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## My association with William Steel Creighton

George C. Wheeler

*University of North Dakota at Grand Forks*

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## My association with William Steel Creighton

George C. Wheeler  
University Professor Emeritus  
Department of Biology  
University of North Dakota at Grand Forks  
3358 NE 58th Avenue  
Silver Springs, Florida 32688

### Introduction

The recent (1986) publication of "My Association with William Morton Wheeler" evidently stirred my latent autobiographical urge. It is quite reasonable that I should next apply it to William Steel Creighton, for he certainly ranks next to W. M. Wheeler among American myrmecologists. It will be quite different, however, because my actual association with Creighton was very brief: twice a dinner guest in New York City and two visits in La Feria, Texas. Correspondence, however, is quite different. I received 45 letters from W. M. Wheeler between 1919 and 1936; the last was dated four months before his death. They dealt chiefly with our proposed treatise on ant larvae; only two ran over to the second page. From Creighton I received 81 letters between 1929 (while he was still a graduate student at Harvard) and 1973 (dated 12 days before his death). His early letters filled one page; the length increased gradually to three pages. The subject matter was chiefly practical taxonomy, but the wide variety of topics treated makes them just as interesting as when they were written.

I suggest that anyone interested should first read Gregg's excellent appreciation (1974) of Creighton's importance in myrmecology; it includes also the details of his life history. I will not include here any of that material. Instead I call attention to the photograph of Creighton on page 68. While visiting the Creightons at La Feria in 1968 I was watching Bill working at his microscope. Suddenly I was startled to realize how closely he resembled W. M. Wheeler. After our return to Reno I showed my wife (who never saw WMW) a published photograph of WMW without letting her see the legend; she exclaimed, "A picture of Creighton!" Gregg's photograph does, however, show a marked contrast in attire. Both men were field naturalists *par excellence*, but Creighton wore field clothes while W. M. Wheeler was always well groomed, even in the field.



**Figure 1.** William Steel Creighton, Chiricahua Mountains, Arizona, 1968. Courtesy of E.O. Wilson

1934

It is interesting to know how the future dealt with the following extracts from his letter to me dated December 3, 1934:- "To tell you the truth the small *Solenopsis* are the devil and the more I work on them the less I believe it is possible to make any satisfactory separation unless the sexual forms are

present. This is one reason why I have never attempted to publish the second part of my thesis." Half a century later this group is still unrevised.

"Incidentally when are you going to finish your larva paper?

"Soon I hope. Dr. Wheeler and I are starting a joint work on the ants of the United States which may be finished in the next two or three years and we would like to include some of your data." Dr. Wheeler died three years later. Creighton published alone "The Ants of North America" in 1950. My answer to the question about my "larva paper" could have been, "Never!" Half a century, 60 papers and one book later my wife and I are still working on ant larvae.

#### First meeting

My first meeting with Creighton was in New York City in 1937, when I was teaching in the summer session at C. C. N. Y. He met me with his car at an Elevated station and took me to their apartment where Marty served us dinner. During the evening he selected for me pinned and labeled ants from his collection. He told me the name of each, which I wrote on a label for the pin. We still have these ants; they form the most valuable part of our Nearctic collection.

Many of these have hand-printed labels; the letters are minute and very neat. Many years later I asked him how he did such fine printing. He told me in a letter (December 15, 1969): "The pen I use in writing locality labels is the Joseph Gillott's Lithographic No. 280 or No. 281, which they call a 'mapping' pen. The two are identical, as far as I can see except that 280 has a brown finish and 281 a blue one. I always hone down the point of the pen before I use it. At one time I could write the labels without optical aid. I am now too far-sighted and have to write them under a binocular. Incidentally, La Feria is, by very long odds, the worst place to write labels in I ever saw. It is so humid here that you have to dry out the cardboard if you don't want the ink to run."

I have seldom seen Creighton's handwriting, although it was neat and legible. Most of his letters were typewritten. A few were by hand and all neatly *printed*. If he added a postscript to a typewritten letter, it was usually hand-printed. His last letter dated July 11, 1973, 12 days before his death, was neatly hand-printed.

1948

"At present we are on leave of absence from the College and living in our summer cottage in the Thousand Islands. We were driven to this course

because it seemed impossible to find any other place to stay. It has not been a very easy life but it has been a good thing for the ant book. When you are thirteen miles away from the nearest town and a mile away from the nearest neighbor you are not bothered by many interruptions. We have also learned to do many things we had never tried before, especially snowshoeing. It doesn't get too cold in these parts but it certainly can snow." (February 8, 1948.)

#### The 1950s

The correspondence throughout this decade is heavily loaded with identifications of ants we sent him and discussions resulting therefrom. Nevertheless several passages deal with other aspects of myrmecology, especially understanding Creighton. On my attempt to get larvae of *Myrmecocystus*: "I would suggest that, if you want results, you don't mention my name in the business. \_\_\_\_\_ is as much Hollywood as entomologist and he and I don't see eye to eye on several points: notably that I cannot be ordered to identify ants at will."

From some of Creighton's revisions of the work of W. M. Wheeler one might get the impression that he had a low opinion of the work of his major professor. That this is incorrect is rather entertainingly shown in his letter of October 14, 1957. I had reported to him that some European entomologist had referred to the deleterious effect on current myrmecology of the "dead hand of Wheeler." "Who made the extraordinary statement concerning 'the dead hand of Wheeler' which you quote? Whoever it was, he deserves to have his hide taken off. If that statement was published I shall undertake to remove said hide. ...I never heard of such an egregious thing in all my time." I deeply regret that it was not published. Creighton's scathing attack could have been a masterpiece of invective, well worthy of a W. M. Wheeler disciple.

For anyone who wishes to know Creighton's published opinion of W. M. Wheeler, I quote the concluding sentence (1950:27) from the section "The History of Ant Taxonomy in North America": "It is Wheeler's singular distinction that by his indefatigable effort he made our ant taxonomy the living thing it is today." And who could know better than Creighton!

#### Second meeting

My second meeting was in April 1957, when I attended an AAUP annual meeting in New York City. Creighton had already arrived at the meeting place when the Convention was adjourned, to pick me up and take me to their apartment, where

Marty served dinner. During the evening he gave me more identified ants for our Nearctic collection and finally took me to Grand Central Station where I boarded the train for home.

#### Visits to La FERIA

Invitation November 6, 1967. "This place has a rather comfortable bedroom. Why not come and inspect it?"

"WARNING--Another bit of advice that you ought to have is not to count on it being warm here. After your years in North Dakota you may laugh at this but I assure you that you can be colder at 34 degrees here than at 15 below in the north. The houses are simply not built for cold weather." (January 26, 1968).

FIRST VISIT-1968:--Arrived at La FERIA on the evening of February 9. Departed morning of February 17; seven full days.

SECOND VISIT-1972:--Arrived 6:30 PM February 1. On Feb. 2 the Creightons took us to Brownsville to visit the zoo, which was unusually good and to Artisans Center in Matamoros, Mexico for shopping. Departed 8:15 A. M. February 4.

Meals at the Creighton home were certainly not memorable events. They purchased good food, but when it got to the table the flavor was deficient. After several years the cause suddenly occurred to me: they were both chain smokers; they even smoked between courses. Smoking certainly deadens the sense of taste. I think that accounts for Creighton's inordinate fondness for jalapenos. If more proof were needed to show that cigarettes damage the heart, I would nominate Bill Creighton.

Overwork, namely the effort to protect their island in the St. Lawrence, could possibly have been an exacerbation to an already damaged heart. Creighton was determined that we should get acquainted with the local ant fauna, probably because he had long tempted us to move to the Brownsville area of the Valley. Apparently he tried to show us every species in the area so we could see its habitat at first hand and collect it ourselves. He had two handicaps: (1) Our visit followed too closely Hurricane Beulah; the ground was still soaked and many roads to his habitats were closed. (2) During most of our visit it was cold, cloudy, and damp.

Creighton had warned us about possible cold weather. The house was not built for cold: it had no "skirt" and the cold wind could circulate freely underneath, which it did; no storm doors or storm windows and no insulation. We had no source of generated heat except the kitchen oven with the door left open and a small (12" X 15") gas space-heater--both pitifully inadequate. In the evening the

four of us would huddle close in front of the space-heater and watch the weather forecasts on TV. The county was divided into districts. Each district got a separate cold prediction, so that the citrus-growers would know when to activate their antifreeze heaters and/or air-circulators.

The minimum for the night was 27 degrees F. The citrus groves were not affected--not as much, in fact, as we were.

In spite of these two handicaps we accomplished a lot of collecting: 20 species out of a possible 30. But more important than that, we had an opportunity to experience field work with one of the world's leading field naturalists. I had already spent considerable time afield with the other one, viz., W. M. Wheeler.

Besides fieldwork there was plenty of time for good conversation. In fact, it was these two visits, as short as they were, that sealed the close relations between the Creightons and the Wheelers and made the subsequent correspondence more meaningful. We regret, nevertheless, that we never saw the Creightons again after February 4, 1972.

#### Opinions

OPERATORS: "I recently had a talk with a young Englishman (Bio. major at Cambridge) who states that what are being produced now are 'operators.' These individuals are convinced that advancement is the main desideratum. They will not, therefore, pick a field that demands slow, careful and unspectacular work (myrmecology, for instance) but pitch on the flashy 'quickies.'" (January 8, 1966.)

SUBSPECIES: If two groups are clearly separable, they are separate species, not subspecies. Subspecies should not be named. (*In verbis* February 11, 1968.)

SIBLING SPECIES: "I do not doubt that there are myrmecologists who would jump at the chance for recognizing three 'cryptic' species here, and perhaps this is the correct procedure. But it seems to me that until we can test such species by breeding experiments or possibly by the examination of very large amounts of material, there is no way of being sure as to what they are. It never fails to amaze me to see some of our young hopefuls cutting ahead describing cryptic species from a single short nest series at the same time that they are denouncing the subspecific descriptions of their elders as stone-age witchcraft. I used to get mad at such an attitude but now I snicker at it. Taxonomy, like history, appears to repeat itself." (May 14, 1958.)

## Arthritis

"I am beginning to be crippled by arthritis. It is a Scotch complaint and, since I am three-quarters Scotch, I don't find it surprising. But when you can barely walk, it surely slows you down." (September 27, 1968.)

## Creighton and other myrmecologists

I never learned the cause of the feud between Creighton and Brown and I never asked. It seems to have been one-sided: Brown willing to be reconciled, Creighton stubbornly refusing. But toward the end I noted a softening of Creighton's attitude. Had he lived longer I think I could have effected a reconciliation. "I don't think that there is any doubt but what Brown considered Wing's work sound and, from what I have seen of it, I would go along with Brown. If Bill has managed to settle Wing down into sound taxonomy he deserves a lot of credit. Wing was pretty flighty in his younger days, both taxonomically and otherwise." (November 5, 1968.)

"There is a lot of truth in the statement that by the time a myrmecologist can use a key with certainty he no longer needs it. But, except for the person who made the key, this is a process that takes time, patience and continued application. It has been my experience that very few people are willing to take the trouble to learn how to use keys and I anticipate a rash of complaints about those which have appeared in recent months.

"Because I was nettled by \_\_\_\_\_'s 1953 performance I have since made it a practice to run all material for identification through the keys in the *Ants of N. A.* This was not to get the identification, for I can by this time identify most ants north of Mexico on sight, but to check the keys. You may be amused to know how the material you sent came out.

"You sent on twelve pins. Seven of these bore specimens which ran through the keys perfectly. ... No attempt was made to identify the single *Pheidole* female. This cannot be done until a key to this caste is forthcoming.

"Now let's look at the record. One specimen could not be identified by any present key. Three others belong to species which were not recognized in 1950. That leaves eight species to which my key could apply. Seven keyed out perfectly. In other words the keys worked 86% of the time." (November 28, 1968.) "I was also glad to hear that you had a pleasant visit with Bill Brown. I think that getting away from Harvard has done him a lot of good. When you and I were graduate students at Harvard we were riding on Wheeler's coat tails, so

to speak, and it was a good position for any graduate student. Some of Wheeler's colleagues may have detested him but few of them dared to cross him. Brown went into graduate work at Harvard during a period when all sorts of changes were going on. He did not have the security that we enjoyed and he apparently listened to the crowd that thinks that the sun rises and sets in Harvard's backside (except for the Vatican there is no more selfsatisfied group extant). It is not surprising that Bill fell for this guff or that he presently began to downgrade everyone else in ant taxonomy. What he needed was to be taken out to the professorial woodshed and to have had his rear warmed with a paddle. But nobody did so, least of all Phil Darlington who, as Bill's immediate superior, should have set things right. It may interest you to know that I wrote Phil this at length and was told to mind my own business. So Bill soon found himself on the outside looking in, which is probably the best thing that ever happened to him. Your remarks about him were very gratifying for they confirm what one of his colleagues at Cornell told me a couple of years ago, that Bill had become a valuable member of the department there." (December 15, 1969.)

"Have you seen Bill Buren's article on fire ants which appeared in the January issue of the Jour. Ga. Ent. Soc.? I think you will find it interesting. According to Bill, Ed Wilson is all wrong about the 'red form' being an evolutionary offshoot of *richteri*. He has found this same form in South America and is treating it as an undescribed species, which he has named *invicta*. If he is right there have been two occasions on which the Argentine fire ant has been imported, which should make the quarantine crowd unhappy." (February 28, 1972.)

## Keys

"As you know \_\_\_\_\_ is a conservative of the conservatives in taxonomic matters and I think that this sometimes gets him into awkward positions. He is unwilling to admit that utility is one of the concerns of taxonomy and insists that phylogeny is the only consideration in setting up a taxonomic system. If this were the best of all possible worlds, I would agree with him. ... In short, I would rather have an imperfect key which works than a perfect one that doesn't." (November 5, 1968.)

## *Pheidole*

"I am trying to arrange the United States and northern Mexico material so that it will be usable. It appears that when I am through there will be about two dozen schmitt boxes full of the stuff. I have been able to study all but five of the recog-

nized forms *in the field* [italics mine]. M. R. Smith has recently suggested that I monograph the group but I am not yet ready to have that particular Old-Man-of-the-Sea sitting on my shoulders." (January 20, 1967.)

#### Higher education

"The root of the trouble is the degeneracy that grips higher education. You must remember that neither you nor I had to face the hazards of open admissions, the denigration of significance in grades or the conviction that exchange students are the light of the world. We have the bloody nitwits of social scientists to thank for these crappy notions. I saw how things were going at City College twelve years ago and I got out. The old grey education ain't what she used to be." (February 8, 1973.)

#### Compliments

Jeanette and I are vain enough to consider a compliment from Creighton as something very special in our life histories. Therefore we do not hesitate to include a few.

"Your paper 'Don't go to the ant' is most amusing. I may say that I concur heartily with most of the opinions at the end of it."

"*The Ants of North Dakota* is a most satisfactory study for which its authors deserve sincere congratulations. Your illustrations of key characters are excellent. I wish I could have had them in the *Ants of North America*. If anyone cannot use the keys in your work it will be simply because they are too careless to do so. [Jeanette regards this as the highest compliment ever paid her drawings.]

"I greatly appreciate your sending me specimens of *Veromessor lobognathus* and want to congratulate you for turning up this species in North Dakota. It sure makes me a bad prophet, but that is beside the point." (September 18, 1958.)

"You certainly take the cake for turning up *Veromessor lobognathus*. I wish I knew the technique. I have never seen the ant in the field." (December 17, 1963.)

"You are to be congratulated on finding *Manica parasitica*. As you doubtless know, Art Cole made an intensive effort to take additional specimens, both in California and Nevada, about ten years ago. He did not do so and, since Art is a sort of human vacuum cleaner in the field, I had begun to wonder if the thing would ever be found again." (October 6, 1967.)

"My sincere compliments on your 'local' limericks. You have a genius for the business, as who should know better than I, who despite extensive

efforts have never been able to produce a good one." (March 6, 1973.)

#### Invectives

PSEUDOMYRECOLOGIST NO. 1. "During the summer I had at least four letters from \_\_\_\_\_ which practically demanded that I turn over all the material in \_\_\_\_\_ group to him. When I wrote that this was out of the question he came up with a long sob-story about straightened finances and lack of time for research. It seems to me that he should have thought about this before he married and started raising a family." (January 18, 1972.)

PSEUDOMYRMECOLOGIST NO. 2. "There is no method whatever to his mounting technique. He uses some ghastly, opaque muck as an adhesive and, I suspect, throws the specimens at the point from across the room. There wasn't a single correctly mounted specimen in the two boxes that he sent on. In some the point was stuck to the gula, in others to the side of the thorax and as often as not to the petiolar joints. These were often completely covered with the aforementioned muck. About a third of the specimens were pinned through the thorax. If he had deliberately set out to ruin his material he could scarcely have done a better job. ... At any rate I told him, when I sent his ants back, that ninety percent of his pinned material would be better off in the waste basket." (February 28, 1972.)

"He mounts his ants one to a pin. It seems incredible to me that anyone would fail to realize that such procedure triples the space, pins and locality labels required. What it does to a dimorphic genus like *Pheidole* where you have to have the major and minor associated is pathetic. [He] sent on about fifty vials of alcoholics and what he has done to these is equally silly. Most of the vials contain more soil than ants and there are often two or three species mixed in a vial." (February 15, 1972.)

#### Evans

"Thanks to your suggestion Evans and his wife, from Harvard, came up about the Wheeler biography. Both of them are real honeys and we had a ball while they were here." (Rockport, Ontario, September 27, 1968.)

"I hope that you have seen the biography of W. M. Wheeler that Howard and Mary Evans have just published. They have drawn Uncle Bill to the life and, furthermore, have set the atmosphere of the Bussey just right. I think you will greatly enjoy the book but be warned that it will make you feel pretty ancient. Too many people that you and I

knew in that group are no longer living." (December 5, 1970.)

### Stubbornness

September 18, 1957. "The Creightons were on the rock-pile all summer, building a very large seawall which we hope will counter any rise in the St. Lawrence when the Seaway goes into operation. I do not propose to be chased off our island, if I have to put it on stilts."

November 18, 1958. "I have not written anybody this summer, largely because I have not been able to keep awake in the evenings long enough to do so."

"To understand this last you would have to see our summer place here. Thirty years ago we bought an island in the St. Lawrence. As to whether this was the best move we ever made or the worst mistake on record, I am not sure. But the fact is that we regard the place as a sort of an earthly paradise. We have built everything about the place ourselves and landscaped it to very high standards. When the Seaway went through things looked equally [bad], for the island is a comparatively low one, and the rumors had it that the Seaway would raise the river level considerably."

"I am nothing if not stubborn and Mart is Scotch too, so we decided to raise the whole damned island, which we have done. This isn't as much as it sounds, for the place is only about six hundred feet long and (praise God) mostly bed rock. But it has involved tremendous amount of masonry. The ice action here is so severe that it will take out exposed walls of normal thickness. Most of ours are three feet thick and often six or seven feet thick at the base. It will give you some notion of what we have been doing when I tell you that this summer Mart and I hand-mixed eight tons of cement mortar (sixty tons over the time we have had the island) and set more stones than I care to think about. We have been at this little exercise without let-up since May 22nd and I guess we will survive, although there are times when I doubted it."

July 11, 1970. "Last fall we built the footings of a reinforced concrete dock and this summer we have been trying to finish it. The trouble is that every pour involves at least a quarter of a ton of concrete and leaves us knocked out for several days afterwards. The local opinion is 'God help the poor devil that tries to take the thing apart!' The minimum guess is that it will be here at least five hundred years. At any rate I think we have proved that it is possible to build a dock that the ice can't wrench out of shape."

November 24, 1970. "As to when I can get at the rest of your stuff I don't know. To be perfectly

frank Mart and I nearly killed ourselves constructing a reinforced concrete dock last summer. She lost fifteen pounds and I lost thirty. I am afraid that it will be a couple of months before we get back the old zing. Luckily neither of us got hurt although why I don't know, what with manhandling over two tons of concrete."

September 26, 1972. "We have been working all summer to finish up the dock that we started three summers ago. It is done now and I am not sure that we are not too."

### Anecdotes

Creighton had an abundant supply of good anecdotes. The cold wave during our visit gave him the opportunity to tell one of his favorites:--

Certain railroads in collaboration with developers used to sponsor excursions to the Rio Grande Valley in the winter from New York for the purpose of selling real estate. One of those excursions turned out to be not so sunny when a Texas norther hit. One of the suffering Yankees went to the office of a nursery and ordered a thousand young orange trees. "Where shall we ship them?" asked the nurseryman. "To Oswego, New York." "What kind of joke is this? You know they won't grow that far north." To which the Yankee replied, "They grow here and its no colder up there than here."

Another anecdote from his supply of westerns: A pioneer lived in a log cabin beside a spring. One evening a prospector stopped at his door. "Camp here?" asked the prospector. Pioneer: "Other side of the spring." Prospector: "How long?" Pioneer: "Long as you want to." No more was said. The prospector camped as directed. The following morning the pioneer saw the prospector packing up and went over to him to ask, "Leaving?" Prospector: "Yep." Pioneer: "Why?" Prospector: "Too damned much conversation."

SEQUEL. After leaving the Creightons we traveled northward to Arlington for a visit, thence westward to Lubbock for a visit and then headed for Organ-pipe Cactus National Monument in southern Arizona. Between Ajo and the Monument there is a village named Why, which is just outside the Papago Indian Reservation. We stopped there at a filling station. An Indian man came out. I said, "Fill it with regular." He did. I asked, "How much?" "Six fifty." I paid him. A few miles later I was inspired to say to Jeanette, "I'll never stop at that station again!" "Why?" "Too damned much conversation!"



## Retirement

May 2, 1961. "My teaching duties at the College will end in this June . . . We expect to make our summer place in Canada headquarters. In the winter we go to the southern U. S. and northern Mexico for work with the ants. We will thus be doing the two things we like the most--working at the island during the summer and working in the field during the winters. With any luck we should be able to avoid coming within three hundred miles of New York [City] again. At least we can try."

May 14, 1958. "Eight more days and we will be out of New York--Oh Happy Day!"

February 17, 1967. "Frankly, although I admire George's initiative in getting a place at Reno, I am very sorry that he has chucked Texas. I had hopes of getting him down here for this is no bad place for ant work. In fact if there were any place higher than thirty-five feet it could give cards and spades to southern Arizona.

"As a retiree of six years standing I am going to give you a piece of advice. Always keep an alternative open. Without going into details we expected to spend the rest of our lives (at least I did) in southern Arizona. And now look at the damned thing. But there is always the island in the St. Lawrence. Not even the devil can take that away and I strongly suspect that the natives figure that it is because the devil owns it." (February 17, 1967.)

## Increased congeniality

The increase in mutual congeniality that resulted from the visits led Creighton to a fuller (and at the same time more violent) expression of his opinions of myrmecology and myrmecologists. At first I planned to quote both, but his comments about living myrmecologists became too pungent. Reluctantly I decided caution was wiser than valor. Some of the targets are of the type that would sue on the slightest provocation or even none at all. But documentation would be difficult even though I might be legally safe. I prefer to avoid annoyance and legal expenses. I have, however, quoted some opinions that cannot be identified. Better acquaintance also led to exchange of examples of what Gregg called his "delightfully earthy sense of humor." Unfortunately most of these examples are not quotable in this serious article. I cite one example for which we were responsible. However, a bit of preliminary explanation is necessary. In Nevada prostitution is legal by local option by county. One would expect that it would be legal in the two large cities, Reno in Washoe County and Las Vegas in Clark County. Not so. It has been legalized only in rural counties, one of which is

Storey County, which includes Virginia City. Twenty miles east of Reno is the village of Mustang, which is on the Truckee River, which separates Washoe County from Storey County. There is a bridge across the river and near the Storey County end is the famous Mustang Brothel. In our Nevada days it was usually referred to as Joe Conforte's brothel, which was housed in a group of living trailers enclosed by a high fence and surrounded by a grove of tall cottonwoods. We needed some ants from that Storey County locality. So one day we went there--to the grove, that is--and collected representative samples of the ant fauna. According to custom specimens from each sample was mounted on pins and labeled "NEV. 475/Storey Co./Joe Conforte's Brothel." We mounted an extra pin of *Pogonomyrmex* and sent it to Creighton with a covering letter warning him to read the locality label carefully. If it proved to be a new species he could name it *Pogonomyrmex meretricius*. *Meretricius* L. = of or relating to a harlot or prostitute, from L. *meretrix* = a harlot. The reply (dated January 15, 1973) from La Feria was prompt: "Your proposal for the specific name for the *Pogonomyrmex* taken at Joe Conforte's Brothel is the one bright spot in six weeks of cold, overcast depressing weather. It brought to mind . . ." But never mind; I'd better stop right there.

## The last letter

Rockport, Ontario  
July 11 1973

Dear George:--

As you know I have always been glad to support your applications to the N. S. F. This time something happened that indicates that you should have someone else contact the National Headquarters of Sigma Xi.

About a month ago I had a cardiac attack which laid me out. I had a pulse rate of 133 beats per minute and with this fibrillation was a pulse pressure too low to be easily detected.

What you need is a spry advocate who will push your interest with Sigma Xi. Whatever I may be just now it is not spry.

This type of cardiac attack is said to yield easily to digitalis treatment provided you are willing to spend several months sitting around doing nothing. Not a pleasant prospect but the alternative is worse.

I am returning the ants you sent on and suggest that you send them to Roy



Snelling. He is pretty good with the California *Camponotus*.

Best regards,  
Wm

#### Appreciation

My own appreciation of Creighton is best expressed in a letter which I wrote February 1, 1966 in support of his application for a Sigma Xi grant:

This letter is written to support the application by Dr. William S. Creighton for a grant to subsidize the publication in *Psyche* of articles on ants.

It is scarcely necessary to attest to Dr. Creighton's competence in his field. I have long regarded him as the dean of American myrmecologists and furthermore it is my opinion that he is the world's leading myrmecologist even though he has restricted himself to the North American fauna.

That he is an able writer is shown by his "Ants of North America," the Bible for American myrmecologists, and by his numerous research articles on ant behavior.

Finally he is particularly well fitted by long experience as well as ability to study and report on the habits of ants. In the first place, we can rely on his taxonomy. (If he can't identify them, who can?)

In the second place, he is a keen observer in the field. Third, he checks his field observations by laboratory experiments. Fourth, his observations have been admirably reported in concise, well written articles.

It would be sad indeed if, with so much easy money for molecular biology, we should be denied the reports of the researches Dr. Creighton has been making on the habits of ants.

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