## William Bridge Cooke, 1908-1991

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For most of us, among favorite images remembered from MSA forays and meetings are those of Dr. William Bridge Cooke colorfully attired in one of his mushroom shirts, carefully crafted by his wife. He accepted the task of summarizing results of these excursions as a serious responsibility. A prolific author, writing nearly 200 articles during his long and productive life, Bridge pioneered standards for microbial observations during waste-water treatment, and was renowned for his knowledge of fungal ecology and taxonomy, especially of the Polyporaceae. But first and foremost, Bridge was a lover of the out-of-doors, especially the mountains, and the fungi they relinquished to an avid collector.

William Bridge Cooke was born July 16, 1908 in Foster, Warren County, Ohio, and died at the age of 83 in Cincinnati, Ohio on December 30, 1991. He was the eldest of the four children of William Thomas Hunter Cooke, a gardener, and Katherine May (Bridge) Cooke, a teacher. Bridge married Vivian Marie Greenwald on June 12, 1942, in Reno, Nevada, after a 12yr courtship.

Bridge Cooke's education began at his mother's side. As a public school teacher, she took her children with her to the school where she taught. After early schooling in Foster, Bridge graduated from Terrance Park High School in 1925. He enrolled in the University of Cincinnati night school program in 1928, and then wanted to enter the Unitarian ministry, but after a year of study at the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry in Berkeley, California, felt he lacked the temperament for the job. After a brief period of study at the University of California, Berkeley, Bridge returned to the University of Cincinnati in 1932, from which he graduated in 1937 with a B.A. in Botany. Graduate study was undertaken at the Oregon State College under the guidance of Donald P. Rogers, with a M.S. degree awarded in 1939. After being drafted and serving in the Army during World War II, Bridge earned his Ph.D. from the State College of Washington in 1950, under the direction of Rexford F. Daubenmire.

A colorful employment history exemplified Bridge Cooke's love of natural history, especially fungi. His earliest employment was a National Youth Administration position in the University of Cincinnati herbarium, preparing fungal specimens. Summers from 1936–1941 and 1946–1947 were spent as custodian of the Shasta Alpine Lodge, Mount Shasta, California. It was a rugged job, getting up at 4:00 A.M., but this employment allowed much time for floristic studies, resulted in several publications, including a series of popular articles in the Mount Shasta Herald, and shaped much of the rest of his life's activities. While at Oregon State College, he earned his living by aiding Roderick Sprague identify grass diseases. Prior to World War II, Bridge contributed articles to the Warren County News (Ohio) on local plant life. During the war, he served for 2 yr as a U.S. Army supply clerk in Virginia and was then transferred to the Tropical Deterioration Research Laboratory in Philadelphia, a position that utilized his mycological expertise on a study of the role of fungi in the destruction of equipment and clothing in tropical climates. After his discharge from the army, Vivian encouraged Bridge to pursue his Ph.D. This led to a move to Washington, where he worked in the herbarium under the direction of Charles Gardner Shaw. Upon completing the Ph.D., Bridge was employed by the Robert A. Taft Sanitary Engineering Center, Cincinnati, as a mycologist, a position he held until his retirement in 1969. In his retirement years, he held research associate appointments at the University of Cincinnati and Miami University.

As a professional mycologist, Bridge Cooke authored at least 192 publications on the taxonomy and ecology of fungi, fungal and vascular plant floristics, and waste water organisms, including five books: *A Laboratory Guide to Fungi in Polluted Waters*... (1963), *Our Mouldy Earth* (1970), *The Ecology of Fungi* (1979), *Fungi of Lassen Volcanic National Park* (1985), and *The Fungi of Our Mouldy Earth* (1986). New taxa he published include at least 3 subfamilies, 10 genera, 1 section, 1 subgenus, 144 species, and 4 subspecies and varieties, as well as 141 new combinations at various ranks. Bridge was an avid reader and published at least 160 book reviews. He also wrote, but never published,



William Bridge Cooke, about 1960.

English translations of many scientific articles from German and French, including such major works as Lohwag's *Anatomie der Asco- und Basidiomyceten*. His last major scientific work, a fungal biota of Ohio, was under revision at the time of his death, and is being edited for posthumous publication.

William Bridge Cooke was a member of numerous scientific societies, including the American Association

for the Advancement of Science (fellow), Mycological Society of America, Explorer's Club, British Mycological Society, International Society for Human and Animal Mycology, American Institute of Biological Sciences, Society for Industrial Microbiology, Ecological Society of America, Botanical Society of America, American Bryological Society, American Fern Society, American Society of Plant Taxonomists, Arctic Institute, California Botanical Society, California Academy of Sciences, Ohio Academy of Sciences (fellow), North American Mycological Association, Sierra Club, Nature Conservancy, American Society of Agronomy, Soil Science Society of America, Ohio Mushroom Society, International Society for Plant Taxonomy, American Academy of Microbiology (charter member and fellow), Northwest Scientific Association, and Society of American Bacteriologists. Honors awarded to Bridge include induction into the Blue Hydra (University of Cincinnati), Phi Sigma Society, Sigma Xi, Gamma Sigma Delta (Oregon State College), as well as a Superior Service Award from the U.S. Public Health Service and an Award for Excellence from the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration. He was cited in Who Knows-And What, American Men of Science, Who's Who in the Midwest, Who's Who in America, World Who's Who in Science, and the Dictionary of International Biography. He served on the editorial boards of Mycopathologia et Mycologia Applicata and Sydowia. Bridge presented papers at meetings of the Ohio Academy of Science, Mycological Society of America, Purdue Industrial Waste Conferences, and the Gordon Research Conference on Stream Pollution.

As a member of the Mycological Society of America, Bridge served one term (1962–1964) on the MSA Council, and was present at most forays during his years as a mycologist. He was involved with or chaired the MSA Foray Committee for over 30 yr from at least 1960 to 1991. For his outstanding dedication to the annual MSA forays and for inventorying the foray results, he was presented a MSA Special Service Award in 1990. Bridge also attended forays of the North American Mycological Association, Ohio Mushroom Society, Northeast Mycological Foray, and those of the International Mycological Congresses.

Bridge was an avid collector, both of plant and fungal specimens, and of stamps. His personal herbarium, numbering some 70 000 specimens, consisted mainly of fungal specimens, but also vascular plants, bryophytes, and lichens. The bulk of his fungal herbarium is now deposited in the W. S. Turrell Herbarium, Miami University, but specimens were distributed widely. In addition to exchanges of specimens and gifts sent out for determination, Bridge prepared sets of specimens issued as *Mycobiota of North America*, which were sent to 25 institutions, of which 11 fascicles were issued, numbering 1–450, from 1939 to 1951, and materials for new issues were being prepared at the time he died. Many taxa were based on his collections, and Bridge Cooke was honored with taxa named for him, including *Bricookea* M.E. Barr, *Bahusakala cookei* M.B. Ellis, *Choiromyces cookei* Gilkey, *Clathrospora cookei* Wehmeyer, *Microsporium cookei* L. Ajello, and *Phaeosphaeria cookei* Shoemaker & Babcock (all fungi), as well as *Glyceria cookei* Swallen (Graminae), and *Phacelia cookei* Heckard & Constance (Hydrophyllaceae).

Bridge will be remembered as a quiet and independent individual who liked to spend time reading, writing, and studying his herbarium. He did not like to drive, so Vivian drove him places he wanted to go, or they took the bus. In his early years, Bridge would walk the many miles from his home to the University of Cincinnati, often reading a book as he walked. As a young man, when his lifelong trips to Mount Shasta, Mount Lassen, and Glacier National Park began, he hitchhiked from Cincinnati to the West. Trips west after he and Vivian married were by car. Although they had no children of their own, they often included a niece or nephew on these trips, who report many songs sung on the way. Later, Bridge and Vivian used the bus to travel cross-country, and Bridge reportedly had all the bus time tables for the Cincinnati terminals memorized. Although a punctual man when going to church or other places, he would lag behind on hikes, being too interested in the plant and fungal specimens to be collected to care to keep up.

In fact, Bridge was the ultimate forayer. He was in his glory in the woods or in the lab, postforay, working up specimens. He enjoyed challenging his colleagues and young mycologists-to-be with the use of a new generic name or species epithet. He also made great use of the spread of collections on the display tables by harvesting collections for his herbarium. Many of the collections in his herbarium were derived in this manner. Bridge was very helpful in providing specimens for study. With the geographical area covered by the forays, and the specimens authenticated by experts in attendance, his herbarium provided a rich source of the wood-decay fungi, although insects took their toll on the fleshier materials.

Bridge was a legendary mycological character. Recalling him to mind will bring a smile to the faces of those who knew him because of his somewhat eccentric personality, his dry sense of humor, his unhurried pace, his infamous single-spaced, double-sided, three legal-page length Christmas letter, and his presence at seemingly every foray held in his career. He was a unique and special mycologist.

It was rare to see Bridge without Vivian at his side. They remained nearly inseparable. They had a special relationship and, in their life, worked as a team. In the kitchen, Bridge creamed together the sugar and butter as Vivian made cookies, and in the field, Vivian would always seem to locate the fungus that Bridge wanted to collect. They hiked together, sometimes for an entire day, searching and collecting fungi, climbing trails up the mountains. In their 80s, these climbs were at a slower pace, and they would periodically rest on benches along the way. People passing by would ask in amazement how they had got there. The reply was characteristically direct: "Why, we walked, of course!" It is not surprising that Vivian followed Bridge in death only about a year later, on February 25, 1993. It is difficult to imagine how one could exist without the other.

Bridge Cooke will be missed by those who loved forays. No one could have loved mycology more or with more enthusiasm. In his absence, MSA forays will never be the same.

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