

TONY CAPUSTEN (1915 - 1987)

Anthony Richard Capusten was born on his father's homestead in the Strong Pine district south of Weirdale, Saskatchewan, on 23 July 1916. A life-long interest in nature was aroused by his grade 6 teacher,

Miss Myrtle Anna Bourne, and her Audubon bird cards, in the one-room school at Strong Pine. He died while communing with nature at his beloved cottage, nicknamed "Gopher Ranch," at Emma



Lake, Saskatchewan, on 6 Jul; 1987.

He spoke five languages fluently, read voraciously, taught navigation and photography to Cadets for 25 years, and was the leading authority on Saskatchewan mushrooms, yet he was the most quiet and unassuming of men. He offered his presence and quiet support each time the Prince Albert Natural History Society resumed a period of activity, and was its president in 1961-62, but did not consider himself a leader.

After some years helping on the family farm, Tony attended Regina College to complete high school and then joined the R.C.A.F. as a navigator during the Second World War. Shot down over France, he was cared for by the French resistance — and for the rest of his life kept in contact with his French rescuers, hosting a visit from one of the grandchildren to Canada in 1986. After the war, he again attended the University of Saskatchewan at Regina before re-enlisting for three years of all-weather flying in Australia followed by two years at a base in Prince Edward Island. On his delayed return to civilian life he was the manager of the Bottle and Keg company in Prince Albert, recycling bottles, until his retirement in 1982.

A long-time member of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society, and a director from 1956-1960, Tony was an expert nature photographer, with a particularly fine collection of mushroom photographs. He kept a nature diary and took morning and evening walks along the North Saskatchewan River, rain or shine. His publications in *Blue Jay*, spanning 32 years, included seven notes, all but one illustrated with his own photographs, dealing with edible wild plants, fungi, mushrooms, drilling habits of the pileated woodpecker, and nests of the Common Merganser, Cliff Swallow and Brown-capped Chickadee. He also contributed six book reviews, one letter, and the photograph for the back cover of the

December 1963 issue. He was an Associate Editor of the *Blue Jay* from 1984 until his death.

His daughter, Dr. Bernice Capusten, a radiologist in Red Deer, Alberta, remembers the friction engendered in the family by her acquisition of a cat — Tony felt he must keep it under surveillance to protect the robins. Son Steven's pet crow was no more popular when it flew off with the car keys Tony had left on the hood of his car. The crow landed on the roof of the neighbor's house, but even the arrival of the local fire department with ladders could not retrieve the keys. The Capusten home was haven for any injured bird; over the years robins, warblers, flickers, killdeers, as well as owls and hawks were kept in boxes and cages until well enough to be released along the nearby river bank. Tony had a way with wild birds, but the onset of facial paralysis (Bell's palsy) about 1971 made this more difficult.

He was predeceased by his wife, Mary, in 1974. We will miss Tony's enthusiasm for all of nature, and his quiet smile. — *C. Stuart Houston*, 863 University Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 0J8.

Capusten contributions to *Blue Jay*:

Cliff Swallow 13(2):40
Brown-capped Chickadee 13(3):36
Prince Albert and Emma Lake Fungi 21:145
Common Merganser 41:119
Edible Wild Plants and Herbs 44:86
Mushrooms, 1985 44:86
Pileated Woodpecker 44:142

Book Reviews:

Wild Life of Australia and New Guinea 15:186
Mushrooms 17:173
Eye of Wind 21:40-41
Fungi 21:145
Mushrooms of Quebec 44:131
Canadian Encyclopedia 44:131
Letter 19:188