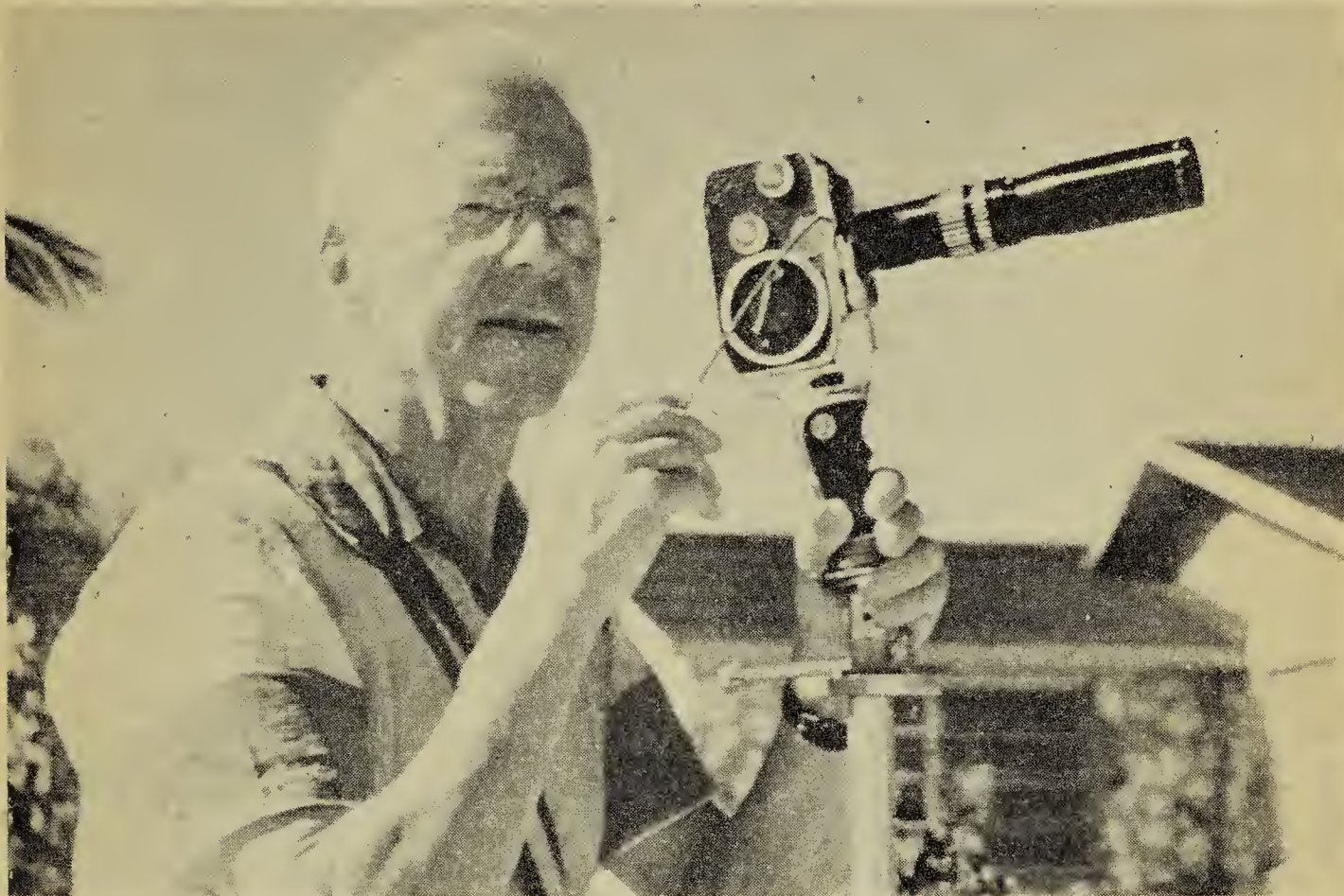


IN MEMORIAM

Alexander George Lawrence, 1888-1961

by C. Stuart Houston, Saskatoon



With the passing of A. G. Lawrence on August 25, 1961, the Saskatchewan Natural History Society lost one of its first members. As will be explained, the very origin of the **Blue Jay** can be traced to the impetus given to this venture by A. G. Lawrence.

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A. G. Lawrence was born of Scottish parents in Cardiff, Wales, on April 24, 1888. During his early boyhood in Scotland and his youth in England he became interested in ornithology, botany and geology — and he continued these interests after coming to Canada in 1910. For forty years he served as secretary of the City of Winnipeg Department of Health.

He was one of the founders and a past president of the Manitoba Natural History Society, a founder and past president of the Manitoba Museum Association and a past president of the Winnipeg Cine Club. He contributed observations and

photographs to Bent's **Life Histories of North American Birds**.

He began the weekly nature column in the **Winnipeg Free Press** entitled "Chickadee Notes"—and 1756 columns came from his pen in the course of 34 years, until his severe illness nearly seven years ago. Here were listed the observations of virtually all Manitoba naturalists, and here appeared the first published observations of such Saskatchewan naturalists as Maurice Street, Manley Callin and the writer. The world famous author, Bruce Hutchinson, once remarked something to the effect that whereas in other cities, people might be interested in the sport pages or the comics, in Winnipeg everyone read "Chickadee Notes."

Following a prolonged illness in 1954-55, "Lawrie" resumed his interest in birds. He attended the summer meeting of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society at Madge Lake in June, 1956, and that at Moose Mountain in June, 1959.

In January, 1961, he and his son, Morrey, visited the Bahamas, and made a special trip to remote Andros Island, to study the birds and sea life. This year he completed a manuscript on the birds of the Shoal Lakes, Manitoba.

He is survived by his wife, Selina, and two children—Morrey of Toronto and Gerdine (Mrs. Crawford) of Winnipeg.

To understand how A. G. Lawrence played so great a role in the founding of the **Blue Jay**, one must review the life of the late Isabel Priestly, whose path and Lawrence's crossed on numerous occasions. Mrs. Priestly had been a research botanist in England prior to her marriage to a Canadian soldier at the end of the war, and she naturally joined the thriving Manitoba Natural History Society soon after moving to Winnipeg in 1929. At this time, A. G. Lawrence was creating a great deal of popular interest in bird-watching through his lively column, "Chickadee Notes," in the **Winnipeg Free Press** (the newspaper which now had R. J. Priestly as its desk editor!). On the nature outings, Mrs. Priestly began with the botany group but, noticing the greater enthusiasm in the birding group, she gradually developed a serious interest in ornithology as well.

When Mrs. Priestly moved to Yorkton in July, 1935, her enthusiasm kindled an interest in many young people, whom she led on weekly nature hikes around the "Muskeg" on the western outskirts of Yorkton. Soon she was asked to write a nature column in the **Yorkton Enterprise**—and this column was frankly patterned after "Chickadee notes" both as regards style and the high degree of reader participation.

As an outgrowth of these activities, Mrs. Priestly in July, 1942, issued a

mimeographed list of the birds in the Yorkton area. The next column of "Chickadee Notes" was devoted to a glowing review of this list; indeed, A. G. Lawrence spoke so highly of Mrs. Priestly's work as a model for other communities to follow, that his words were reported almost verbatim in the news columns of the **Regina Leader-Post** and **Saskatoon Star-Phoenix**. So many requests for the list resulted that the initial 75 copies were rapidly exhausted and a "second run" became necessary.

Most of the people who received Mrs. Priestly's list replied, comparing their own observations in their districts with hers at Yorkton. Mrs. Priestly realized for the first time how many people had similar interests—and conceived the idea of a yearly mimeographed newsletter to act as a clearing house for the exchange of such information. An enthusiastic response greeted a form letter addressed to her new contacts and a quarterly bulletin was decided upon. The Yorkton Natural History Society was formed for the purpose of publishing it, and the first mimeographed issue of the **Blue Jay** (125 copies) appeared in the fall of 1942. Mrs. Priestly several times acknowledged to me that it was really A. G. Lawrence's column that had "started the ball rolling."

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One of A. G. Lawrence's admirers recently described him as "A man . . . completely dedicated to priming a person's interest, and fascinating him into wanting to learn more. He taught me dedication to the pursuit of knowledge . . . and that a responsibility is incurred to pass this knowledge on."

The work of A. G. Lawrence lives on in the lives of the countless people who came under his influence.

Nature Notes from Ireland

by **Thomas Heaslip**, Loughries, Newtownards, Co. Down, N. Ireland.

Sheep and cloud; sky and meadow. Sweep of a summer wind over the far blue hill. I am in the townland of Annamoe, in the county of Offaly.

Although not primarily on a birding trip, I have had the good fortune

to observe bird life in abundance and variety along the quiet grass-verged roads and among the broad fields of this tranquil pastoral land.

The cawing of rooks enlivens the somnolent summer air, when parties