

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
80TH ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE FLORIDA ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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It is a privilege and honor to stand before you today as President of the Florida Entomological Society and to open our 80th Annual Meeting. As you know, I accepted the presidential gavel prematurely last fall when newly-installed President Everett Mitchell had to step down due to a serious health problem.

Dr. Mitchell's health had been improving to the point that he planned to attend our annual meeting this year. Everett informed me last week that his doctors wanted to put him in the hospital for further treatments, preventing him from attending our meeting. I am happy to report that Everett's attitude is very positive. I know you will keep him in your prayers.

When I took over this office last fall, Everett had already organized much of what needed to be done, making my job fairly easy—and I got out of the president-elect's responsibility of putting together this year's technical program. That burden shifted to Dr. Joe Funderburk, and he has done a fine job.

Dr. Mitchell once referred to the office of FES President as a coveted position. I certainly agree with Dr. Mitchell. After all, ours is without question one of the finest entomological organizations in the world.

FES is unique in many respects.

Our journal, the *Florida Entomologist*, is one of the most-respected entomological research publications in the U.S. and currently the only entomology journal on the Internet (thank you, Dr. Tom Walker). All major university libraries subscribe to our journal, and it has most fittingly been dubbed "An International Journal for the Americas."

Our Society's Annual Meetings feature excellent scientific presentations and bring internationally acclaimed scientists together each year. We offer the prestigious "Pioneer Lectures" like those you will hear this morning by Dr. Knipling and Mr. Baumhover. In general, FES members share a special camaraderie, and our once-every-five year Caribbean Conference has expanded our base.

At the heart of FES is education, the sharing of information pertaining to arthropods. But our Society's role in education goes beyond the sharing of information through our journal and meetings.

Each year, we encourage students of entomology to present papers at the annual meeting, and the caliber of these student presentations is almost always outstanding (I'll see you at the student paper session on Wednesday). We also offer annual travel grants and mini-grants to students, and two student appointees serve each year on the Society's Executive Committee with full voting privileges.

Another example of our commitment to education is FES support of science fairs. For the second year in a row, Gary Leabee and Moh Ling Kok-Yokomi served as judges to select the best projects in entomology at the Florida State Science and Engineering Fair. Vicky Buckles won the Senior Special Award for her project entitled 'Can the Pattern of *Leucauge venusto* Webs be Used to Indicate Environmental Contamination?' Amanda Rebecca Zeiler won the Junior Special Award for her project "Which Color or Pattern Attracts the Most Insects?" These winners will be present on Wednesday with their projects. Please go by and welcome them.

FES interest and active involvement has increased with respect to educating the general public about entomology. For example, for the second year in a row, FES members participated in the Annual Insect Encounters Exhibition at the Florida State Fair in Tampa. This large exhibit of live arthropods was extremely popular among fair-goers. In particular, I commend Mary Jo Hayes for her leadership in this exhibition.

As another example of our Society's interest in educating the general public, we recently worked with the Department of Entomology & Nematology at the University of Florida to develop an informative poster about insects for primary school students. Many of the posters have been sent to county school districts for distribution among classrooms in Florida.

Each year FES offers an award for an outstanding elementary or high school teacher promoting entomology. This year's award-winning teacher will be honored Wednesday evening at our banquet.

Our Society has been on the right track with respect to education, and we must continue our endeavors in this arena. After all, entomological problems continue to affect our welfare, and by educating each other and the public about these problems, we stand a better chance defeating insects like the medfly, the Formosan termite, the West Indian weevil *Diaprepes*, and the brown citrus aphid. Through education, we stand a better chance of helping the general public implement true IPM programs.

Our excellent journal, our annual meetings, and our commitment to education - these are some of the reasons entomologists like Dr. Mitchell and myself hold so much respect for the Florida Entomological Society. It has truly been an honor for me to have served as President, and I thank you for the privilege.