

THE BUZZ

UC RIVERSIDE – DEPARTMENT OF ENTOMOLOGY
NEWSLETTER

Spring 2006

Mir Mulla Honored at Building Dedication

Entomologist has been with UCR for 50 years

Mir Mulla's work as an entomologist has taken him around the world and earned him countless accolades. But some of his greatest accomplishments and one of the most prestigious honors came right in his own backyard.

April 6, the Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District recognized Mulla for his work to control pests – including eye gnats, mosquitoes and biting midges – in the low desert valleys of Southern California with the dedication of the Mir S. Mulla Biological Control Facility.



It is the latest honor in 50 years of service, during which Mulla has distinguished himself as one of the world's leading entomologists in public

Board President John Fuschetti cuts the ribbon in front of the new Coachella Valley Mosquito and Vector Control District facility bearing Mulla's name.

health entomology.

But it is not a path he originally sought.

Born in Kandahar, Afghanistan, Mulla came to the United States after high school to continue his education.

He was attending Cornell University, hoping to pursue a medical degree, when he took his first entomology course.

He was hooked.

"It just really hit me that this is something I really wanted to do," Mulla explained. "I have never regretted the decision."

He earned a B.S. in Entomology and Parasitology from Cornell in 1952 and a Ph.D. in the same discipline from the University of California, Berkeley in 1956.

He left Berkeley and accepted a position at UC Riverside where he was charged with developing the research regimen and teaching curriculum for the department's newly formed program in Medical Entomology.

Mulla immediately began work on a project to develop control methods for eye gnats in the lower desert valleys of Southern California.

At the time the gnats, a carrier of pink eye, had reached epidemic proportions. Lower desert schools were closed for days at a time. Residents who ventured outside had to continually wave the pests away from their faces.

Mulla championed biological and ecological control strategies and his efforts have

reduced the gnat population today by 92 to 95%.

Those numbers still aren't quite good enough for Mulla.

"We're still trying to find improved methods to reduce eye gnats," he said. "They're still there in some pockets, even though in lower numbers."

Around the same time he was battling the eye gnat, low desert and central California officials urged Mulla to tackle California's mosquito problem, which was becoming unmanageable.

SEE MULLA, PAGE 2

Linnaean Team Wins at Branch Meeting!



The Linnaean team celebrates their win at the Entomological Society of America, Pacific Branch meeting in Hawaii. From l to r, Jen Henke, Apostolos Kapranas, Deane Zahn, Rebecca Waterworth and Mary Sorensen. **SEE STORY INSIDE**

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MULLA, CONT.

“There was a public demand for research on mosquito control. There was no such research going on at the time at UCR,” he explained.

From there, Mulla’s research broadened into other areas. He worked diligently in the field and the lab, seeking natural enemies and other tactics to combat some of the world’s most annoying and potentially deadly pests.

He studied house dust mites in Columbia and California, synanthropic flies in California poultry ranches and Asia, and nuisance midges in Southern California lakes and streams.

He established colonies of dust mites and provided them to pharmaceutical companies so that antigens could be made for those who are hypersensitive to mite allergens.

He developed practical and safe waste water management methods to mitigate aquatic nuisance midges and devised biological control and environmentally friendly strategies to regulate mosquitoes in various habitats. In the 1960s, he welcomed the opportunity to pass along his knowledge to the younger generation as UCR’s Entomology department expanded



Mir Mulla accepts a plaque, honoring him for his work mitigating pests in the Coachella Valley. From l to r, Don Goms, District General Manager, UCR Vice Chancellor William Boldt and Dr. Mir S. Mulla

into the teaching sector.

“It made a lot of difference to be able to get young, brilliant students and to train them for stewardship in the scientific discipline,” Mulla explained.

Mulla has conducted Medical Entomology courses, instructed graduate students in Medical and Veterinary Entomology and has presented lectures in other courses in entomology for non-majors. Under his supervision, 5 students have obtained M.S. degrees and 25 students have obtained Ph.D. degrees.

Mulla has also served on, and as an advisor to, many national and international organizations devoted to alleviating public health concerns in developing countries, including the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Program.

This dedication to diminishing pests and improving the quality of life for humans everywhere has earned Mulla countless honors.

One of the greatest came just last month.

The Mir S. Mulla Biological Control Facility in Indio was dedicated on April 6, 2006 and is the latest weapon in the war against pests in the Coachella Valley.

“The purpose of the facility is to find and develop biological and natural control agents for insects of public health importance,” Mulla explained. “It will serve as a base for research and field work.”

Owned and operated by the Coachella Valley Mosquito and Control District, the 9,000 square foot building houses office, lab and library space for researchers working to discover ever-more efficient methods of controlling mosquitoes, gnats and other pests.

It is a unique facility; the only one of its kind dedicated to the biological control research and application against disease vectors.

Outside, there are areas for cultivating, maintaining and holding the macroinvertebrate predators and pathogens of local pests as well as outdoor research facilities for studying the biology and ecology of these natural enemies.

Mulla said he was honored that district officials wanted to name the facility after him.

“I’m very appreciative,” he said.

After 50 years, 500 publications and travels to more than 25 countries, Mulla shows no signs of slowing down.

Oh sure, he’d still like to travel and he enjoys gardening and playing tennis, but entomology remains his true passion.

“I enjoy every minute of it. My students, they can’t keep up with me in the field,” Mulla said, chuckling. “I’ll keep doing this as long as my health holds up.” •

Honors and Awards

Nancy Beckage received the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Mentorship of Undergraduate Research. June 2005. She was also invited to serve as faculty marshal at the 2006 CNAS Commencement. **Brad Mullens** was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award, sponsored by Bayer Animal Health, 2005. **Joe Morse** received the Research Award of Excellence from the Citrus Research Board, 2005. **John Trumble** was elected a Fellow of the AAAS in 2005. **The following faculty** received Distinguished Achievement Awards from the ESA Pacific Branch: **Mike Adams**, Insect Physiology; **Elizabeth Grafton-Cardwell**, Excellence in IPM; **John Klotz**, Urban Entomology; **Tim Paine**, Teaching; and **Bob Krieger**, Extension. **Jocelyn Millar** received the Woodworth Award from the ESA Pacific Branch. **Erinn Powell**, undergraduate researcher in Nancy Beckage’s lab, received the 2006 Chancellor’s Excellence in Undergraduate Research Award. **Elizabeth Grafton-Cardwell** has been named Director of the Lindcove Research and Extension Center. **Sarah Butler, Dong-Hwan Choe, Raj Saran and James Keenan** received the 2006 Carl Strom/Western Exterminator Company Scholarship in Urban Entomology. **Bob Krieger** received the International Award for Research in Agrochemicals, 2005, from the American Chemical Society, the Public Communications Award, 2005, from the Society of Toxicology and was named the 2004-05 Non-Senate Distinguished Researcher. **Tom Perring** was awarded the UCR Teaching Innovation Award for 2006. **Martin Barnes**, Professor meritus was recognized as one of “100

UCR Linnaean Team Wins Regional Match

Fruit Grower Magazine•

Team will compete at National Conference in December

It's been more than 5 years, but the UCR Department of Entomology once again has a Linnaean team.

And what a triumphant return!

This March, in their first competition, the squad beat 3 other teams at the Pacific Branch meeting of the Entomological Society of America, held in Hawaii. The win earned them \$500 and the opportunity to compete against teams from across the country at the society's national meeting in December.

Not bad for a team that just formed last year.

Jen Henke, a grad student in Bill Walton's lab, led the team building efforts.

Henke came to UCR last year from the University of Georgia, where she



Apostolos Kapranas and Deane Zahn compete in Hawaii

was involved in the Linnaean games.

"I enjoyed being on a team and wanted to continue that here," she explained.

The Linnaean games were started by the North Central Branch of the ESA in 1983 as a way for students to have a greater involvement in the society's yearly meetings.

The first national competition was held the next year.

questions in a variety of entomological disciplines, including pesticides and toxicology, taxonomy, medical and economic entomology and history. There are 16 toss-up questions where any member of either team may answer – without help from the rest of the squad. A correct answer means the entire team has the opportunity to answer a bonus question.

Grad students may participate in the games up to one year after graduation.

Henke sent out a call to grad students last fall and soon had a team comprised of herself, Deanne Zahn, Rebeccah Waterworth, Apostolos Kapranas and Mary Sorensen.

The squad practiced weekly, gathering around the table in the small conference room, their hands hovering over regulation-style buzzers as coach Darcy Reed peppered them with questions.

They pored over textbooks and history books, perused current events and memorized the names of ESA officers and branches.

"Basically we just read a lot of everything," Henke said.

In February, the group staged a mock competition against UCR professors. They lost by only 5 points and set off to Hawaii with high hopes.

The UCR team won their first match against Cal-Poly Pomona.

They readied for their next match against

hometown favorite, University of Hawaii.

Things looked a bit bleak in the beginning of the match.

"We started out down 50 to nothing," Henke said. "It took us a while to get into our groove."

Bolstered by shouts of encouragement from the crowd, which included UCR faculty and students attending the

"It was great," Henke said. "Everybody was cheering."

The team is taking a short break for now, but will resume practice sessions come Fall Quarter.

"We're looking forward to going to Indianapolis in December," Henke said.

A Letter from the Chair

Alums and Friends,

Entomology continues to prosper, as is evident from all of the activities and accomplishments recounted in our newsletter.

And there is more good news.

John Pinto's retirement position will be filled early next year with a new Assistant Professor, Christiane Wierauch, now a postdoctoral associate at the American Museum of Natural History. Also, in the coming year we will be searching for replacements for Giovanni Galizia and Heather Costa.

The department continues to set an admirable pace in training of graduate students, now numbering 55 in Entomology and another 18 registered in other programs while supervised by our faculty; we have 15 undergrad majors; and our extramural grants are now approaching \$11,000,000 yearly, the highest departmental total and highest per capita at UCR.

Despite our grant resources, there are many crucial activities that remain perpetually under funded. Among these needs are resources to support outside speakers, travel grants to send graduate students to scientific meetings, and our Insect Museum.

Many of you are in a position to help us build on our tradition of excellence. We will be contacting you again in the fall as we set up endowed funds that will have lasting benefits to Entomology.

In the interim, we hope that you will consider appropriate ways to support our department. •

Ring Cardé, Chair

The Buzz is compiled by UCR Entomology Administrative Department Staff. We welcome comments and suggestions for articles. Please contact Laurie Allen at (951) 827-3718 or laurie.allen@ucr.edu

Schlinger Visit

Dr. Everet Schlinger (UC Berkeley Professor Emeritus of Biological Control) visited the Department twice this year.

As many of you know, Ev was also a faculty member here at Riverside from 1956-1969 and was Chair of the Division of Biological Control from 1968-1969 when he transferred to Berkeley.

In March, Ev returned for a visit and was an honored guest of the Friends of the Entomology Research Museum and presented us with two seminars titled "*What is it about Fiji?*" and "*Systematics and biology of the enigmatic Acroceridae: dipteran parasitoids of spiders.*"

In mid-April, Ev and his first student at UCR, Professor Emeritus Mike Irwin of the University of Illinois, participated in and contributed extensively to a workshop to develop new research and management approaches for the endangered Delhi Sands Flower-Loving Fly. •

King Farouk I of Egypt appointed him to the Order of the Nile, Chevalier.

In 1947, Riehl joined the Citrus Experiment Station, Division of Economic Entomology at UCR. He served as head of the division from 1975 until 1979, and retired from the university in 1981.

Memorial donations should be made to the Riehl Foundation, Riverside Foundation, the funds, "In Memory of Dr. Louis Riehl." Donations will be used to support graduate students in the Department of Entomology. •

Riehl

Noted Entomologist and UCR Professor Louis Riehl died Sept. 4, 2005 at the age of 92.

Riehl was known for having integrated natural and chemical strategies for pest control that had less impact on the environment and posed no threat to workers. His programs were utilized by citrus grower and farmers throughout the world.

Riehl was born in Le Grand, Calif. in 1913 and earned his doctorate in entomology at Iowa State University in 1942. During World War II, he served as an entomologist in the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation and as a consultant on insect-borne diseases to the Surgeon General's Office of the U.S. Army.

His group of scientists provided the method of delousing used to control a typhus epidemic in Naples, Italy, marking the first time in recorded history that such an epidemic was halted before infecting an entire population. For his work, Riehl was awarded the Bronze Star and the Gambia Eradication Medal.

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Vernon Stern Passes Away

Professor Vernon Stern passed away on March 16, 2006. He served on the faculty from 1956 until retirement in 1991 and was a pioneer in the development of Integrated Pest Management.

A remembrance will follow in our next newsletter. •

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED