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AN UNUSUAL SPIDER BITE

Dorald M. Allred¹

ABSTRACT.— The bite of a male blackwidow spider on a Utah woman is described.

On 24 October 1973 a woman in Provo, Utah was bitten by a spider which I subsequently identified as a subadult blackwidow, *Latrodectus hesperus* Chamberlin and Ivie. As she arose in the morning she slipped her bare feet into a pair of solid-toe loafers, and walked into the kitchen. Her right foot immediately began to hurt, and as she removed her shoe she noted a crushed spider on her foot. Pain was localized in her big toe where she noticed a red spot and puncture marks on the top about one-half inch from the base.

The pain soon extended to her thigh where it remained for about the first hour. During this time her leg ached and throbbed, occasionally with sharp pains. After an hour the pain in her thigh subsided, but remained prominent in her foot. The pain in her foot gradually subsided until the third day after the bite when it completely disappeared. She did not consciously detect other symptoms of arachnidism (rigid abdomen, tightness in the chest, difficulty in breathing, nausea, and sweating, etc.), most likely because she was in her fifth month of pregnancy and was experiencing "morning sickness."

The site of the bite remained red during the whole period of pain, although no scab or necrosis occurred. One month after the bite the site remained red, although no pain or tenderness was present.

The bedroom of the victim was in a semi-basement apartment. It had two windows, one of which had been open for several days prior to the biting incident. The spider likely moved into the apartment through the open window with the advent of cold weather.

According to Dr. Willis J. Gertsch, bites by male blackwidows are unusual, and such incidences apparently have not been previously recorded. The male likely has venom similar to that of the female, but is not inclined to bite. The entrapment of the spider in the shoe was undoubtedly the stimulus that resulted in the bite.

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