



JOHN F. McILVAIN

1917-1977

JOHN F. McILVAIN 1917-1977

John Folwell McIlvain was reported to have shown an interest in birds at the age of three. In 1933, when 16, he joined the D.V.O.C., the club that played a paramount role in his adult life. A loyal and devoted member, he served on council and many committees, and was elected fellow in 1951. He was secretary for 4 years and president in 1960-1961.

In 1961 a near fatal automobile accident threatened to prohibit further field ornithology. Therapy, determination and prosthetics restored limited mobility although henceforth he was never without discomfort and frequent intense pain.

He applied the same determination to pursue more avidly his chosen avocation. In addition to continuing his participation in local counts and marathons, he expanded his horizons by trips to the Caribbean, Iceland, Central and South America, Europe and East Africa. Travel in Surinam included dugout passage along jungle streams. While in Ecuador preparing for a Galapagos Isle trip, a fall caused a leg refracture. Following the application of a full leg cast he boarded the boat to continue the trip, disembarking at the islands along the way. He stubbornly visited Peru and Panama before his return home.

In August 1977, on the second day of a DVOC west coast excursion, John injured his back, but insisted on embarking on the full day sea trip. Although immobile in rough waters throughout the day, he managed to observe most of the species through his cabin window and his enthusiasm remained with him, although it proved the last field trip he was to take.

In spite of adversity and continuously increasing pain during the 16 years following his accident, John never asked quarter. When the Ross' Gull appearance at Newburyport, Mass., incited an international migration of bird watchers in the winter of '74-75, John was determined to be among them. A fall on the pavement sparked fears of another fracture, but John insisted on waiting in the car. When the bird appeared John's friends carried him to a vantage point to see it, and his tenacity provided a sight as memorable as that of the Ross' Gull.

John's concern for others was reflected in his service as PTA president, Boy Scout merit badge counselor and president of the Magee Memorial Hospital Alumni Club. In the latter role he provided therapy to others on a rehabilitation program.

John's ready wit, apt comments, intelligent observations, and sincere devotion to people and causes will remain with his many friends of the D.V.O.C.

Robert H. Sehl
1062 Welsh Rd.
Phila. Pa. 19115