

Several Leaving Teaching Staff At High School

Several teachers will leave Birmingham high school at the end of the year for new jobs, homes and educational opportunities.

Working toward a Ph.D. degree, William Clark will be counseling at Michigan State. Al Pommichowski and Hugo Wilkoff will also work on Ph.D. degrees, while doing part-time teaching.

Moving to Derby junior high school will be Donald Laatch, Mrs. Ruth Naylor, Raymond Knes and Miss Mary Turbush. Sheldon Slavin will teach speech and English in Oak Park high school.

Joseph Borowick will become athletic director and head football and baseball coach at Lanphere high school.

PLANNING to teach physics at General Motors institute of technology is Robert Lichty. Donald Rose will teach mathematics in Dearborn junior high school.

Mrs. Dora Johnson will fly half way around the world to Frankfurt, Germany, to join her husband.

Because of no more freshman classes at the local high school, many teachers' courses may be changed.

Kermit Ambrose and Gordon Trayer will teach driver training. Carl Lemie will coach golf, besides starting his third year as football coach next fall. Thomas Carson will take over Harold Newcomb's tennis coaching duties.

Mrs. Ellen Severy is also leaving the high school.

Killer at Work On Our Oakland County Birds

EDITOR'S NOTE: Cranbrook, one of our near neighbors, has a lot to offer. Not only the beauty of its three hundred landscaped acres, its Millies fountains and sculpture, the architecture of its six institutions, but the many interesting things that go on in these institutions all the time. Because we are proud of our neighbor, we'd like to take you with us on an occasional ramble there, noting its beauties and talking with the people who work there as educators, gardeners, artists or whatnot.

Today we go to the first floor of Cranbrook Institute of Science and talk with Walter P. Nickell, the naturalist who has taken so many of your children on bird walks and nature excursions.

Special to The Birmingham Eccentric.

A killer is at work every day in Oakland County. The name is DDT, because of our haphazard notions about its effects on birds, animals and humans.

The other day as I sat talking with Walter P. Nickell, naturalist at Cranbrook Institute of Science, two victims lay dying on the desk in his laboratory.

The delicate female Myrtle warbler died first; the brilliant male Baltimore Oriole lasted longer. I watched them go to sleep more than an hour. It was a traumatic experience.

IF YOU FIND a helpless bird in your garden, quivering all over, claws clenched, it is undoubtedly suffering from the cumulative effects of DDT-poisoning. DDT affects the nerve ends first, then the flight muscles, overstretching the wings and causing the bird to flap over on its back until the poison reaches the brain, bringing final spasms, and death.

Of the many birds brought to Nickell so far this season with these symptoms, none has survived.

"A bird," says Nickell, "has a highly developed nervous system which goes into paralysis when even a small amount of DDT enters its body. The phone rings all day long right now, with people asking what is killing the birds."

DDT IS a pretty safe answer. People don't seem to realize that it's not the strength of one dose, but the cumulative effects of many small doses through the eating of many DDT-treated insects, that kills birds and beneficial insects, even soil bacteria, and, in general, upsets the balance of nature.

"Enough has been written," Nickell went on, "about how poisonous sprays upset the balance of nature, but actually not enough research has been done to give definite answers on the long range effects of DDT and other poisons."

ASKED to name a "beneficial insect," Nickell mentioned the carrion beetle which does a vast service in eliminating carrion, ground beetles which eat the spring canker worms which hang by a spider-like thread in wooded areas, defoliating the trees before they have stored up enough food for the season, the honey bees which are essential to the pollination of fruit trees, the mosquitoes, eating dragon flies, ladybugs, and so on.

At this point, Clinton Cook of Vaughan school came in, beak and small dead bird in his hand. "The children found this on the playground," he said, "and we'd like to know what bird it is and what killed it."

NICKELL looked at the bird. "A Pine Siskin, female," he said. "Undoubtedly DDT again, because there is no sign of its having been hurt in any way. The spraying this season is doing more damage than usual because of the late, cold spring which slowed down the migrants—so many of them are killed along with the early nesters."

Came a phone call at this point, and a long conversation with a public utility man followed, about the death of a cardinal. "Men with Michigan Bell or Detroit Edison," Nickell said as he hung up, "have the best opportunity to observe bird deaths."

"Dozens of calls are coming in from the Bloomfield Village area, west of Maple and south of the Rouge, where area spraying has been done for Dutch elm disease this spring."

"ONE WOMAN" called to say she had tied up a market basket full of dead birds. I asked her to wrap each bird in aluminum foil, and bring them in to us. We'll freeze them, and hope to get a clever chemist later to analyze the amount of DDT it took to kill each bird. After that they will be sent to a taxidermist to prepare for use in our bird exhibits.

"In fact, if you write a piece about this, I wish you'd tell everyone to bring in birds—wrapped in foil, of course."

GETTING BACK to the subject of the DDT in the spray for elm disease, I asked Nickell how, without DDT, elm disease can be controlled. "Well—it's not being effectively controlled now, and the results of the effort to control it are very unpleasant to contemplate. We may even, eventually, find the destructive of human life than the hydrogen bomb. We just don't know enough about it yet. The whole business is a muddle and a mess."

"Blanket spray from the air is particularly devastating, even for mosquito control. Mosquitoes can sometimes be carried for miles on the wind, and with 600 lakes in Oakland County how can anyone expect to be rid of mosquitoes in one small area such as one acre, or twenty."

ACTUALLY, the first rain washes the spray down into the soil and the pests, come back. Meantime, innumerable birds, beneficial insects and even soil bacteria have been destroyed. A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing—and a little knowledge is at present all we have to go on.

"Elm disease beetles, incidentally, can also ride a high wind to another area, and it is probable that one beetle is enough to transmit the disease."

"As to birds—I've had at least 50 species brought in or phoned about—warblers, thrushes, cat birds, thrashers, song sparrows, rose-breasted grosbeaks, crows, starlings—and remember that starlings are one of the most valuable insect-eating birds we have, even if starlings are noisy and people don't like them around. Yes, the bird slaughter has been tremendous this season."

"SO WHAT'S to be done?" Nickell was asked. "Well—why not suggest that people put three questions to themselves before going in for wholesale spraying: (1) Is the spraying now being done really effective? (2) Is the spraying being done at a time when the beetles carrying the elm disease emerge? (3) Do all the beetles emerge during the period that the spray is effective? "I know there are people who

prefer elm trees to birds—but that's not the point. The point is, can we afford to upset the natural balance to a point where it may endanger man himself?"

"Cows store DDT in their fatty tissues and are not affected, but rats drinking their milk have been known to die. What about the cumulative effect on humans?"

"Isn't it obvious we must know more about what we are doing—

and that it will take much more research than has been done to date, before we can be sure?"

—M. H. B.

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