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TRIBUTE TO VASCO TANNER

Bertrand F. Harrison¹

The time was the mid to late nineteen twenties. The members of the faculty in the biological sciences at Brigham Young University could be comfortably enumerated on the fingers of one hand. Science libraries were few and those that existed were anemic from undernourishment. Research activities were underway but as yet there was only a dribble of research, and still less found its way to the printed page. Research then in progress was, perhaps by necessity but more because of urgent need and because of the magnificent opportunity at hand, confined to descriptive field work. Such was the picture when Vasco Tanner joined the faculty of Brigham Young University.

Dr. Vasco Tanner brought with him a strong conviction that the growth of a science required the ready availability of pertinent scientific literature. He consistently preached this belief to students and colleagues alike. He expressed his zeal for building bibliographic resources by working to strengthen the University library and by beginning the accumulation of what was to become a substantial personal library.

Interest in scientific literature did not stop with his desire to build and to accumulate. He had a critical sense of that which was good. Further he had the ability to express in literate prose the results of his growing personal research program. His expertise in writing and in judging the writings of others served the Utah Academy of Sciences well for the many years he served as secretary and editor of the *Proceedings*. Upon his termination in this position he founded the *Great Basin Naturalist*. He has served as editor of this journal from its founding until the present.

My acquaintance with Vasco Tanner began just after he joined the Brigham Young University faculty, while I was still a student. A few years later, when I joined the faculty, our work and common interests brought us closer together. Thus began a long and rewarding friendship.

The statement that we were "brought closer together" was literally true. We shared one set of student microscopes between us. The general botany laboratory sections and the general zoology laboratory sections were scheduled on alternate days, and our single set of microscopes was transported back and forth each day to serve for study of animals one day and for the study of plants the next. Other items of laboratory and field equipment did double duty, serving students of both departments. Under such conditions cooperation rather than isolation became the only feasible working relationship.

Dr. Tanner was always generous in sharing, whether it was an item of equipment belonging to the Zoology Department or a book

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from his personal library. Similarly, he was always willing to share his time, to find a literature citation, to identify an insect, or to suggest solutions to a problem.

For me, the sharing of material things, while necessary and helpful, was secondary to Dr. Tanner's willingness to give of himself. At a time when biologists in the intermountain area were few and widely scattered, our opportunities for discussion of principles and patterns of thought were very limited. Hence, the privilege of having someone else to talk with, to test out hypotheses against another's thinking was worth much.

From my many years of association with Vasco Tanner I have developed a great respect for him, for his personal interest in his students, for his contributions in several fields of zoology, for his editorial work on several journals, for his interest and effective work in conservation, and for his service to his community. I wish to add my commendation for the great service he has given others.