

WILLIAM JAY

(1884-1958)

RICHARD F. MILLER

William Jay, an active member of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, died suddenly at his home on January 28, 1958. A lifelong resident of Germantown, Philadelphia, Bill was the son of the late William Jay, a prominent politician of his day and a direct descendant of John Jay, first Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

Bill joined the Club in 1922 and was regularly active until, like several others, his ornithological interests were superseded by entomology. He became active in the Entomological Club at the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Lepidopterists' Club of Philadelphia; and his subsequent collection of lepidoptera included many rare items.

Bill Jay and I first became acquainted in 1922 through mutual reading of the *Oologist*, the journal of egg collectors in those days. We later made hundreds of trips together for specimens. Bill contributed two brief papers to the *Oologist* entitled "The Blue-winged Warbler" and "The Kentucky Warbler", relating to the birds' nesting habits in the Wissahickon Valley. In the late nineteen-thirties Bill gave up "egging" and donated his egg collection to a local high school.

He returned to the D.V.O.C. fold in 1953, with the assist of a practical joke which he enjoyed as thoroughly as did the perpetrators. Dave Cutler called him one Thursday to tell him that if he wanted to see a Barrow's Goldeneye, he should be at a certain spot before sundown. Dave picked him up later, but instead of arriving at some local reservoir, Bill found himself in the Academy with the skin of a Goldeneye in his hand, and a meeting of the D.V.O.C. about to get under way.

Bill was a keen observer, and became quite an authority on the birds of the Wissahickon. Most of his birding was around Philadelphia, but he had also birded in Florida, Texas, Massachusetts and Canada. One of Jay's quirks was a phobia on wearing warm clothing in the field; Club members recall how he nearly froze in the icy blasts off bleak Halibut Point at Cape Ann one January. And his peculiar lack of sense of direction often had him lost, though it never bothered him. He would locate a bird for you by saying, "Oh, up the road a way", meaning anywhere from Chestnut Hill to Norristown. He kept daily notes religiously, even though he might enter only a Starling. The bulk of his life records were accidentally destroyed; the rest he gave to the Club library.

My last trip with Bill was in November 1957 to Brigantine with Sam Mulligan. On December 30th he took Dave Cutler to the Wissahickon to find Cutler's 299th bird of the year, a Long-eared Owl. We last saw Bill at the January annual meeting where he reported having seen a Red-necked Grebe at Point Pleasant the week before. He was a grand field birder, and we'll miss him.