

# Bill Jackson: Bowling Green's 'Pied Piper'

BY JANIS L. PALLISTER

**M**ANY of you are quite familiar with the extensive work that Dr. William Jackson has performed on a world-wide basis in the identification of warfarin-resistance in rodent pests and his extensive study of the effects of this substance, as well as the evolution of counter measures designed to eliminate that resistance.

Indeed, Bill is our own pied piper, only since he has been paid for his troubles, it's a question only of rats, not children!

Bill joined the BGSU faculty in 1957. And in the course of his career he has traveled to many parts of the world, having gone, for example, to the South Pacific to study island rat populations and the response of rats to radiation at the atomic test sites of Bikini and Enewetak Atolls.

Bill has also traveled as a participant in international symposia and consultant for the World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, U.S. Agency for International Development and private foundations and corporations. To this day he is frequently the consultant to the pest control and food processing industries.

Bill has written over 200 technical and popular papers as well as chapters for books; and he has also appeared on national TV (including *60 Minutes*). This work has led him in many directions and taken him to many countries: there is only one continent he has not been on, and that's Antarctica. "There are no native mice there!" he says.

**AT THE TIME** of his retirement in 1985 he had become the Director for Environmental Research and Services and carried the title of Distinguished University Professor of Biological Sciences. He is a member of many honorary and learned societies, and was for 20 years, until his recent withdrawal, the Executive Director of Pi Chi Omega — a professional honorary society for the structural pest control industry. His role in this organization has been complex: he has



• Dr. William Jackson and "friend" were photographed in December 1984 by Clifton Boutelle. Photo retrieval assistance from Ann Bowers, University Archivist; and Craig Bell, director of photography, Office of Marketing and Communications, and Brad Phalin, University photographer.

been in charge of arranging meetings, of the publication of a newsletter, and has processed many applications for the scholarships awarded by this "fraternity." Bill was also chairman of the American Society for Testing and Materials subcommittee on vertebrate control.

**BUT WHAT** has Bill been doing since he retired? Well, quite a bit!! He has formed — along with several associates — Bio-Cenotics Inc. of Osseo, Mich., a testing laboratory and consulting group for pesticide and environmental research and development. Stocks of anticoagulant-resistant rats and mice were moved from the University. And the laboratory was uniquely capable of testing potential

rodenticides, baits and control devices on wild rodents.

Recently, the group has been asked to design a rodent management program for Boston's 10-year, multi-billion-dollar Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel Construction project. Environmental assessments and measurements of environmental quality are also involved.

Bill is still called upon to travel to many parts of the world, and his adventures make for fascinating stories. He has found that animal behavior and human behavior both play a part in infestations: "A pest," says Bill, "is by definition a creature that wants the same thing you do." It is his job to diagnose the problem coming from some pest (bird, insect or rodent), eliminate that problem and set up strategies for prevention: e.g., putting screens in windows, closing doors, setting traps, etc. And he has therefore set up training courses for pest control in Africa; and they are now being planned

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## 'Pied Piper' • continued

for Europe as well.

These travels, though professional in nature, have been the source of considerable knowledge and understanding of other cultures. For example, he was in Iraq, in Bagdad, in the early days of Saddam's rise to power; and he stresses that the people are marvelous. And wherever he goes he not only does investigative work for corporations or manufacturers who are concerned with pests of one kind or another (insects, rodents) that are getting into food products and containers for food products, but he also does "touristy" things: shopping, sightseeing, going to museums, exploring the terrain.

Meanwhile, Jackson has continued to teach part-time at BGSU. And as recently as 1995 he was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award for superior efforts to enhance human-wildlife relationships by the Jack Berrymann Institute for Wildlife Damage at Utah State University.

A native of Wisconsin, Bill received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin. But he travelled a bit for the doctor's: He holds the Doctor of Science degree from the School of Hygiene and Public Health of The Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore). Initially he was involved in the pioneering research program on the ecology of urban rats and the first field testing of Compound 42 (warfarin to you) at The Johns Hopkins University.

Later he became a commissioned officer in the U.S. Public Health Service, with research and training responsibilities in vector control. He then accepted a two-year assignment with the National Research Council on Ponape in the Eastern Caroline Islands of Micronesia, where he studied tropical rodent populations.

Bill is the father of two sons and one daughter, Beth, who was born in Micronesia, and is now a librarian in public schools in Maine. All three of Bill's children are BGSU graduates. He has two grandchildren, ages 7 and

9. And he shares his home with his wife Shirley and her Himalayan cat, whose name is Misty.

Since upon occasion Shirley has traveled with Bill, they have been able to observe aspects of foreign cultures he might not have known about otherwise. For example, when they visited a remote Muslim village in the Sudan, his wife was the only woman included in the gathering. An Arab meal was served to them, but Shirley was the only woman at table; the native women were "back in the kitchens."

And in Brazil and elsewhere they noted that the women (if not also the men) had great interest in Americans, and in their politics, though they seemed to gain most of the knowledge of our culture through soap operas. (Bill acknowledges also that Shirley has played an active role in Pi Chi Omega: she handled much of the paper work.)

Though his on-site visits are more often located in the U.S. these days, Bill nonetheless expects to go to Italy in the near future. This trip will be comprised of government and industry officials who seek to control bird and rodent pests that are getting into food products. (Bugs in the spaghetti????)

In sum, one can safely say that Bill's work is varied and unpredictable. He says he never knows what might be going to happen when the phone rings. One can also safely say that his work is his hobby and his hobby is his work.

On a personal note, it has been my great pleasure to have been able to include Bill's "identifications" of strange land and sea beasts in the appendices of my English language edition of Ambroise Paré's *On Monsters and Marvels*. Published in 1980, this has been a remarkably successful book for many reasons, not the least of which are the contributions of Bill and my brother Philip D. Pallister, M.D., S.D. — a clinical genetics expert. The weird pictures help. □

■ The History Channel will have a special program on rats later this year.  
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