

In Memoriam J. Linsley Gressitt (1914–1982)

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<https://doi.org/10.5109/2463>

出版情報 : ESAKIA. 22, pp.165–168, 1984–11–20. Entomological Laboratory, Faculty of
Agriculture, Kyushu University

バージョン :

権利関係 :

In Memoriam

J. Linsley Gressitt (1914-1982)

Dr. and Mrs. Gressitt have fallen to death at Kweilin !... That was the shocking news which went out across Japan on April 29 in 1982. The morning paper on that day read : "On the 26th of this month, a Trident of the Chinese People's Airlines, a passenger plane from Kwangchow for Kweilin, crashed into a mountainside in southern Kweilin. All the passengers, including 2 Americans, were killed." What a surprise and pity to us that "2 Americans" were Dr. and Mrs. Gressitt !



Dr. J. L. Gressitt in the early 1950s. (Photo by Hirashima)

They were just enjoying their trip to their "home ground" when they died in the accident ; Dr. Gressitt had once taught at Lingnan University and they had lived in Canton for **10** years from 1939, and they had been invited to visit the university 31 years after they had left.

Needless to say, Dr. J. Linsley Gressitt, Senior Entomologist at Bishop Museum, Honolulu and Director of the Wau Ecology Institute, Wau, Papua New Guinea, was a

world-renowned entomologist ; he was one of the most excellent scientists and the best investigator in these days in the fields of the taxonomy of the Cerambycidae and Chrysomelidae, and the entomogeography of the Pacific region. He had just published his grand work "Biogeography and Ecology of New Guinea" through W. Junk in the Netherlands when he died.

In 1953 Dr. Gressitt started to work at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu and soon he made its entomological department into one of the most distinguished institutes of entomology. Bishop Museum owes much to him for its enormous collection of insect specimens and for its status as a leading group in the entomology dealing with the Pacific and Southeast-Asian regions ; his ability and work were almost beyond comparison. Having become interested in biogeography when he was young, Dr. Gressitt explored throughout the Pacific and Southeast-Asian regions ; the coverage of his expedition is indeed surprisingly wide. He was especially interested in New Guinea and, after some exploratory visits, set up the Bishop Museum New Guinea Field Station at Wau in 1961. This field station, which was reorganized into the Wau Ecology Institute in 1971, has long been functioning as a key station for investigations on the entomological aspects and ecology of New Guinea. In recent years, many biologists from Japan have visited the Wau Ecology Institute.

Dr. Gressitt conducted a Japan-U. S. binational science program, Zoogeography and Ecology of Pacific Area Insects, from 1963 to 1965. Dr. Syoziro Asahina was the principal investigator for Japan. Many Japanese entomologists traveled to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand and the Ryukyu Islands to study. This program was productive not only to the Bishop Museum but also to Japanese institutions.

Dr. Gressitt and Margaret Gressitt, his wife, both of whom were born and brought up in Japan, loved Japan very much ; Mrs. Gressitt was once a music instructor in Japan. Many people, when they first met Dr. and Mrs. Gressitt, were surprised at their fluent Japanese. Dr. Gressitt was a dignified, fearless gentleman and Mrs. Gressitt an open-hearted, cheerful lady.

I can mention no other foreign scientists who have so many friends and acquaintances among Japanese entomologists and biologists as Dr. Gressitt. That is, Dr. Shoziro Asahina, Prof. Michio Chûjô, Prof. Rokuro Kano, Prof. Mitsuhiro Sasakawa, Mr. Hitoshi Hasegawa, Dr. Yoshihiko Kurosawa, Dr. Shun-ichi Uéno, Dr. Kintaro Baba, Prof. Keiichi Omoto, Prof. Masao Hayashi, Prof. Keiichi Kusama, etc. ; it is almost impossible to present all the figures with whom he was associated.

He was especially closely related to Kyushu University where he was associated with Prof. Teiso Esaki and Assoc. Prof. Keizo Yasumatsu; he revered Prof. Esaki from his heart. A Kyushu University Micronesia Insect Collection was made by Prof. Esaki and, centering on the collection, joint investigations were carried out by Kyushu University and the Bishop Museum. One of the fruits of the co-operative work was the publication of "Insects of Micronesia", a series which has continued until now.

During the next period, that of Prof. Keizo Yasumatsu, many hopeful students of Kyushu University went to the Bishop Museum to study at its invitation. The first one among these students was Dr. Shinsaku Kimoto who went to America in 1958 ; he is



Dr. Gressitt and Hirashima on Mt. Wilhelm, Papua New Guinea in 1969.

now a Professor of Biology at Kurume University. Since then, Dr. Kimoto has accumulated excellent results, as a good collaborator of Dr. Gressitt, in the taxonomic studies of east-Asian Chrysomelidae.

It was in about 1950 that I first met Dr. Gressitt, during a visit by him to Kyushu University. He appeared to me a good-natured, young and energetic entomologist. Since then, I became one of his friends and one of those who were greatly influenced by him. I studied in several places at his invitation : Bishop Museum British North Borneo Expedition for 7 months (1962-63), Honolulu for 13 months (1966-67), Bishop Museum-National Geographic Society Expedition to Papua New Guinea for 3 months (1969) and the Solomon Is., New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa and Hawaii for a month (1969). Some of the most enjoyable and memorable programmes during the trip to Papua New Guinea, while based at the Bishop Museum New Guinea Field Station at Wau, were camping with Dr. and Mrs. Gressitt and their daughter Ellyn at Mt. Kaindi (July 22-23, 1969) and at Bulldog Road (July 25-27), an ascent and collection of insects with Dr. Gressitt at Mt. Wilhelm (August 3-12) and a trip to Angoram with Dr. Gressitt (August 13-16). *Palaeorhiza gressittorum* Hirashima is one of the remarkable bees I collected on Bulldog Road.

My recent studies on bees have been based upon the above investigations and explorations abroad ; none of those studies would have been possible without the

relationship with Dr. Gressitt. Dr. Gressitt and I developed a theme, Evolution and Distribution of Insects in Asia and the Pacific Area, for the 16th International Congress of Entomology at Kyoto (1980). Dr. Gressitt was the chairman of the symposium. Here I would like to especially mention our latest work, Ecological Studies on Insect Species Diversities and Productivities in the Highland Agricultural Ecosystems of Papua New Guinea, supported by the Grant-in-Aid for Overseas Scientific Survey, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Japan) which started on July 11 in 1982. It was planned as a co-operative work by Dr. Gressitt and me, so we Japanese investigators were utterly discouraged by his sudden and unexpected death.

We feel a great regret at the sudden loss of our good friends, Dr. and Mrs. Gressitt. Their kindness and excellent work will remain with many Japanese entomologists as a heartwarming memory forever. May their souls rest in peace !

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* I thank Miss Gloria Caddell, Horticultural Laboratory, Faculty of Agriculture, Kyushu University for reading of the manuscript.