

# Resolution of Respect

---

## George Sprugel, Jr.

1919–1999

A truly outstanding natural scientist and administrator, George Sprugel, Jr., passed away on 10 September 1999 at the Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis, Indiana.

George was born in Boston, Massachusetts on 26 September 1919, the son of George and Frances Sprugel. The family then moved to Williams, a small farming community in central Iowa, where young George first learned to appreciate nature. After graduating from Williams High School in 1937, he matriculated at Waldorf Junior College in Forest City, Iowa, obtaining the A.A. degree in 1939. He next entered Iowa State University at Ames for a year, when he was called to active duty in the U.S. Navy.

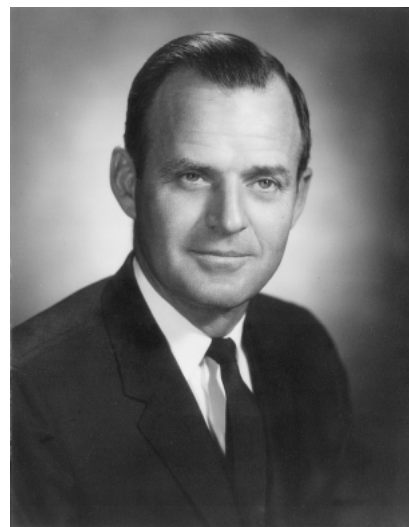
This seemingly mundane event turned out to be a major influence on his future activities, and he maintained a strong loyalty to the U.S. Navy throughout his adult life. Initially, he served aboard the *U.S.S. Bowditch*, a hydrographic survey ship involved in mapping the ocean approaches to both ends of the Panama Canal. Upon the outbreak of World War II, he was transferred to the Motor Torpedo Boat Training Center in Newport, Rhode Island. There he developed a MTB launching rack for torpedoes, which resulted in his being shipped to the Solomon Islands and the Allied-controlled part of New Guinea. His orders were to supervise the installation and use of these devices on all PT boats newly activated as part of the Southwest Pacific Fleet. He was subsequently assigned to the command of an MTB in Papua and was involved in a number of invasions on Japanese-held areas, until his boat was sunk and his crew was lost to enemy action. He was then transferred to the MTB Training Center in

Rhode Island for instructional duty, until he was detached for study at the Naval War College.

Shortly after the end of the war, George returned to Iowa State University, where he obtained Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees in zoology and entomology between 1946 and 1950. His alma mater appointed him as an Assistant Professor, but gave him leave of absence in 1951, when the Navy recalled him to active duty at the onset of the Korean War. He was appointed as the Acting Head of the Biology Branch of the Office of Naval Research in Washington, D.C., with the rank of Captain, USNR. Upon release from active duty in 1953, he became the Special Assistant to the Assistant Director of the Biological and Medical Sciences Division of the National Science Foundation, which was just getting established. This experience led to his appointment as the first Program Director of Environmental Biology in the NSF, a post in which he was able to provide significant support to ecological research during the 10 years he held this position (1954–1964). Dr. Sprugel was then selected as Chief Scientist of the National Park Service, where he served until October 1966, when he was selected as Chief of the Illinois Natural History Survey in Champaign, Illinois. He held this post until his retirement as Chief Emeritus on 1 September 1980.

Dr. Sprugel was called upon to serve in a number of important advisory capacities, e.g., the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Department of Commerce, American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS), National Aeronautical and Space Administration (NASA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Research Council (NRC), and the National Academy of Sciences.

He was also active in a number of scientific societies and served in elective positions in many of them, e.g.,



American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)—Vice President and Chairman of the Biological Sciences Section (1970); American Society of Zoologists (ASZ)—Secretary (1970–1972); Ecological Society of America (ESA)—Vice President (1968); and The Institute of Ecology—Program Manager (1973).

I first became acquainted with George when I served with him on the Executive Committee of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) in Washington during the years 1972–1976. He was elected as president of AIBS in 1974, where his assistance in planning and organizing the annual meetings that I chaired that year at Arizona State University was invaluable. Furthermore, at that time he assumed considerable additional responsibility due to the untimely death of Dr. John Olive, Executive Director of AIBS. Dr. Sprugel took a leave of absence from his regular position in Illinois to return to AIBS Headquarters in Washington, where he worked long hours stabilizing the management of this organization, as well as initiating the search for a new Executive Director. For this purely voluntary activity, he was given the AIBS President's

Meritorious Service Award in 1975. Similarly, in 1976 the Ecological Society of America gave him their Distinguished Service Citation in recognition of his many contributions to environmental science.

Dr. Sprugel is survived by his loving wife of 54 years, Catharine (nee Cornwell), as well as a son, Dr. Dou-

glas G. Sprugel, a Professor of Forest Ecology at the University of Washington, Seattle, two grandchildren, two brothers, and three sisters. His interment was in the Williams Cemetery in his former hometown, Williams, Iowa.

This charismatic man with a marvelous sense of humor and a remark-

able organizational ability affected the lives of many people during his long and distinguished career. He will be missed.

*James E. Canright  
Professor of Botany, Emeritus  
Arizona State University  
Tempe, AZ 85287*

---