

IN MEMORIAM



JOHN H. CROSS 1925–2010

The death of John Cross on 19 November 2010 has deprived our parasitology community of a remarkable and accomplished scientist, someone who had achieved eminence internationally for his substantial contributions to parasitology during nearly 50 years of research and teaching. His contributions to the understanding and control of parasitic diseases, particularly tropical parasitic diseases in Asia, are well known. He lived and conducted research in Southeast Asia for 20 years and, as a result, became a widely recognized and sought-after parasitologist for his expertise on zoonotic parasites endemic to Asia. John began his long-association with Asia during World War II, as a U.S. Navy Corpsman in the Solomon Islands. After mustering out of the Navy in Shanghai, he began working for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which in 1948 moved to Taiwan. He eventually returned to the United States to attend college, and to marry Evelyn, a young woman he first met in Shanghai (who worked for the Chinese National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration [CNRRA]) and pursued while she was a student at the University of Michigan. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Texas at Galveston in 1958 and, after a stint teaching parasitology in the Medical School of the University of Arkansas, was invited in 1966 to join the staff of the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No.2 (NAMRU-2) in Taipei, Taiwan, and to direct the unit's newly created Medical Ecology Department. There, he provided badly needed leadership to NAMRU-2's mission to characterize the leading parasitic diseases in Vietnam and throughout Southeast Asia, and to find new and novel approaches to prevention.

John was a creative man with an ability to think clearly and to ignore the irrelevant, and his legacy is marked by this unique strength of mind. He was a terrific mentor, and I (KDM) was the fortunate beneficiary, early in my career, of his great energy and strong leadership. My association with him had immeasurable value to me in shaping my future. Our lifelong relationship began in late 1966, when, with my wife, Joyce, I arrived in Taipei as a newly minted Navy parasitologist, assigned to John's department. At that time, the need to support the Marines in Vietnam was rapidly increasing and demanded much of John's time. Even so, in the short space of time since he had arrived he had also organized research programs on amoebiasis, angiostrongyliasis, soil-borne helminths, and the mosquito vectors of encephalitis and malaria. He considered every parasitic disease an opportunity and expected similar enthusiasm and dedication from all of us. Over the next couple of years, he led us on

many field expeditions to study filariasis, schistosomiasis, malaria, plague, and scrub typhus in Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Taiwan, which he consistently linked to laboratory work at NAMRU-2. A comprehensive program that he organized almost overnight on the human capillariasis outbreaks that occurred in the Philippines exemplifies his signature research approach. Under his guidance, the research combined field epidemiology, basic parasitology, and clinical investigations, and included a large team of professionals. As a parasitologist, my mission was to determine the source of the infection; for a helminth, it had an astonishingly high human case mortality rate. After more than a year searching in everything from shrimp and snails to numerous vertebrates, the hosts for the parasite remained an enigma. As I rotated out of Taiwan, I told John that in my "considered" opinion, this was a one-off event, and that the natural hosts for this parasite might never be discovered. He didn't say much in response, but within 12 months he had described the life cycle in the lab through a series of clever experiments involving fish, the intermediate host, and assorted mammals, including 1 human volunteer, John himself. I was embarrassed by my earlier pronouncement on the outbreaks, and I came away with a real life lesson from John, i.e., the importance of perseverance and imagination in research.

A measure of John's impact on the scientific community of Southeast Asia is the respect he enjoyed, evident not only in the many people who called him friend, but in the honors he received from universities in the region. Over the years, he often arranged for American parasitologists to meet with scientists in Asian countries to present their research, to learn what scientists in the region were doing, and to encourage networking among all of them. His assistance and encouragement earned him the title of "Papa" John among many Asian scientists, some of whom have said he was "Asian" in his understanding of the region and its people.

John Cross was not only my mentor for a critical period of my career and a close collaborator in later years, he was much like a father who watched me closely during my apprenticeship and always helped me when I had a problem. I treasured our personal friendship and our research together. I will miss him deeply.

As a friend and colleague of John for some 54 years I (LRA) have some observations of my own on the remarkable career of John Cross. We met at an AIBS meeting held in Storrs, Connecticut, in 1956 when we were both in doctoral programs, John being under the mentorship of J. Allen Scott in Galveston, Texas. After joining NAMRU-2 in Taipei in 1966, we had opportunities to collaborate on investigations into angiostrongyliasis, experimental infections of monkeys with *Wuchereria bancrofti*, and intestinal capillariasis. Over