

Winston William Brockner 1915-2008

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Winston Brockner had been a member of the Buffalo Ornithological Society for 76 years at the time of his death on November 19, 2008. Winston, sometimes known as “Win” or “Bill,” was born in Buffalo on 22 Jul 1915, and lived here until 1965 when he and his wife, Sylvia Booth, moved to Evergreen, Colorado where he resided for the rest of his life.

The Buffalo Ornithological Society was barely four years old when Winston became a member in 1932. He was 16 years old and had been birding for several years. When he was 11 or 12 and while birding in Delaware Park, he met Harold Mitchell and Clark Beardslee, two of the gentlemen who would soon be founding the B.O.S. They were impressed with his enthusiasm for bird study, encouraged him and were soon including him on their birding expeditions. On one of these trips in the mid-1920s Winston saw his first Cardinal, an extremely rare bird in this area at the time and he loved to tell the story of it: Dr. A.E. Perkins of the Gowanda State Hospital had called Harold Mitchell to report that a Cardinal was visiting her feeder. A trip was quickly organized and all interested, including Winston, went to Gowanda and were rewarded by seeing this rare and beautiful bird. They were still enjoying their sighting when an older teenager arrived on his bicycle, having ridden over from Jamestown. The young man was Roger Tory Peterson who also logged his first Cardinal. These boys became lifelong friends. Winston admitted that he reminded Roger a few times of which boy saw the Cardinal first. They met often at meetings of the A.O.U., *The Kingbird* 2009 June; 59 (2)

A.B.A., Nature Conservancy, etc. and it was Roger who convinced Win that he should keep a life list of birds he saw in the A.O.U. area. Winston's list stands at 754, which is among the top 100 lists in the country.

As a child, Winston frequented the Buffalo Science Museum where he always checked out the "Bird of the Month" case. In this exhibit he first saw the Museum's mounted pair of Ivory-Billed Woodpeckers which captivated and inspired him. He meant to see that bird and in later life made several trips to its haunts, including the Big Thicket of Texas, to no avail. So many of his friends and acquaintances knew of his interest that he received more than 50 phone calls when the report came in of the appearance of the Ivory Billed Woodpecker in Arkansas.

Although Winston was too young to have been a founder of the Buffalo Ornithological Society, he and his close friend Bill Vaughan were considered builders of the Society during the decades from 1930-1970. He served as President in 1947.

Winston served in the U.S. Army, 101st Infantry Division, in North Africa and Italy from 1943-1945. Since there were no field guides for these areas, Winston wrote detailed descriptions of the birds he saw and sent them to Sylvia who identified them from books in the Research Library of the Museum where she worked.

As a strong believer in Nature Preserves, Winston was a Charter Member of the Nature Sanctuary Society of Western New York and the Nature Conservancy. He was cofounder and a president of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs (now NYSOA). In 1968 he and Sylvia founded the Evergreen Naturalists' Audubon Society in Colorado. Winston served as President, wrote a monthly bird column, and kept a daily bird count at Evergreen Lake.

Winston was truly a man who never met a stranger, never forgot a friend, never failed to greet everyone along the trail with a cheerful word and was never, ever without a smile. His many friends are saddened by his death, but as they remember his, they will surely return his smile.

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