
IN MEMORIAM

WARREN HJERTAAS, 1921 - 1999

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“A knyght ther was and that a worthy man ... And though that he were worthy, he was wys ...” Geoffrey Chaucer.

Warren Randall Hjertaas was born at Wauchope, Saskatchewan, on January 31, 1921, and departed this life on July 12, 1999. He completed the first segment of his education in a one-room country school (Middleburg), growing up and observing nature while doing chores on a mixed farm like most children of that time. Education was important – a number one priority – to quote his son Blain. Warren took grades 9 and 10 by correspondence at Middleburg school, then took grade 11 at Arcola, where he earned his board by milking cows and delivering milk before school. His grade 12 was completed at Redvers.

Post-secondary education began at the University of Saskatchewan with a physics major as his aim. In 1942, after two years at university, Warren heeded the call of his country and joined the Royal Canadian Navy as an electrician. He was posted to Canada's first aircraft carrier, *H.M.C.S. Warrior*. The ship was still under construction but Warren's ingenuity and teaching ability meanwhile benefited the war effort. At an airfield in Scotland he trained pilots to land on carrier decks. He also did electrical service on aircraft and salvage work on aircraft damaged by enemy fire.

Warren served as an Ordinary Seaman, first class, until 1946 and then

came back home to farm with his father and brother Ralph. This was a typical mixed farm of the time; it later became a beef cattle enterprise, then a commercial swine operation. After a move to Yorkton in 1971, he was senior manager of the rat control program for east-central Saskatchewan. He provided ingenuity and skill in problem wildlife control for the City of Yorkton, plus on-site rat control for three rural municipalities.

For some servicemen, lasting romances and married life began during the war, but for Warren this part of his life began in 1947 when he met the young teacher at nearby Middleburg School. He married Elinor Stuckey in 1948 and they had three sons. Blain lives on the home farm and runs a seed-cleaning plant. Dale is well-known to naturalists for his continuing role in species management and policy planning for Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management. Sadly, Mark was struck down by leukemia at age 10.

It has been my good fortune to know Warren in many roles. Before Shirley and I moved back to the farm at Saltcoats in 1985, we had met Warren and Elinor and their faithful diesel truck at Saskatchewan Natural History Society field trips, and at meetings where Warren's skill in debate and judgement were often of critical importance. His talent in photography was evident during members' slide shows. As president of the Yorkton

society, and in spite of the fact that executive meetings were most often held in Davidson, Warren made many a long trip over snowy roads to help in policy and planning.

Warren's contributions on committees and boards of towns and rural municipalities, community and provincial organizations included: delegate, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; charter member, Redvers Lodge, B.P.O.E.; secretary, Redvers branch, Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF); SWF zone chair and member of SWF provincial executive (President's Council); developer and principal instructor in SWF firearms safety courses at Redvers. Warren helped at the York Lake Regional Park, especially with upkeep of the Isabel Priestly Nature Trail. Warren and Lorne Lepp, and their wives, cleared another trail in the Ravine Ecological Reserve in Yorkton, where the trail now bears his name. He led numerous tours, especially for school children, and did many slide presentations on this trail and ecological park.

He twice accepted the Saskatchewan Natural History Society's prestigious Conservation Award. In 1989 he was given the award personally for his part in development and maintenance of the Ravine Ecological Preserve on the west edge of Yorkton. In 1995 the award was presented jointly to the Yorkton Natural

History Society and Ducks Unlimited for their work on natural history inventories of Ducks Unlimited lands. As president of the Yorkton society, Warren played an important organizing and field role. Many of us benefited from the common thread of activities that ran through his life.

To me, the life of this man whom I observed for so long, and worked with in so many scenes, deserves the following free translation of Psalm 37:3 as an appropriate closure:

"Trust in the Lord and do good, so thou shalt dwell in the land..."



Warren Hjertaas



"Every day opens and closes like a flower, noiseless, effortless."

John Muir, *In Nature's Heart : Wilderness Days of John Muir.*