

EDITORIAL

QUALITY, BREVITY, ECONOMY

One of the satisfactions of having studied with a great teacher is the memory of occasional words of praise for a piece of work well done. Equally fresh in the memory, but perhaps with their sting happily dulled by time, may be words of disapproval evoked by carelessness or superficiality. It is only fair, therefore, for the Editor, before accusing others of a crime, to admit that he is guilty, on occasion (such as the present), of the same crime: the crime of verbosity.

As a graduate student, sitting in awe and admiration at the feet of William Morton Wheeler and George Howard Parker, the Editor once submitted a manuscript of some 150 pages to Professor Parker. It was promptly returned with the remark that any good thoughts would be almost certainly buried in all those words, and that it might just as well be cut in half before going any further. The manuscript was cut down by about 50 pages and resubmitted. This time it came back with the written comment "Evidently you do not understand what a sound condensation means." The third time, after another shaking-down in which most of the words of more than three syllables and most of the tables were tossed out bodily, it began to win at least a small amount of approval, and the comment came back: "Good! Now it looks as if you are almost ready to begin to write it."

The Editor has such a high respect for the talent and learning represented among the contributors to *Mosquito News* that it is only with the greatest reluctance that he asks for revisions of their manuscripts, or for the condensations which can so often be made by the elimination of tables and superfluous illustrations. But the plain fact is that tables and illustrations cost money. Some are essential, others, if not essential, add greatly to the value of a paper. But sometimes a photograph is

included just because the author took it, and could not bring himself to omit it. With a few papers the impression is inescapable that they represent an unedited portion of an annual report or a transcript of field notes. The Editor feels that truly significant points are often masked, and potentially good papers often spoiled by authors who are in such a hurry to get on to the next piece of work that they rush the deadline with papers which on more leisurely consideration they would have shortened by many words.

The necessity for brevity is real; it is dictated by the need for economy. A full page of tabular material costs about four times as much as a page of 10-point type, and fractions of a page in the same proportion. It is often cheaper to make a line cut of a table than to set a full page of tabular material in type, but for a line cut a table must be perfectly neat and clean, and the typing must be sharp, black and clear.

If there are several illustrations, often much time and expense can be saved if they are so chosen that they will all take the same amount of reduction and can be trimmed and fitted to make a full page or half page plate, or a vertical cut of column width. Labels and key numbers and letters should not be so placed that they extend so far into the margins as to prevent an otherwise permissible reduction to column or page width.

All authors should read and follow the manuscript rules and regulations printed on the inside back cover of *Mosquito News*. Both the Editor and the printer have been extremely lenient in the interpretation and enforcement of these rules, but this is a good opportunity to mention that every violation is expensive to the Association. For instance, although the printer might accept and work from a carbon on thin paper, it is more difficult

to handle, takes more time to read, and will result in more errors for the proof-readers to correct; THE ASSOCIATION PAYS FOR ALL OF THIS EXTRA TIME AND LABOR.

The author can estimate very easily how many pages his paper will require, and should try to tailor it down to six. If it appears that his text plus illustrations cannot be made to fit on six pages—and it should certainly be admitted that many such occasions arise—a statement should accompany the manuscript authorizing charges for extra pages and giving the name of the person to whom the bill should be sent.

Most authors and organizations willingly provide for and pay these charges, and *Mosquito News* takes pleasure and pride in presenting long papers of a significant nature in this way. But, returning to the subject of condensation when it can be accomplished without sacrifice of quality, the Editor is reminded of the old rule for pruning a tree: cut out everything you think the tree can stand, then back away, look it over, and go back and take out half as much again. This applies to nearly all writing and to nearly all writers, so "never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."—D.L.C.

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Box 3081
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May 27, 1955

DR. DONALD L. COLLINS, Editor,
Mosquito News,
New York State Museum,
Albany 1, N. Y.

Dear Don:

I would like to have you present, through "Mosquito News," my profound thanks to my many friends who were so kind to me at the Los Angeles Meeting in January of this year. I was too overwhelmed to adequately express my appreciation, and actually I think I was in a daze during the entire meeting. I shall always treasure the many beautiful and useful gifts presented to my wife and myself, and the two honorary memberships, and especially that wonderful book of letters. This now has a special stand in my office. The sincerity and kindness of these letters are heart warming, and give me a feeling that I have really been of some use in this world.

I had hoped to be able to reply to these letters individually, but a serious illness and operation from which I am recovering but slowly has prevented my doing so, and belated replies now appear to be inappropriate. It may be several months before I will be fully recovered, and even then I will have to proceed at a much slower pace than in past years. In the meantime we have purchased and moved to a lovely place in the Sierra foothills five miles southeast of Oroville in California, and we hope that our friends will call on us when they are in the vicinity. They will receive a hearty welcome.

Sincerely yours,

HAROLD F. GRAY