



Donald Denning (1909-1988)

Biographical Sketch by Hany Abdoun, Archives Volunteer

Donald Denning was born on December 18, 1909 in Ely, Minnesota. As a young boy he became interested in collecting insects. Upon completion of high school, he received a four-year scholarship to Macalester College, St. Paul, Minnesota, where he received his B.S. in zoology in 1932. In 1933 he became Assistant Entomologist at the University of Minnesota and received his M.S. in entomology from there in 1937. From 1936 to 1937 he was employed by the Bureau of Entomology, United States Department of Agriculture. As Junior Professorial Assistant to Dr. J.R. Parker he conducted research on the biology and ecology of grasshoppers. In 1938 he became Senior Field Assistant. In 1942 Denning received his Ph.D. in entomology from the University of Minnesota. His studies focused on insects of public health importance, including control of livestock insects, economic control methods, and on the taxonomy and biology of Trichoptera, or caddisflies.

In 1942 Dr. Denning became Assistant Entomologist with the United States Public Health Service on Mosquito Survey and Control in war areas. In 1943 he was commissioned a Lieutenant in the U.S.P.H.S Reserve Corps, where he worked on insects that affected man, and in 1945 he was promoted to Captain. At the end of 1945 he requested a discharge and in 1946 he received an honorable discharge.

In 1946 Dr. Denning accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Entomology at the University of Wyoming. In 1951 he moved to California and worked for Velsicol Chemical Corporation as a field researcher, a position he held until his retirement in 1976. In 1954 he received an Honorary Doctor of Science from Macalester College.

Dr. Denning was a member of many scientific organizations including the Entomological Society of America, which elected him Fellow in 1943. He was also a member of the Entomological Society of Canada and President of the Pacific Coast Entomological Society, which occasionally held its meetings at the Entomology Department of the California Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Denning died on February 7, 1988. His widow, Loretta Denning, donated his caddisfly collection to the Entomology Department of the California Academy of Sciences in 1989.

Sources Consulted:

American Men and Women of Science, 12th Edition, Vol. 2, 1972.

Eulogy, March 4, 1988.

<http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com/>

Pacific Coast Entomological Society, Executive Board Correspondence, 1972.