



Dr. J. Bernard Gollop

## A TRIBUTE TO J. BERNARD GOLLOP

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Upon completing the December, 1976 issue, Dr. J. Bernard Gollop stepped down as editor of the *Blue Jay*. It is a pleasure to thank Bernie for the service he has given our Society and for the contribution his editorship has made to natural history.

The editorship of the *Blue Jay* takes many hours of time and is otherwise demanding. All this Bernie knew when he was asked to accept the position. Before committing himself he thought it over thoroughly and talked with Dr. George Ledingham, who was completing 16 years as editor, and with Miss Margaret Melcher, Dr. Bob Nero, Dr. Stuart Houston and others connected with

the journal in various capacities. Once having agreed to a term of service, Bernie applied himself to the task the only way he knows how — with complete dedication.

A great deal of work goes into the production of a journal like the *Blue Jay*. The problems are compounded when the publisher is an organization of volunteers like the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, where only the printing is done by a commercial agency with trained personnel. All the myriad other tasks have to be performed by Society members and their friends. The responsibility for planning and coordinating the operation and many of the actual tasks — are taken on by the editor. He makes it all

go. Bernie tells us that he has spent 50 to 60 hours on each issue.

Bernie put his heart into his work, as well as his time. He often used to stop at our house and show us a new *Blue Jay*, hot off the press. If something was not to his liking, he would say so. From the way he talked we could sense he was disturbed, and blamed himself. It hurt him to fall short of his ideal.

As editor, Bernie engaged in the perennial argument about what the *Blue Jay* should be. He delighted in debating whether the format should be changed or not, whether there should be more conservation articles or more articles on natural history, more scientific writing or more popular writing, more photographs or fewer, more regional articles or more local items, etc., etc. At the beginning, he sent out a questionnaire to all readers, and he guided himself as much as possible by the interests they indicated in their responses.

From its inception the *Blue Jay* has contained items on conservation. Yet only in the past two decades have feature articles on ecology and the environment appeared with any frequency. Bernie aimed to strengthen this side of the journal, a timely move as knowledge of these subjects was expanding and public awareness growing.

At one time the flow of small items sent in by readers had pretty well dried up. We missed these letters containing brief notes on natural history observations on the prairies. When Bernie took over, he and I discussed the value of these members' contributions and ways in which their participation might be encouraged. The increasing frequency with which these notes and letters have been appearing in recent issues in gratifying.

Bernie lost one battle. In his last issue as in the first, the major section was on birds, which is not what he wanted. He strongly believed that all natural history subjects should be treated, and he tried hard to broaden the coverage. In many areas he was

successful. But birds still predominated. Perhaps this was inevitable since the majority of our authors and our readers seem to be interested in birds.

Every editor dreams of being deluged with a great quantity of unsolicited material on all sorts of subjects written in a finished and readable style! He can then happily be selective, accepting articles which meet certain standards and philosophical criteria and rejecting others which do not. However, in reality not enough articles are submitted and some must be solicited. In this the editor has to exercise considerable tact, for it is difficult to ask for an article and then request that part of it be rewritten. Yet this is often necessary, if the journal's standards are to be upheld. Bernie was able to do this with some success because authors recognized his integrity and sincerity, and knew that he set as high a standard for himself as he did for them.

Another dream of Bernie's could not be realized. From the beginning he wanted colour photographs in the *Blue Jay*, but the financial position of the Society made it impossible to introduce them. Colour photographs would have increased publication costs by at least \$1,200 a year and the membership fee would have had to be increased. However, Bernie can be determined when he wants to be. The December issue in 1975 had a centre spread in full colour. How did he swing that? A glance at the Society's financial statement will show an item entitled "Honoraria". Bernie saved each quarterly honorarium paid the editor, and blew the whole sum on a colour photograph for one issue!

Gary Seib, our new editor, tells me that Bernie has agreed to continue working for the *Blue Jay* by helping edit the bird material. I am happy to learn this as we, the readers, will continue to profit both from Bernie's editorial experience and from his knowledge of ornithology. When trained natural scientist contribute his services to a society composed mainly of amateurs, we all benefit.