

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### VICTOR CHANDLER TWITTY (1901 – 1967)

Victor Chandler Twitty was born near Loogootee in Martin County, Indiana, on November 5, 1901. He was the youngest of five children of John McMahan and Emma Chandler Twitty. After a boyhood in southern Indiana he enrolled in Butler College (now University) in Indianapolis, from which he received an A.B. degree in 1925.

He himself has described his choice of Yale's Department of Zoology for graduate training as fortuitous but fortunate. The staff of the Osborn Zoological Laboratory, headed by Ross Harrison, included several outstanding scientists who were at the peak of their careers and a group of graduate students most of whom were to make significant contributions in the future. Of his choice of the field of embryonic development for graduate training and specialization he says, "I arrived at Yale with little preparation or bias that would predispose me in choosing among areas of modern research specialization in the Department."

It was an exciting time in embryology. The definitive paper on heteroplastic transplantation of the organizer was published in 1924. Harrison and his students had used microsurgery and transplantation experiments together with tissue culture to investigate problems of growth accommodations and conflicts, proportionate growth, and size regulation. Experiments using vital and supra vital dyes, among other things, had made mapping of the pattern of development in the egg a possibility. The problems of embryonic induction, cell migration and cell and tissue interaction appeared to be yielding to experimental analysis. A new Yukon was opening to which eager miners, in the words of Harrison, were now rushing to dig for gold.

Victor Twitty received his Ph.D. degree from Yale in 1929. He stayed on at Yale as an instructor from 1929 to 1931, and went as a National Research Council Fellow to the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin the following year.

In 1932 he came to Stanford as an Assistant Professor of Biology and in 1936 became a full Professor. His earlier experimental work at Stanford contributed significantly to the understanding of factors that regulate proportional organ size, organ form, cell migration, growth and cell and tissue interaction. His great strength as an investigator lay in his ability to cut through the overlying complications of a problem and to frame his questions in terms that lent themselves readily to an experimental approach.

His distinction as an experimental embryologist is attested by the high regard in which he was held by professional colleagues. He was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and of numerous scientific societies in this country and abroad. Numerous capable graduate students came to study with him, and many established experimental embryologists came to work in his laboratory. He gave generously of himself to his students, both as a scientist and as a friendly and compassionate man. He was able to instill his own sophisticated

understanding of research attitudes and techniques, his ability to analyze problems into their simpler components, his appreciation of the role of chance in research and discovery and his great talent for accepting disappointment philosophically.

He was from boyhood an enthusiastic fisherman, a lover of the outdoors and a naturalist. In more recent years his interests shifted from the experimental analysis of development to the genetics, speciation and ecology of the California salamanders that he had previously used as embryological material. He did important work on artificial hybrids of the local species, and at a ranch in Sonoma County which became the focus of his scientific activities; he conducted a remarkable series of experiments on the salamander's homing abilities. It is rare for a man to do really distinguished work in two fields so widely different. It is rarer still when he can write about them both with the felicity, charm and wit that characterizes the book Of Scientists and Salamanders, which he completed shortly before his death.

From 1948 to 1963 he was Executive Head of the Department of Biological Sciences at Stanford. He brought to the chairmanship a sense of purpose and direction, good judgment, tact, an ability to delegate responsibility and a capacity to compromise the desirable with the possible. He was appointed Herzstein Professor of Biology in 1964 and held this chair at the time of his death. He always found time to participate actively in a broad range of University and community affairs.

He married Florence Eveleth August 3, 1934. They had four children, John, Eveleth, Sarah Ellen and Edith Ann, and an adopted son Kalevi Holsti.

Victor Twitty died on March 22, 1967. He was 65.

Joseph F. Oliphant, Chairman  
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