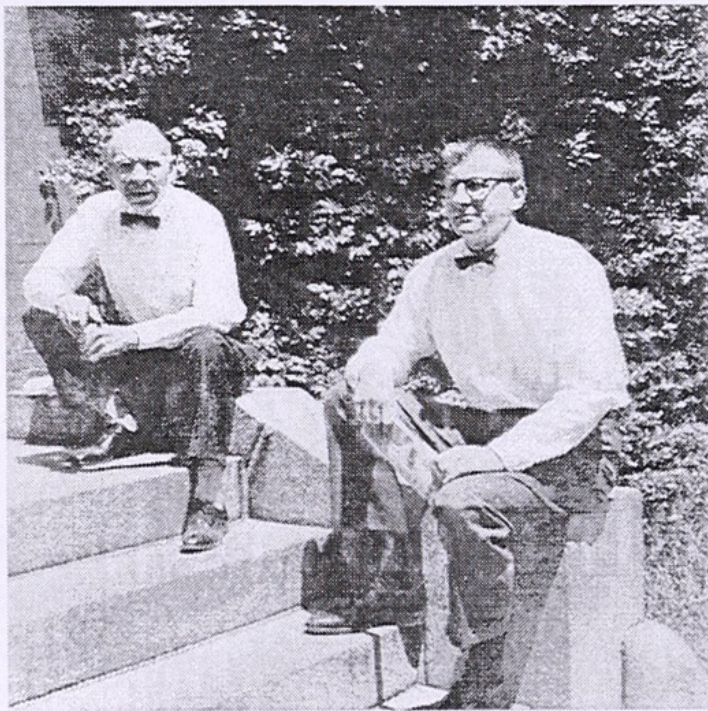


RICHARD IRWIN JOHNSON

It is a great pleasure to be able to dedicate this volume of Occasional Papers on Mollusks to Mr. Richard Irwin Johnson who has, during almost six decades of association with the Department of Mollusks, made numerous contributions to both malacology and its history, a number of which have appeared in this series and the Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, as well as Breviora and Miscellaneous Occasional Papers. He has generously supported the Department and added considerably to its library; such works as Kiener, the Küster edition of Martini and Chemnitz; and the original pattern set to Reeve's, *Conchologia Iconica*, all duplicates from his library, which is the most extensive malacological collection in private hands.

During 1939 when Richard was fourteen years old and showed an interest in biology, his science teacher, Mr. Albert Clish took him to meet Clish's old classmate from the Huntington School, Boston, William James Clench, Curator of Mollusks at the Museum of Comparative Zoology. With his remarkable and infectious enthusiasm, Clench assured Clish that if Richard wished to volunteer in the Department he might become especially interested in mollusks. Richard was set to unpacking the extensive incoming collections of Unionoidea, including both those of the Grand Rapids, Michigan, Public Museum and of the duplicates from the Bryant Walker collection, which had recently been received from the University of Michigan. He was assured by Clench that this group was his special interest and it has been ever since. So much for imagination.

Among those working in the Department at the time were Richard Winslow Foster, Henry Drummond Russell, and Robert Tucker Abbott, an undergraduate. The latter already appeared to be a distinguished malacologist to a fourteen year old. In August of 1941 most of the members of the Department attended the eleventh annual meeting of the American Malacological Union at Rockland and Thomaston, hosted by Norman W. Lermond, and it was here that Richard met Frank Collins Baker, Horace B. Baker, Paul Bartsch, Fritz Haas, Henry A. Pilsbry and many others.



William J. Clench (left) and Richard I. Johnson contemplating unios on the steps of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, May 1963.

During October of 1940 to April 1941, Clench was at the B.B. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, on a grant to study Hawaiian land snails with Dr. C. Montague Cooke, and Dr. Russell was left in charge. During this time, Richard became acquainted with James R. Miller, a professional collector of biological specimens, and through him, Herbert D. Athearn, who has also spent his life collecting and studying Unionoidea. Miller volunteered at the New England Museum of Natural History, and it was here, while helping him, that Richard discovered an old catalogue which led to his being able to reidentify many of the type specimens of mollusks described a century before by Joseph Pitty Couthouy. He also made the acquaintance of Ruth D. Turner, then Assistant Curator of Birds. Either he or Miller introduced her to Clench whose infectious enthusiasm for mollusks caused her to abandon ornithology for malacology. She became a leading specialist of the bivalve family Teredinidae.

In early December of 1941, Johnson and Turner accompanied Miller to Tiverton for several days to help him prepare starfish which Miller was dredging for the Cambosco Scientific Company. Turner left a day early to assist at Audubon Society's annual bird count. Those who returned to port on the 7th of December learned that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Johnson was drafted in June 1943, knowing only that he had an early acceptance to Harvard if he returned. The proofs of the Couthouy paper were corrected while he was on latrine duty at Camp Hood, Texas. When finally sent to Europe, he was occasionally able to sneak to Paris where he found the most important works on mollusks so cheaply priced that he purchased virtually everything he saw. Later, as a Harvard

undergraduate, he financed his summers in Europe with the books he bought and sold. At college, he rowed on the freshman crew, successfully defeating Yale that year in 1947. As an undergraduate he was a member of the Hasty Pudding Club and the Spee Club, known as a Final Club, which had Maximilian Agassiz and John F. Kennedy as members. After graduating in 1951, he attended what is now the American Graduate School of International Management near Phoenix, Arizona, but he never appeared at the National City Bank in New York which had hired him. He returned to Boston and the Museum, becoming involved in life insurance, and trading securities at White, Weld & Co. In 1954 he married Marjory Weld Austin. They had three children; Sally, married to David Lurie; Marjory; and Richard, married to Karen O'Leary who had given him a grandson, Mason. The marriage ended in divorce in 1982. Later at the opening of an event at the Boston Athenaeum, Richard met Marrian Geer Gleason, the widow of Edward Hollis Gleason, a Harvard Graduate whom he had come to know at graduate school, and married her in 1989. She also has two adult children, Julia and Edward.

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In 1960, at the insistence of Dr. Giles W. Mead, Curator of Fishes, Johnson accompanied Frank Mather on the Woods Hole vessel *Crawford*. Mather was studying the breeding habits of the tuna, and Johnson baited the Japanese long lines about which everyone has heard ever after. In 1952, Johnson led the Harvard Expedition to Peninsular Florida to collect Unionidae. He was accompanied by an undergraduate, Samuel Liberty Harvey Fuller. Fuller subsequently became a professional biologist associated with the Academy of Natural Sciences of

Philadelphia, especially interested in Unionoidea. After trips to Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Central Ohio in 1964 and 1965, Johnson had constructed an office in the room which contains the Unionoidea, retired from business, and has since then devoted most of his time to the Museum.

From 1958 until 1970, under the directorship of Professors Alfred Sherwood Romer and later, Ernst Mayr, Johnson served on a Committee with Drs. Charles Pierson Lyman and Raymond Andrew Paynter planning exhibition work. The Committee was abolished by the then new Director, Dr. Alfred W. Crompton, who also, after more than 100 years ceased publishing the Annual Report of the Museum.

In 1989 the Mollusk Department held a party at the Harvard Faculty Club to celebrate Johnson's fifty years at the Museum. A few months before James R. Miller appeared at the Department. Though close to ninety, he had hitch hiked from Florida. Johnson's original thank-you note to Clench, obviously written with his mother's prodding, was found in the Departmental files and read to a distinguished audience.

Having served under all of the directors of the Museum save the two Agassiz's and Samuel Henshaw, Johnson realized that of those he had known, the most distinguished was Ernst Mayr, the world's foremost evolutionary biologist. He and the author, with the permission of Mr. Rudenstein, President of the University, established a fund for a portrait of Professor Mayr, by the distinguished artist Robert Douglas Hunter. The portrait hangs in the Museum's library, now known as the Ernst Mayr Library.



Richard Irwin Johnson

Seen here prepared for the annual meeting of The Club of Odd Volumes, the purpose of which is “to promote literary and artistic tastes.” It was founded in Boston in 1887 and limited to 87 resident members. Both Samuel Henshaw and Thomas Barbour, former directors of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, were members. (Though his beer glass is visible, conspicuously hidden in his right hand is Johnson’s ubiquitous cigar.)



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