



Christopher Blackwell [photographer]

Richard Bayard Dominick

RICHARD BAYARD DOMINICK
1919—1976

What an honor it is to be called upon to write an introduction to this special volume of *The Moths of America North of Mexico* dedicated to the memory of my life-long friend and beloved husband, Richard Bayard Dominick. Dick and I first met early in 1941, and our friendship spanned more than 35 years, leading ultimately to ten incredibly happy and fulfilling years of marriage. Random vignettes gleaned from those many years come to mind . . . Dick, a loyal member of his college crew at Yale, introducing me to the sport of rowing at the Yale-Harvard boat race . . . Dick, newly qualified as a Marine Corps pilot, stepping off the Florida train in his fresh, new, white uniform while I, playing truant from my office job, waited to meet him! . . . Dick in his Austin "Mini Moke" (a miniature, jeep-like vehicle), armed with butterfly nets and collecting jars, speeding happily through the woods in South Carolina. But no matter how vivid my many personal recollections are, this occasion calls for a more explicit memoir to share with others.

"How fortunate the man whose vocation is his avocation!" It was Jack Franclemont, Professor of Entomology at Cornell University, who first brought that quotation to Dick's attention. Dick often repeated it to describe his own situation, after discovering that a boyhood hobby could indeed develop into an important, life's work. The seeds of fascination with lepidoptery had been planted during childhood in coastal South Carolina, but for many years lay dormant. His rediscovery of the Carolina lowlands and subsequent years at The Wedge Plantation reawakened his early enthusiasm for butterflies and moths and led to what proved to be a major turning point in his life and career. Then the days never seemed long enough for all of his naturalist's pursuits—the collecting, the spreading and labelling, the identifying and curating, the seeking out of habitats and food plants, the rearing and feeding of caterpillars, the experimentation with new techniques, and all the joys of an inquiring mind reinforced by scientific activities. In his laboratory, with the expert help of such distinguished friends as those on the editorial board, *The Moths of America North of Mexico* was meticulously planned as the definitive identification reference work for all species of moths found in the continental United States, Canada, and Greenland. This publication, when completed, is scheduled to fill 150 parts or fascicles. To all of these tasks Dick dedicated his singular enthusiasm, his dynamic energy, and the perfectionism that was characteristic of everything he did, while he never failed to highlight his ventures and misadventures alike with an infectious sense of humor and enjoyment.

As a boy at Gregorie Neck, his parents' plantation on the Coosawhatchee River in South Carolina, Dick became acquainted with such species as the large and showy cecropia and luna moths, but his interest soon broadened to include other species. He became adept at wielding a butterfly net and preparing specimens for his rapidly growing collection. Great encouragement was provided by his parents, and Dick later recalled with amusement overhearing his father telephone the New York Zoological Society, of which he was a member of the Board of Trustees, and ask to speak to "the chief bug man!" An appointment was duly made with that unnamed worthy, who happened to be a curator at the American Museum of Natural History, and Dick was taken to him for induction into entomological circles and advice on the requisites of a budding lepidopterist.

Out in the countryside, Dick acquired a naturalist's lore, learning to rec-

ognize species, to remember their scientific names and to associate them with their different habitats and food plants. But sadly, boyhood dreams all too soon cede their magic to the demands of more formal education. Schooling absorbed more and more time and led to entry into Yale's Davenport College in his father's and grandfather's footsteps. There, persuaded by others that interest in natural science was a logical first step toward becoming a physician, he began to concentrate on premedical courses.

Fate, however, intervened and changed Dick's plans. In 1941 his father died, and soon afterward the historic bombing of Pearl Harbor marked the beginning of U. S. involvement in World War II. Gregorie Neck was sold, and the collection of Lepidoptera, later to surface with fortuitous impact, was donated to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Dick's active participation in the Inter-collegiate Flying Club, of which he was president, led him to volunteer as a Marine Corps aviator. For four years he flew in the Pacific theater, primarily as pilot of a Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber, and his thoroughness in emergency preparations led his fellow pilots to claim that he alone would likely gain weight if forced down in his aircraft. He was awarded the Air Medal, the Purple Heart, and, for his initiative in compiling a manual of gunnery, a Commendation from the Commanding General.

At the end of the war Dick resumed his university studies and, after graduation, went on to qualify in medicine and surgery, later specializing in ophthalmology. He completed his surgical residency at Roosevelt Hospital and later moved to Manhattan Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital. Although he had enjoyed his medical studies, the practice of medicine proved considerably less fulfilling than he had hoped. Always responsive to people and their problems and with a warm human empathy toward his patients, Dick frequently ran afoul of hospital politics and priorities. More and more he sought involvement in other humanitarian or educational projects such as the Greer Children's Community in Dutchess County, New York, of which he became a director.

He also became a patron and honorary life member of both the Peabody Associates and the Explorers' Club, of which he became Vice-president and which awarded him the Scroll of Honor in recognition of his travels in the then unmapped Endicott Range of Alaska. There he had become friends with the Eskimos, filming and documenting their traditional ways. His compelling interest in exploration, natural history, and photography took him from the Sierra Nevada, where he sought the legendary Golden Trout, to the plains and forests of East Africa where he filmed unique footage of rare wildlife, such as the sitatunga and bongo, two little-known antelopes.

Among other things, he undertook the role of Scoutmaster for Troop 503 in Far Rockaway, Long Island, and for four years energetically led a happy band of young scouts. Under his direction, the troop won the highly competitive and greatly prized annual scout film award, which brought them national recognition. Always a dedicated fisherman and sportsman, Dick became associate founder of the Yale University Outdoor Recreation Center, and Lake Dominick at their facility near New Haven was named in his honor. To all of his many affiliations he gave a great deal of time and creative energy, while keeping a weather eye on the salt marsh outside our Long Island home in pleasant anticipation of the duck hunting season.

Although commitments multiplied, somehow the restlessness of untapped energies always churned just below the surface. Then one day, largely on impulse, we decided to visit friends living in coastal South Carolina. The

nearer we were to Dick's childhood haunts the more delighted he was, until it seemed patently obvious that his heart was really in the lowlands of South Carolina. During a rest stop we visited a country general store where, amid fishing tackle and other sporting goods, Dick came upon a shelf with various guide books to the flora and fauna. These he purchased, and among them was a copy of Klots's *Field Guide to the Butterflies*. When he inspected this book more closely, his attention was drawn to illustrations of some specimens from Coosawhatchee, based on material in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History. With growing amazement, Dick realized that these could only have come from his own boyhood collection, as he knew of no one else who had collected moths and butterflies in that area. This inspired him to get a brand new net, and he promptly set about testing his rusty collecting technique while dredging his memory for the once familiar Latin names and key recognition features. Soon he was up to his ears in spreading boards and all the paraphernalia peculiar to lepidopterists. In his own words, he was "as happy as a clam at high tide."

Through a memorable proliferation of events, we found ourselves acquiring The Wedge Plantation, where Dick built and equipped a fine laboratory near the main plantation house. Having come full cycle, he returned with joy to his first real love—entomology.

The beautiful "Wedge" essentially became the culmination of all Dick ever wanted to have or to do. It allowed him to develop one of the finest regional moth collections in the country. This he achieved in the remarkably short span of 10 years of intensive and dedicated work. He became during this time an Associate Fellow of Bradford College, and a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society as well as a Research Associate of the Charleston Museum.

The site of The Wedge was important because it is located in one of the more sparsely collected areas in the United States. Hardly any collections of moths, least of all from year-round sampling, had existed from that part of the southern coastal plain or from the marshy deltas of the great rivers that enter the sea along its coast. To create what we referred to as "the world's biggest bug trap" Dick converted half a cottage into one large lure for insects, ablaze at night with ultra-violet light. In every way The Wedge provided an amazingly convenient facility where lepidopterists could view a whole new fauna, particularly that of the hard-to-reach delta marshland, as well as to develop the crucial friendships that contribute so much to this work.

The diversity and richness of the material that he collected, coupled with the growing realization that there was no comprehensive, up-to-date, identification manual, prompted the initiation of *The Moths of America North of Mexico* series, which Dick himself described in an illustrated introduction to Ron Hodges' sphingid fascicle, the first to be published. For the lymantriid fascicle alone, Dick's material finally made it possible to recognize and characterize four species and one genus whose identity had remained uncertain for more than a century because of inadequate material; and he provided beautiful specimens of an entirely new one, *Dasychira dominickaria* Fgn., one of four species of moths that have been named after him.

On the lighter side, science sometimes invaded the kitchen to the tolerant dismay of the household when Dick brought his work home. Freezers were filled with film, containers of caterpillars appeared in the refrigerator, and paraffin wax for photographic diffusion blocks simmered not only on the stove but sometimes spilled over onto the counters and floor.

I don't think that it is an exaggeration to say that anyone who came to know Dick was stimulated by his enthusiasm and touched by his warmth and kindness. He was greatly loved as a man and greatly admired as a serious and dedicated natural historian. Among his contributions to lepidoptery were the discovery of over 20 species new to science, not to mention those he set aside in a special drawer, humorously but no less earnestly labelled UFO's [unidentified flying objects]. He made detailed studies on the life cycle and habits of the poorly known sweetbay silkmoth, *Callosamia securifera*, and set up a foundation for publication of *The Moths of America North of Mexico*. He was the author of various scientific papers such as the one on the application of freeze-drying techniques to the preservation of caterpillars. Combining his knowledge of optics and photography, he perfected a means by which the specimens for the colored plates of the moth-book series could be illustrated on a shadow-free background of the traditional pale-blue color, and in a life-size format. These are but some of his noteworthy accomplishments achieved during those 10 full, productive years at The Wedge.

There was a poignant moment at the simple family burial we arranged for him in the woods he loved so well. Jane Wineglass, our dear friend and housekeeper for all the wonderful Wedge years, sang for the service, and it was she who chose the spiritual sung as we laid him to rest—"May the work I've done speak for me" . . . May it indeed! To those of us whose lives he touched he left a legacy of warmth and integrity, and memories of a rare and wonderful man.

I would like to add that Dick's efforts are being perpetuated under the aegis of the University of South Carolina. The Wedge is now theirs, and they are proceeding to make it an international center for public health research, concentrating particularly on the study of diseases transmitted by insects. They too have honored Dick's accomplishments and have fittingly dedicated the Center as the Richard B. Dominick Laboratory.

Tatiana Dominick
Washington, D. C.
January 1985