

# IN MEMORIAM — DR. FREDERICK GEORGE BARD — 1908 - 1989

RUBY APPERLEY and FRED LAHRMAN



Fred Bard worked at the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History in Regina for a total of 45 years — years which were dedicated to the task of building and maintaining the Museum. In spite of terrific odds and great difficulties and discouragement, and because of this unfaltering determination, a permanent facility was finally constructed and completed in 1955.

Supported by the Saskatchewan Centennial Jubilee Committee and the Saskatchewan and Regina Natural History Societies, the building of the museum was the culmination of Bard's dream. At that time, this renovation with its lifelike and detailed displays was considered to be one of a kind in north America — a graphic testimony to Fred Bard's imagination and energy.

years later Dr. Stuart Houston commented in his wildlife column in the quarterly Fish and Game Sportsman: "I remember Fred showing me through the new building on Easter Weekend 1955. The plastering wasn't done, wires sagged and exhibits were just holes in wall. Familiar with habitat exhibits in the American museums, where one takes over one year and \$10,000.00 to prepare, I expected that at most one habitat case would be ready when the Governor General opened the museum on May 16. Imagine my surprise at the opening ceremonies to find the Museum completed. Ably assisted by Fred Symon and R. D. Symons and by work-night and day these men had achieved the impossible."

From his early youth Fred Bard loved outdoors and the world of nature. He wanted to share with others the wonders found there. When he was 16, the Museum of Natural History became a natural outlet for him to achieve his goal of popularizing nature. Perhaps it is not generally known that he also dreamed of a museum out-of-doors, one where people could enjoy and study the living world of nature in the wild. To this end, he was instrumental in establishing the Wascana Waterfowl Park, the Condie Natural Refuge, as well as many Interpretive Areas and Nature Trails within the provincial parks system.

No one can ever know the countless hours of pleasure, the thrill of discovery, or how many lives have been touched by the visiting these sanctuaries.

Many of Bard's happiest hours were spent with his family on a small, open, grassy piece of property fronting on the Wascana Creek in Regina, which he had purchased in the late thirties. It didn't seem barren for long. He soon planted a row of trees which grew rapidly. He excavated a dugout and had his own private sanctuary. He

called this area the "banding station" — for it was there that he first banded waterfowl and began his prestigious bird banding career. Thus over the years Fred Bard won recognition in North America as an ornithologist.

Bard delighted in listening to the songs of the Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Marsh Wrens and other birds which filled the air with their melodies in early spring and summer while he worked in his garden at the "banding station." It was here that the Wascana Canada goose flock was started. The flock began modestly in 1953 with the first pair of geese — "Hiawatha and Queenie" — a gift from the late Ralph Stueck, a naturalist from Abernethy, Saskatchewan. It took additional pairs of geese, eggs, hard work and a good measure of trial and error before the geese became established. The many Canada Geese now found in the southern part of the province and especially Regina, attest to the success of this pilot project.

At the "banding station" Fred Bard did some of his first film work. He spent many hours in blinds photographing birds in the marsh, becoming an accomplished photographer — both in stills and motion pictures. His beautiful photos appeared in various publications throughout Canada and the United States. He assembled a portfolio of coloured slides to meet the demand for his lectures, which he delivered to many city and rural schools in the province.

While Fred's photography portrayed the beauty of nature, the theme always centered on conservation and the preservation of natural habitat. His film *The Pelicans of Last Mountain* won an award of excellence at the Yorkton Film Festival in the early 1950s. He filmed a variety of subjects including the Carrot River Log Drive, paleontology and archaeology excavations and of course his first love, zoology. Much of this footage was incorporated into other film productions.

Early in his career Fred became involved with the conservation of the nearly extinct Whooping Crane. In the mid 1940s he assisted others in the search for the then unknown nesting area of these magnificent birds. Although many miles were flown over northern Saskatchewan, no nests were found. It was not until about 1945 that he saw his first Whooping Crane. There is a tale of his delight and amazement when he saw the almost mythical bird and shouted "It really is a Whooping Crane."

Through publicity campaigns, the public rallied in support of the birds and reports began coming in of other Whooping Crane sightings. It was through these reports that Fred and other museum staff were able to film the cranes, and no doubt this publicity helped to bring the Whooping Crane back from the brink of extinction. It was Fred who first conceived of the idea for a Whooping Crane foster parent experiment using Sandhill Cranes to raise Whooper chicks. Some 20 years later, in 1975, the experiment was finally tested.

Fred Bradshaw, Director of the Provincial Museum since 1928, and his staff at the museum were undoubtedly the catalysts in the move to organize the Regina Natural History Society founded in 1933; many of the preliminary discussions took place in the work room of Bradshaw's assistant, Fred Bard. The Regina Society and the Provincial Museum have remained mutually supportive.

When Fred was appointed director of the Provincial Museum in 1947 he promised to assist the *Blue Jay*, which was in difficulties after Isabel Priestly's death, by mimeographing the bulletin at the museum. He also reported regularly to the *Blue Jay* on museum activities. When an organization meeting was called in Regina to form the Saskatchewan Natural History Society on 24 January 1949, Fred

Bard was one of the founding members. He was one of its first directors (although he preferred not to take an office), and served as honorary president for some time. In his early years, Bard was an active member of both the provincial and local societies.

Fred Bard was a founding board member of the Saskatchewan Museums Association and continued his support throughout the years, always willing to assist the smaller museums of the province.

On 31 May 1970, Fred retired from the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, where he had served so diligently for 45 years, the last 23 as director. Just prior to his retirement he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws degree by the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, in recognition of his notable contributions to the province in developing the Museum and for his work in conservation. In addition, he received numerous other awards for his dedicated services to conservation.

After his retirement from the Museum, Fred and Phyl Bard moved to Surrey, B.C., where nature conservation and the promotion of natural history continue to play an important role in Fred's life. He spent many hours working on a local Ducks Unlimited project, where he had the opportunity of working with his beloved Canada Geese.

On 23 September 1989, at the age of 81, Frederick George Bard passed away after a lengthy battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Philomene, of Surrey, B.C., one daughter, Donald of California, twin daughters, Lene Feltz of New Mexico and Loraine Freeman of Victoria, B.C.

Fred Bard's contribution to wildlife conservation and education will continue to enhance the lives of people in generations to come.