

## In memoriam Dale James Osborn

Zemřel Dale James Osborn

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Far away from his homeland, the American mammalogist Dale J. OSBORN has finished his life's pilgrimage after a prolonged illness.

Dale spent the latter third of his life in Prague, the capital of Czech Republic (former Czechoslovakia). He moved there in 1980, after marrying a Czech botanist Jana KOSINOVÁ (born KUČEROVÁ) whom he met in 1977 while working together in Egypt's Moghra Oasis. Their happy life in Prague contributed a great deal to Dale's quick adjustment to the different culture and then cold-war political situation, successfully overcoming all challenges of everyday life in a foreign country. Perhaps because of close ties to the English-speaking scientific community, he never did master the Czech language, but became a happy resident of his adopted homeland, nonetheless. Having previously resided in many parts of the world, he was an extraordinarily cosmopolitan man, open and forthcoming, yet able to admire and respect the lifestyle of a small Central European country. He sensed a special atmosphere emanating from the old, historic city of Prague.

Dale J. OSBORN was born in a little town of Hemet, California, in a typical middle class American family. After three years of service in the Navy, he started his university studies at the Colorado State College at Fort Collins (B.S., 1948), to continue at the University of Wyoming, Laramie (M.S., 1949). From the very beginning, Dale's passion was zoology, later specializing in the study of mammals. He served as an Instructor in Zoology at the University of Wyoming, an Instructor in Biology at Boston University, finally accepting the



position of a Demonstrator in Zoology at McGill University in Montreal, where he completed his PhD. in 1957. (His thesis on Taxonomy and Zoogeography of the genus *Clethrionomys* was unfortunately not published.)

Dale gained very important teaching experience during his first assignment abroad, as an Assistant Professor and the Head of Natural Science Department at Robert College, Istanbul, Turkey (1957–1960). He continued as an Assistant Professor in Zoology at Texas Technological College, Lubbock (1960–1961), followed by several years as a Teacher of Zoology at the Anatolia College, an American agriculture school in Thessaloniki, Greece (1961–1964). His work was always connected to various research grants: 1951 Arctic Institute of North America grant-in-aid for research in zoology in the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula; 1952 Carnegie Corporation Arctic Fellowship and funds for research in zoology in the Quebec-Labrador Peninsula; 1958–1961 National Science Foundation grant-in-aid for the study of the taxonomy and distribution of the mammals of Turkey. During these years, Dale became well acquainted with the Mediterranean, its natural history (namely fauna), contributing significantly to the understanding of small mammal distribution there.

Full time, long-term scientific research with no teaching duties awaited Dale in Egypt. During 1964 to 1970, as a Field Associate of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, he worked as a mammalogist in the Department of Medical Zoology, US Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3 at Cairo. He organized numerous short field trips and longer desert expeditions trapping animals and collecting plants. Publications from 1968 to 1970 document his activities there. Much later (1980), together with his local co-worker I. HELMY, he produced a comprehensive compendium on the recent land mammals of Egypt, including Sinai. The Egypt years much determined Dale's future life. The cruel desert environment, pastoral life of nomads, and landscape full of prehistoric remnants strongly appealed to his practical as well as romantic soul, and fully occupied his mind. He became professionally interested in animals of ancient Egypt, both wild and domesticated. The greater goal in his zoo-archeological studies became close collaboration with top egyptological institutions in Chicago, London, and the Czech Institute of Egyptology of Charles University with its rich library in Prague. This work resulted in his last publication in 1998, *The Mammals of Ancient Egypt*.

Between OSBORN's Egyptian and Prague years was a decade of fruitful service as a Curator at Large, Curator of Public Relations, and Curator of Special Projects in Chicago Zoological Park, Brookfield. Numerous short contributions published during this time document his activities there.

It is not easy for us to fully evaluate Dale's life-long scientific work since we only got to know him as an experienced, older colleague, whose professional carrier had already culminated. However, his active involvement in the local scientific community, compilation of previous research material, and valuable editorial assistance has inspired many of Czech zoologists. In the later years, Dale's chronic illness had eventually prevented him from finishing his last work, *The Charm of Ostrich*, a unique treatise on the presence and role of this bird in the culture of ancient Egypt and elsewhere. His life-long interest in world cultural heritage combined with zoology, including animal depictions in ancient drawings and medieval sculptures he saw and photographed in Prague, presented a new realm of research possibility, which he would no longer be able to undertake.

Dale will always represent to us first and foremost an accomplished scientist, but also someone who deeply related to the people of the country he lived in, a charismatic mentor

revered by colleagues, a dear friend, and a man dedicated to and loved by his family. We owe him our sense of connection to the global scientific community, confidence, and enthusiasm about the field.

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