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Dr. Kenneth P. Pruess Obituary

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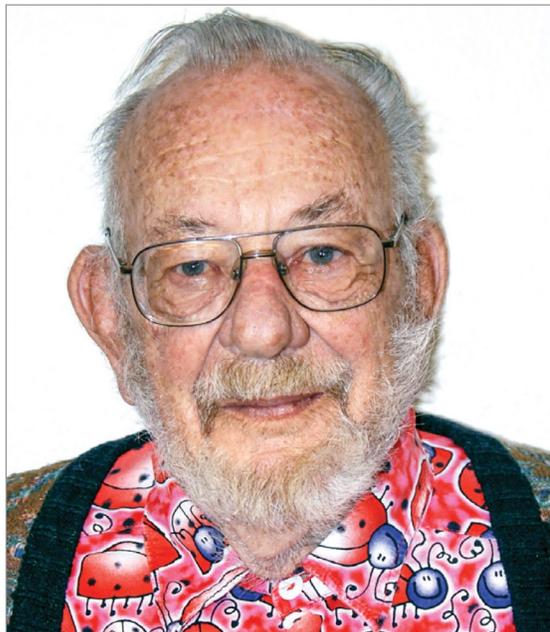
Marion D. Ellis

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Dr. Kenneth P. Pruess

Dr. Kenneth P. Pruess, age 84, of Lincoln, Nebraska, died 11 December 2016. Kenneth was Professor of Entomology Emeritus at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He was born 21 June 1932 in Troy, Indiana, to Elmer and Clara (Grass) Pruess. Kenneth graduated from Purdue University in 1954 and earned his M.S. in Entomology in 1955 and Ph.D. in 1957, both from The Ohio State University. His dissertation was titled “Studies on the Clover Root Borer, *Hylastinus obscurus* (Marsham).” He married Neva Currie on 15 June 1963. He worked at the University of Nebraska’s North Platte Experiment Station from 1957–1965, Entomology Department at UNL from 1965–1997, and was Entomology Department UNL Emeritus from 1997 until the time of his death, continuing his research until 8 December 2016.

Throughout his career, Kenneth conducted research on a wide variety of topics. Initially, he was hired at North Platte to study the army cutworm, *Euxoa auxiliaris* (Grote), which was a major pest of wheat

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in western Nebraska. He published several studies that helped document their summer migration from the Great Plains to the Rockies. One of these he co-authored with his wife, who also had graduate training in entomology. They used binoculars to track the direction of flight at night of army cutworm moths by watching them as they flew in front of the moon. He began long-range studies of the population dynamics of rangeland grasshoppers, which continued for decades after he moved to Lincoln. He was an early adopter of using microcomputers in teaching and developed programs for computer modeling in pest management. He conducted several studies on biology and management of western corn rootworms, including a 1968–1970 study on areawide management of adult rootworms over a 16-square-mile area. His study was the first to evaluate the potential of areawide management of corn rootworms. Later, he began studies on natural history of aquatic insects, particularly focused on black flies. He used molecular techniques to study black fly taxonomy and then alfalfa weevil taxonomy. The week of his death, he was working on finalizing a manuscript on alfalfa weevil molecular taxonomy for journal submission.

Kenneth taught a variety of undergraduate and graduate level courses while at UNL, including Biology and Classification of Insects, Aquatic Insects, Insect Pest Management, and Pest Management Models. He also was active in graduate student training and advised eight Ph.D. and nine M.S. students during his career. As a teacher, Kenneth would always answer a question with another question. He challenged students to debate a question and vigorously defended his position, but he was always pleased when a student came out on top of a lively discussion.

Kenneth was an entomologist who loved the outdoors, and many of his colleagues and students have wonderful memories of fishing, hunting, camping, and collecting with him. One of his colleagues recalls him taking a group of science-focused high school students to Cedar Point, a UNL biological teaching station in western Nebraska. The students spent the day collecting and learning about aquatic insects. In the evening, they learned how to tie flies to mimic the insects they collected, and the next morning, they went fishing with the flies they tied. Kenneth was proud of the fact that he got paid that day to fish.

In retirement, Kenneth was a coach for the UNL Entomology Department's Linnaean team, which competed in ESA's Linnaean Games.

During the time he coached the team, they won two National Championships (2006, 2011) and were national runner-ups twice (1999, 2010).

His memberships include being a 60-year member of the Entomological Society of America, the North American Black Fly Association, the Lincoln Stamp Club, the American Philatelic Society, the American Revenue Association, the American Topical Association, and the Cornhusker Fly Fishers.

He was a long-time participant in the Rocky Mountain Conference of Entomologists, and in retirement, he was active in ESA, frequently co-organizing and speaking at symposia for the Senior Entomologists group. Most recently, he co-organized a Senior Member symposium at the 2016 ICE, and made a presentation on “Retirement: A Time for Hobbies.”

Among his many outside interests were duck hunting, fishing, bowling, stamp collecting (postage stamps with insects and tax stamps), and playing cards. He accompanied his wife, Neva, on numerous birding and geocaching trips.

Even if you never met Kenneth, you may have recognized him at ESA meetings. He always wore insect-themed shirts, which were made by his wife. You can get a flavor of his personality from a video recorded of him at the 2011 ESA meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tgEtv_OemeY

Survivors include his wife, Neva Pruess of Lincoln; their daughter and son-in-law, Carleen and Ken Coulter of Frankfort, Illinois; his sister and brother-in-law, Ruth and Don Johnson of Terre Haute, Indiana; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his son, Cameron, and his parents.

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