



IN MEMORIAM

Wade C. Rollins
Professor of Animal Science, Emeritus
Davis
1912 — 2002

Wade Rollins was born in Jersey City, New Jersey on February 12, 1912, and died November 15, 2002. His mother was of Native American heritage, inheritance of which he was proud. His father was a career employee with the U.S. Post Office. The family moved to the Los Angeles area in 1926, where Wade attended Belmont High School. He did well academically and in track and field sports, and continued to run to maintain good physical condition throughout much of his life.

After high school graduation, he attended Los Angeles City College for two years before transferring to U.C. Berkeley, where he received an A.B. degree in mathematics in 1933. He continued at UCB, earning an M.A. degree in mathematics in 1935. He was employed as a social worker in Alameda County from 1935 to 1937, but feeling "somewhat adrift and alienated from the mainstream" at this time, he left in July 1937 to volunteer in the International Brigade of the Loyalist Forces in the Spanish Civil War. On entering Spain from France via the underground he was briefly imprisoned in the Napoleonic fortress at Figueras by anarchist Spanish forces. He served as an artilleryman in the 14th Battery of the Brigade. His characteristic wry sense of humor was exemplified by his comment that "thank god I'm here as a volunteer; I'd hate to be here because I had to be". Wade had a genuine interest in and respect for the Spanish people. He worked diligently to learn the language, and served as the official translator for his battery. In leaving Spain, he hiked over the Pyrenees in street shoes; carrying his belongings in a small wooden box (he kept the box for the rest of his life).

He returned from Europe in January 1939, and was quite a celebrity with the Bay Area "left wing movement". He met his wife at a lecture he gave on the Lincoln Brigade of the Spanish Civil War, and was married in 1941. He resumed graduate study at UCB in 1939 in mathematical statistics under Professor Jerzy Neyman, and also worked as a dance instructor, reader in mathematics, social worker for the City of Oakland, and claims agent for the U.S. Employment Service. During the 1942-45 war years, he worked as an electrician in the U.S. Navy shipyards in Vallejo.

In 1945 he was recommended by Professor Neyman to Professor P.W. Gregory of the Animal Husbandry Department at UC Davis as a person well qualified to analyze animal breeding data. This period marked the beginning of the science of quantitative genetics, which depended heavily on statistical methodology. Wade came to Davis in October 1945, and resumed graduate studies. His wife and son Tony moved to Davis in 1948, the year that he completed his Ph.D. in genetics. He was appointed as instructor in Animal Husbandry at UCD in January 1949.

Dr. Rollins' career in the Department of Animal Husbandry (later Animal Science) was one of productive research, excellent collaboration with colleagues, good teaching and willing departmental service. His thorough training in mathematical statistics brought timely and valuable expertise to the department. He became involved in projects with several livestock species. His collaborations with physiologists, endocrinologists, nutritionists, and livestock managers expanded his knowledge of animal biology, husbandry and of non- genetic sources of variation in production traits.

An example of an early collaborative study involved analyses of the differences among cattle breeds and breed crosses at the Imperial Valley field station in responses to the high temperature stresses in that desert

area. Another important contribution was estimation of the heterotic effects of crossbreeding in beef cattle, and development of breeding plans to use heterosis for the improvement of productivity. His analyses of accumulated beef cattle data also led to important advances in knowledge of inbreeding effects, genetic variation in several production traits, and inherited defects. A few years later he again became involved in the analysis of collected data, this time from the USDA Rabbit Breeding Station at Fontana where research was being conducted on methods of improving meat production in this species. He helped complete analyses of data after the Station was closed, and with fellow scientists published twelve journal papers and numerous popular articles. This represented the first genetic analyses of production traits in the species.

Wade was noted for careful planning of experiments – his own and those on which he collaborated – and for ensuring that the scope and duration planned would be sufficient to provide statistically valid results. He spent two sabbatic leaves at the Animal Breeding Research Organization in Edinburgh. In the first of these he carried out research on identical twinning in cattle. A second focused on genetically determined muscular hypertrophy (“double muscling”) in beef cattle, an area in which he had already established a research program at Davis. He assembled an experimental herd of these animals, and attracted a strong interdisciplinary team that greatly advanced knowledge of the biology of this syndrome and its potential applicability to improving beef production. During his sabbatical leave he conferred with scientists in several European countries and collected information on the condition in European breeds. He became widely known as a leading expert in the area.

Wade was an eclectic reader. As a teacher, he was known for his interest in exploring subjects in great depth, as well as for his concern for the interests of individual students. He served on numerous Senate, College and Department committees, often bringing a novel and interesting perspective to the discussions. He retired in 1978, and continued to live in Davis a short distance from his office in Hart Hall. His well-known habit of rising early was accentuated during his retirement years, when he was typically in his office from three or four a.m. to midmorning at the latest. In 1995, with failing eyesight, he moved to San Diego to be near his son.

Robert Laben
Eric Bradford
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