably, the talents of each complementing those of the other. They formed a team which is an example today and will continue to be throughout the history of exploration.

As a family man, Tom seems to me to have lacked nothing. He had unobtrusive but deep-rooted understanding with his daughter Susanne and the two sons, Chapman and James. Happily, he and his wife, Margaret, have together been able to rear them through their most formative years.

To the general public, Tom was best known as a gifted expositor. He never failed to make his zoological, geographic, and anthropological interests appealing to a very wide circle of readers, viewers, and listeners. Beyond this, he correlated his discoveries among some of the most inaccessible and highly organized birds in the world with findings from quantitative studies in animal behavior. He saw his birds of paradise, bowerbirds, and cocks-of-the-rock not only as fabulous ornithological entertainment, but also as expressions of instinct, motivation, stimulus, and reaction. As such, their behavior lent itself to analysis and interpretation capable of opening our eyes to steps of evolution throughout life in its myriad forms.

The last remarks offer glimpses of Tom's mind, but I want to end with his *heart*. Tom loved his neighbor, and that neighbor was every human being with whom he had contact. He never needed to say so because it shone out of him. When we publish the results of our research, most of our colleagues and correspondents take the papers for granted. Possibly, they even compliment us—silently—by thinking, "That's a good job."

Not so, Tom! He would write a note, enthusiastically. He would pop into your room to congratulate you and to add, "I could wish I had written that."

If Tom had any faults, they were drowned out in the milk of human kindness. But there was no dearth of iron in his gentleness. He worked hard and consistently, whether at his Museum and home desks or in tents of the tropical wilderness. He paid a high price for his dedication. From childhood, probably from birth, he carried a minor abnormality in the rhythm of his heart. This was not regarded as hazardous and it did not bar him from the army. But we shall never know how the condition may have worsened under frequent and prolonged treatment with anti-malarial drugs.

And who else but Tom could have taken with outward equanimity the blow of losing the sight of one eye? There was no whimpering, no cursing his luck, not even a long face. That battle lost, he bobbed up smiling and carried on, putting all he had into every responsibility assumed.

He was a stoic with cheer in his countenance, a man who should put a ramrod in the spines of all who knew him well. That means his friends who are here today and, on our part, we shall never cease to mourn his youthful cutting off.

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