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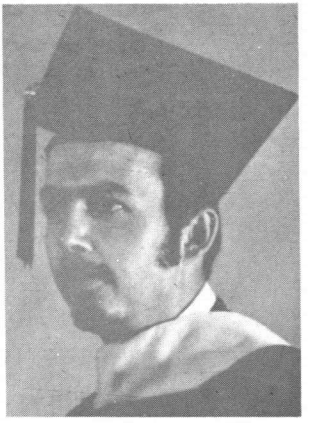
OBITUARY

GEORGE P. DOERKSEN

A short biography of Dr G.P. DOERKSEN (born: July 5, 1940, New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada; deceased:? 30 July 1981, Liard River Hotsprings, British Columbia; entomologist, photographer and teacher) is followed by his odonatological bibliography (1979-1981). His odonatological notebooks and photographs are deposited in the British Columbia Provincial Museum, Victoria.



To all who knew George Doerksen — that enthusiastic and energetic entomologist, naturalist, photographer and teacher — his sudden and tragic death this past summer was a great shock. As always in the summer, George was in the field, this time near the northern border of British Columbia at Liard River Hotsprings, about 560 km northwest of Fort Saint John. According to reports, he was in his camp during the night of July 30-31, 1981, when he was attacked and killed by a grizzly bear. There were no witnesses, but authorities, reconstructing the tragedy, believe he was killed when, in the dark, he surprised a bear that was attempting to break into his car.

This was the last summer George had planned to travel around British Columbia photographing and documenting the behaviour of the province's dragonflies. His marvellous portfolio of photographs lacked only some of the northern species of Zygoptera, *Aeshna* and *Somatochlora*, and he was determined to find most of them by summer's end. Liard River Hotsprings especially drew him, for this is the only known locality in British Columbia for *Ischnura damula*, far from the rest of this damselfly's known range.

GEORGE PETER DOERKSEN was born on July 5, 1940, at New Westminster, British Columbia, Canada. He grew up in Pitt Meadows, a farming

community in the lower Fraser River Valley and attended Maple Ridge High School in the town of Haney. He graduated in 1958. A year later he completed Grade 13 and made the short journey to Vancouver to begin his university studies. In May, 1963 he received a Bachelor of Science degree in zoology and bacteriology from the University of British Columbia. He then taught elementary school for one year at Quesnel, B.C., and for two years lectured in highschool biology and chemistry at Saint Ann's Academy, New Westminster.

From 1967 to 1969 he attended Western Washington State College at Bellingham, Washington, U.S.A., graduating with a Master of Science degree in biology. His thesis was on the internal parasites of the muskrat in southwestern B.C. George got his first taste of the tropics in 1969-70, when he taught biology, general science and mathematics at the Colegio Internacional de Carabobo in Valencia, Venezuela. It was here, he told me, he caught entomological fever, for the nearby forests were full of colorful and exotic insects of all descriptions.

Returning north, he spent the summer of 1970 at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station on Lake Texoma. There he made the acquaintance of GEORGE and JUANDA BICK, who became his mentors in odonatology. He wrote to me once concerning this meeting with George Bick: "*He planted a seed, I suspect, in my mind, I loved him.*" Dr Bick, in a letter to me on August 28, 1981, said, "*In my entire teaching career, George was my all-time favorite. I taught field entomology at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station for 15 years and had George in my class the last year there (1970). I am proud to say that this course started George on his odonate career.*"

That summer George also took a course in plant taxonomy with Dr. James Hardin of North Carolina State University. Dr Hardin brought George to Raleigh where he became a graduate student with Dr Herbert Neunzig. For three years he studied the life histories and larval morphology of nine species of *Nephopterix* (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae). Subsequently, he published three papers on this work. In the 1973 summer session he was instructor of insect biology. He received his PhD from North Carolina State University on May 11, 1974.

In 1976 when I first met George Doerksen, he was beginning his dragonfly studies. At the time, he was working in a lumber mill at Tahsis on Vancouver Island. His hope was to become a self-supporting entomologist, although he knew this would be difficult. After a great deal of negotiation and support from his colleagues, he finally convinced his employers to allow him several months leave each summer in order to pursue his dragonfly work. Thus began a project that spanned five years and only ended with his untimely death.

George's dragonfly photographs are artistically beautiful and scientifically significant. Through the kindness of his family, these photographs and detailed fieldnotes have been donated to the British Columbia Provincial Museum; — George was always eager to expose his work to the general public, and I am happy that the photographs will be used in lectures and displays in this museum. A travelling exhibit on British Columbia dragonflies, which will incorporate some of these excellent pictures, is now under construction. It is fitting that this exhibit will travel throughout the province, stopping in many of the communities George visited while studying and photographing dragonflies.

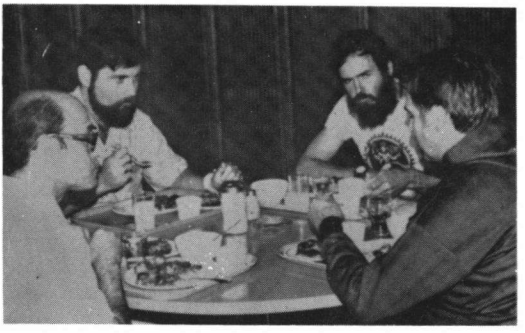


Fig. 2. At a lunch during the Fifth International Symposium of Odonatology, Montreal, August 5-11, 1979. From left to right: Dr A. Compte Sart, Dr M.L. May, Dr G.P. Doerksen, R. Hutchinson. (Photo: M. Kiauta)

George was only beginning to publish his odonatological observations and much of the data he accumulated remain in his notebooks. Papers he did publish are listed below. The reproductive behaviour of Odonata was his favourite topic, and he thought nothing of kneeling for hours up to his waist in muddy water observing and taking notes and photographs. His observation of a female *Enallagma cyathigerum* ovipositing under water for 90 minutes is probably a record for this behaviour. He was the first to collect the larva of *Ischnura erratica* in Canada, and was beginning an intensive study of the reproductive behaviour of *Ischnura cervula.*

With DENNIS PAULSON and me, George was working on a colour field guide to the dragonflies of the Pacific Coast of North America. Dennis and I plan to complete this work and dedicate it to the memory of our friend.

George was an active member of the International Society of Odonatology and the Entomological Society of British Columbia. He was also a teacher. Whatever he did, he passed on his experiences to others. However, he was also very independent and did not relish the restrictions of bureaucracy. He would wryly say that he preferred millwork to the British Columbia school system! During his expeditions throughout the province he visited provincial parks and presented popular lectures on dragonfly biology to campers. In Tahsis where he worked in the mill, he directed high school students in a biology study group. These students were quick to catch George's enthusiasm. One of

their fascinations was with bones and comparative anatomy; their enthusiasm was responsible for the cleaning and assembling of numerous skeletons for classroom study and display purposes.

Many interests occupied his time. A keen fisherman, he enjoyed searching the inlets and bays of the British Columbia coast for salmon and ling cod. As an amateur botanist, he photographed flowers as well as dragonflies. He studied birds and mammals, particularly while working on his Master's degree. Besides his thesis work, he published a study of the food habits of the Barn Owl in southwestern British Columbia.

Above all, George enjoyed life. We can only guess at what his boundless energy would have produced had he lived longer. His modesty, cheerful spirit, humour and willingness to share his discoveries earned him many friends. His colleagues everywhere will miss him greatly, not only for his good work and infectious enthusiasm, but for all those things of promise in his future.

ODONATOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY OF Dr G.P. DOERKSEN (1979-1981)

1979a Notes on mating and oviposition of Enallagma cyathigerum (Charpentier) (Odonata Zygoptera: Coenagriidae). *Abstr. Pap. Vth Int. Symp. Odonatol.*, Montreal, p. 12.

1979b [Slide and Movie Programs] Mating and oviposition of Enallagma cyathigerum (Charpentier). *Abstr. Pap. Vth Int. Symp. Odonatol.*, Montreal, p. 37. [Title only].

1979c (CANNINGS, R.A. & —) Description of the larva of Ischnura erratica (Odonata: Coenagriidae) with notes on the species in British Columbia. *Can. Ent.* 111: 327-331.

1980 Notes on the reproductive behaviour of Enallagma cyathigerum (Charpentier) (Zygoptera: Coenagrionidae). *Odonatologica* 9 (4): 293-296.

Portrait on p. 59 dated May 1969 (?)

Entomology Division,
British Columbia Provincial Museum,
Parliament Buildings, Victoria,
British Columbia V8V 1X4, Canada

R.A. CANNINGS