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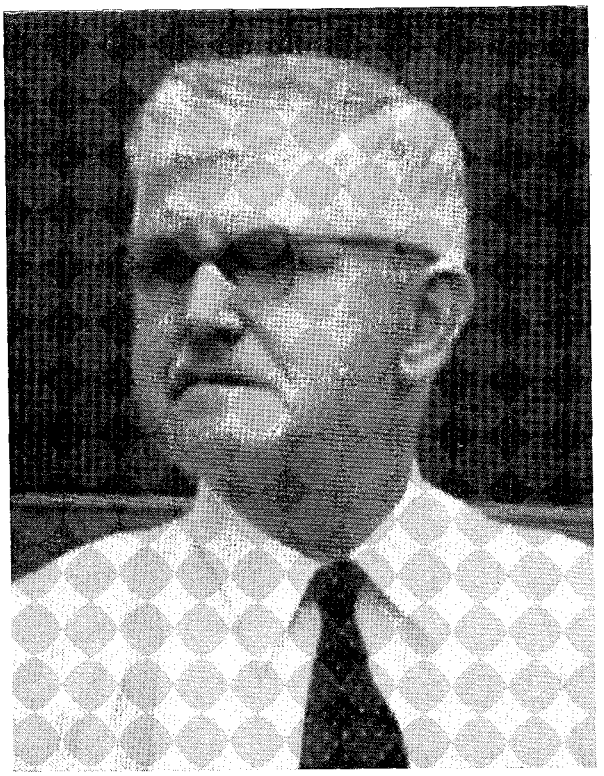
James Zetek
1886-1959

Born on December 12, 1886, at Chicago, Illinois, James Zetek graduated in 1911 with an A.B. degree from the University of Illinois. When he was 25 he went to Panamá where from 1911 to 1913 he was entomologist for the Isthmian Canal Commission. In 1914, Jim married María Luisa Gutierrez, a member of a greatly respected family of Panama City; both were devout Catholics. Until she married, Jim's sister Ella lived with the



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Zeteks, universally known as their daughter. From 1914 to 1915, Jim was employed by the Republic of Panamá as director for the organization of the National Exposition held at Panamá City from 1915 to 1916. From 1916 to 1918, he was professor of biology and hygiene at the National Institute of Panamá, and from 1918 to 1920 he held the post of entomologist for the Panama Canal.

In November, 1920, Zetek was appointed in the Bureau of Entomology as a "specialist on blackfly," a title probably used because he had collaborated for several years with federal workers in a study of the citrus blackfly, a pest of major importance in many tropical or subtropical areas. Results of his work were published in Department Bulletin 885 of which he was co-author with the late Harry F. Dietz.

Zetek's main official assignment was a study of tropical fruit flies, many species of which occur in Panamá. He was specially well-fitted to investigate the biology, habits, host fruit preferences, and especially the method of egg-laying of different species in various fruits. Out of about 126 valid species discussed by Alan Stone in U. S. Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Publication 439, "The Fruit Flies of the Genus *Anastrepha*," 54 were collected in Panamá by Zetek, and in a number of cases his specimens were the only ones available. Although most of his work dealt with biology of these insects, he was the first to determine that tartar emetic is an effective, although slow-acting, poison for use in bait sprays for many species of the group.

Jim also collected many species of termites and studied their habits and destructive work. When Barro Colorado Island was reserved for scientific purposes on April 17, 1923, Zetek with Snyder, began tests on the resistance of native and exotic woods to termites and to decay, both in natural state and after treatment with chemical wood preservatives. Stakes, sections of telegraph poles, bridges, a watch tower, a water tank, and several habitable buildings, serving as rest houses, located at various points on the island were used. In addition, tests were made of treated fiber board and insulated wire. Most of this material was shipped from the United States to the Canal Zone, where it was placed under test, inspected, and reported by Zetek.

When the International Termite Exposure Test was instituted in various tropical countries by George Hunt of the Forest Service and Thomas E. Snyder, Zetek, from 1928 to 1952 installed, inspected, and reported on treated lumber shipped to Barro Colorado Island. During World War II, he conducted secret deterioration studies on the island for the Department of Defense, and for the Eastman Kodak Co.

In 1923, in cooperation with the Office of the Panama Canal, he began tests at Balboa on the resistance of treated and untreated piling to attack by the various marine borers found in the ocean waters of that region. As with the termite tests, yearly inspections and reports were made.

While thus employed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, he served from 1923 to 1945 as Curator of the Barro Colorado Island Biological Laboratory, established first as the Institute for Research in Tropical America under the National Research Council, and in 1939 given legal status by act of Congress as the Canal Zone Biological Area under a board administered by the National Academy of Sciences. When this entity was transferred to the Smithsonian Institution in 1946, Zetek became resident manager, though he continued to live at his old location at No. 0902 Amador Road in Balboa. He was transferred to Smithsonian pay rolls November 6, 1951, and continued there until his retirement on May 31, 1956. On June 1 following he was made an honorary Research Associate of the Smithsonian, a title that he held until his death.

Zetek, with Thomas Barbour of Harvard University, was one of the ardent advocates of the reservation of Barro Colorado as a wildlife preserve for scientific study. While in charge he was an ambassador of goodwill to visiting scientists from all parts of the world. It is this laboratory that remains as the outstanding monument to his devotion to studies in all fields of tropical science. In 1948 Zetek arranged for a 10-cent memorial stamp issued by the Canal Zone on the 25th anniversary of the laboratory, appropriately bearing the ubiquitous coati mundi as the design.

The appended list of publications by Jim shows his wide interests from insects and mollusks to *Peripatus*. He did much general collecting and had many new species named after him in protozoa, mollusks and insects, as well as a striking yellow and black spotted frog.

Jim was highly respected in the Republic of Panamá as well as in the Canal Zone. It gave him great pleasure in 1924 to take friends to call on the President of Panamá at the beautiful palace. Several honors were conferred on Zetek. In 1933 he was made an honorary member of the Scientific Staff, Byrd Antarctic Expedition. He received the gold medal of the National Institute of Panamá in 1915, 1916, and 1917, and the grand prize of the National Exposition in 1916. The Vasco Nuñez de Balboa honor of Panamá, and the Alfaro honor of Ecuador, were bestowed on him, as well as the Danish Galathea medal of 1950–1952.

Zetek was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Entomological Society of America, Entomological Society of Washington, Society of Parasitology, American Medical Association, Ecological Society, Malacological Union, Illinois Academy of Science, Washington Academy of Science, Panamá Society of Agronomy, Canal Zone Medical Association, and Panamá Canal Natural History Society. He helped found the organization last mentioned, and took delight in electing his friends to membership. He also belonged to the Panamá Rotary Club (where luncheon talks were conducted in English, Spanish, and Chinese), to the beautiful Union Club of Panamá, and to the Cosmos Club of Washington, D. C.

Jim had a most alert and active mind. Throughout his official life his desk, and in fact his whole office, was stacked with projects—more than one man could complete in a lifetime. Yet

he accomplished much, and then looked about for more to do. He was deeply affected by the death of his wife María on October 5, 1945, and really never recovered from this loss. He died June 1, 1959 in Panamá City, after having been in ill health for several years.

Surviving members of his immediate family are a sister, Mrs. Ella Zetek Rhode of Guayaquil, Ecuador, a second sister Florence and a brother Charles, of Chicago.

THOMAS E. SNYDER, *Chairman*
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