

OAS LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Paul Buck

On 3 November 2006, The Oklahoma Academy of Science, at its annual Technical Meeting, paid tribute to longtime member Paul Buck by bestowing upon him a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contributions to the advancement of science in the state. In addition, the Academy sponsored a symposium titled *The Natural History of Oklahoma: A Symposium Honoring Dr. Paul Buck*.

Paul was described as an individual who personified each and every facet of the Academy's mission statement, which states that: "The purpose of Academy shall be to stimulate scientific research; to promote fraternal relationships among those engaged in scientific work in Oklahoma; to diffuse among the citizens of the State a knowledge of the various departments of science; and to investigate and make known the material, educational, and other resources of the State." OAS members who have worked with him on various committees of the Academy, collaborated in research endeavors, or accompanied him on field trips well understand how he has had such a profound influence on so many people.

Paul's influence began in 1962 when he began teaching at the University of Tulsa, after earning his Ph.D. in botany at the University of Oklahoma. His undergraduate teaching responsibilities included courses in general biology, natural history, organismal biology, environmental biology, plant kingdom, plant anatomy, plant morphology, plant physiology, plant taxonomy, micro-technique, agrostology, and bioecology. In addition, he taught six graduate level courses and a variety of short courses. For many years, Paul also taught summer courses at The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory at Gothic Colorado, one of the most famous field stations in North America.

Paul's ability as a teacher was praised by the individuals nominating him for the

award and by former students who returned to Oklahoma specifically to attend the award presentation and symposium. They cited his ability to instill an appreciation of botany and the environment in them, to inspire

them to become field biologists, to seek graduate degrees, and in turn to become teachers and researchers.

Paul's research activities and contributions to our understanding of the flora and vegetation of Oklahoma also were outlined. His work with Estelle Levetin on allergenic plants in the state was cited, as was his classic book *Distribution and Identification of Woody Plants of Oklahoma in the Winter Condition*, which has been used by countless individuals becoming acquainted with the woody flora of the state. He had an influential role in the formation of the consortium of state taxonomists and ecologists to write a modern manual for identification of the state's vascular flora. He is one of the authors of *Keys & Descriptions for the Vascular Plants of Oklahoma*, which is the precursor to the *Flora of Oklahoma*.

In addition to his traditional writing as a scientist, Paul has, for years, made botanical phenomena meaningful to the citizens of Oklahoma through his quarterly contributions titled "Botany Bay" in the *Gaillardia*, the newsletter of the Oklahoma Native Plant Society. He played an instrumental role in creating this organization, now composed of more than 500 members. Topic titles such as: *Latin & Scientific Names, Fall Color Change in*



Leaves, Medicinal Plants, Sex in Your Garden, The Tranquility of Nature, Passion Flowers, Tropisms, The Apple, and Journey of Wonder, reveal that some of his columns were traditional, others whimsical, and others philosophical. All were informative.

As members are well aware, Paul's service to the Oklahoma Academy of Science has been exemplary — as an active member,

as a section chair, as President in 1971, and as Executive Secretary-Treasurer for several years. Appropriately, this service to the Academy was recognized via Tenure and Service Awards in 1991 and 1994.

Our thanks once again to Paul for his many contributions to the advancement of science in Oklahoma.