

# The American Museum of Natural History

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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### DR. LIBBIE H. HYMAN, FAMED AUTHORITY ON INVERTEBRATES, DIES AT AGE 80; WITH THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY 32 YEARS

Dr. Libbie H. Hyman, the foremost authority in this country on invertebrate organisms, died on Sunday, August 3rd, at her home at 307 West 79th Street. She was 80 years old.

Dr. Hyman conducted most of her life work at The American Museum of Natural History where she was a Research Associate in the Department of Living Invertebrates. She started her career at the University of Chicago. She had been with the Museum since 1937.

Although she had suffered from Parkinson's Disease for more than ten years, Dr. Hyman continued her work until the past year or so.

Dr. Hyman was world famous for her classic research and writing on invertebrate animals, which took the form of a monumental treatise entitled The Invertebrates. The work was begun in 1931, and the sixth volume was published in September, 1968. The treatise is expected to encompass ten volumes and, when completed, it will cover the entire field of invertebrate zoology, with special reference to anatomy, embryology, physiology and ecology. It is the most comprehensive work in its field ever to appear in English. The final volumes are to be completed by a group of scientists headed by Dr. Joel H. Hedgepeth of the Marine Science Laboratory of Oregon State University.

Dr. Hyman once expressed impatience when asked how many volumes her treatise on the invertebrates would contain. "How should I know? You begin at the beginning and aim for the end, but you never know how long you're going to live."

Dr. Hyman was born in Des Moines, Iowa, on December 6th, 1888. She graduated from the University of Chicago in 1910 and earned her Ph.D. degree from that institution in 1915. She served as research assistant to Dr. Charles Manning Child, Professor of Zoology and a leading biologist of his day, from 1915 to 1931. In 1941 she received an honorary degree of Doctor of Science from the University of Chicago.

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Before her association with The American Museum of Natural History began, Dr. Hyman had completed a college laboratory manual on comparative vertebrate anatomy. It was highly successful and has been used by three generations of college students.

Dr. Hyman was the editor of Systematic Zoology, the journal of the Society of Systematic Zoology, from 1959 to 1963. In 1959 she was president of the Society.

In 1955, Dr. Hyman became the first woman scientist to receive the Daniel Giraud Elliot Medal of the National Academy of Sciences. The medal is given for meritorious work in zoology and paleontology.

In May, 1960, Dr. Hyman was awarded the Linnean Gold Medal of the Linnean Society of London. The medal is the Society's highest honor and a mark of international distinction in the field of biologic research. Dr. Hyman was the first woman zoologist to receive it.

On April 9th of this year Dr. Hyman was honored at The American Museum of Natural History, which presented to her its Gold Medal for Distinguished Achievement in Science. The occasion was the Centennial Celebration of the Museum. Dr. Hyman accepted the medal from her wheel chair, which she had been forced to use several years ago when her disease grew worse.

When asked once to comment on her work, Dr. Hyman modestly replied, "The treatise on the invertebrates has brought me much fame and many honors that has given the zoological public an exaggerated idea of my scientific abilities. The treatise is essentially a compilation from the literature."

The volumes, however, are more than mere compilations. They constitute an analysis and evaluation of published information, and an interpretation of data. The opinions rendered form a notable contribution to practical and theoretical zoology. In addition to The Invertebrates, Dr. Hyman has written some 145 scientific papers on the invertebrates, the first having been published 52 years ago and the last in 1966.

One of her research projects was the taxonomic identification of free-living flatworms, but her interests focused on all of the invertebrates.

Dr. Hyman once discussed the animals that she had studied for so many years: "I don't like vertebrates. I don't mean worms particularly, although a worm can be almost anything including the larva of a beautiful butterfly. But I do like the soft delicate ones, the jellyfishes and corals and the beautiful microscopic organisms."



DR. LIBBIE H. HYMAN, . . . .

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More than any other scientist, Dr. Libbie Hyman was the person that professional zoologists from all over the world wished to meet when they visited the Museum.

Dr. Hyman was a member of the American Society of Zoologists, the American Microscopical Society, the American Society of Naturalists, the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography, the Marine Biological Association, the Society of Systematic Zoology, Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Xi.

Dr. Hyman is survived by a brother, Arthur I. Hyman, of San Diego, California.

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