

RECOLLECTIONS OF MISS MAE K. WOLDT -- 1918-1935

-H. D. Ruhl-

My first acquaintance with the remarkable Personality whose memory we wish to commemorate and will always treasure goes back to 1918. In my early recollections of this outstanding Character before I became especially interested in biology, several attributes stand out in my memory.

Even the athletes wondered at the tremendous physical energy by which this Teacher of Nature Study frequently taxed their powers on field trips. Among the students it was commonly conceded that one could scarcely find a plant, capture an insect, locate a tree or hear a bird that this Biologist did not know or was unable to identify.

It was generally accepted that anyone who had a real curiosity about any biological problem could expect immediate, enthusiastic and effective assistance with it. Perhaps Professor Woldt would have been cheered and astounded if she had known how frequently a bashful student, startled into embryonic curiosity about some phase of biology, had been carried along by the tide of her enthusiasm until he tried his best to become the scholar she saw in him rather than merely another pupil taking a course.

As the years went on and as I became better acquainted with her and with biology, I was more and more impressed by the variety and wide range of the subjects which she taught so well. Nature study, general botany, agricultural botany, plant and insect diseases, plant physiology, laboratory technique, bacteriology, general science, vertebrate and invertebrate zoology, field zoology, evolution, heredity, embryology, entomology, ornithology, mammalogy

and ecology--all these at one time or another were a part of the regular course work. In this day of specialists in which zoology alone is divided into many fields and compartments, each with its own authorities who give little attention to the other zoological fields except in a general way, this indicates an unusual range of interests and abilities.

I remember well the tribute paid to this Scientist by Dr. John C. Johnson, Director of the Rocky Mountain Biological Station, a year or so after Miss Woldt and her sister had spent the summer of 1923 botanizing near the station. Marvelling with me at her vigor, eagerness and extensive knowledge in so many fields, Dr. Johnson remarked something like this, "I first thought she was a zoologist like myself and a good one too, but I soon found out she was 'some botanist' as well. The first we knew, she was pointing out things about the flora and fauna around the station which we had not discovered before. We consider her a most remarkable person". Knowing Dr. Johnson and his staff, that seemed a unique and startling compliment of her intellectual and professional accomplishments.

Much as we admire and respect the versatility, force, enthusiasms, inspiration and scientific accomplishments of the Teacher and Biologist, those feelings cannot compare to the memories of Miss Woldt, the personal Friend and Advisor. In memory I can hear her say, "Why, you are the very person I have been wanting to see. Come in! I have something I want to show you".

No friends' problems were too remote from her regular work. No difficulty was so small and nothing could be so appalling that it failed to challenge her judgment and to enlist her assistance. My last communication from her came a few days before the end. It consisted of a very definite and helpful analysis as to



the possibilities of a wildlife experiment station project being submitted for consideration of federal authorities. This appraisal of the project, from which she could expect to benefit little personally, must have required considerable effort at a very important time.

Among my most cherished memories are the optimistic encouragements received from this dynamic Personality. Many will testify to this unfaltering willingness to give when needed.

Of all the associations with this institution--and they are many and important to me and I would not have you underestimate any of them--but I, and many others, shall miss most of the guidance of that Life who understood so much about life, that Life who gave so much to life, that Life with such a profound purpose toward life.