

THE METAMORPHOSIS of OAK HILL ENTOMOLOGY JUDGING PROGRAM

THE BIRTH

Everything has a beginning. It certainly was not evident that an introductory course in entomology in the spring of 1950 at Purdue University would be that starting point. I do not know even today why I enrolled in that elective course. My prior insect knowledge was not much greater than being able to distinguish a butterfly from a grasshopper. I enjoyed the course and took another entomology course before graduating in 1953. It was in 1954 when I became the vocational agriculture teacher at Converse High School that the idea of having an entomology judging team even materialized. I met Bruce Kelsey, a sophomore, who had a strong interest in insect collecting. Thus the first teams were built around Bruce.

EARLY GROWING PAINS

Recruited were four eighth graders, Bill Burk, James Hogan, Kenny Hunter, and William Mobley. Along with Bruce Kelsey we set out to experience our first competition. The state level competition had probably started sometime in the late 1940s. Our two teams won the area contest. We emerged the 1955 state competition as the 10th & 14th place teams. We were slightly above the middle of the pack. By 1958 these same boys had moved up to the 3rd & 4th placed teams in the state. With one more year of eligibility our goal was to be the 1959 state champs. But, I instead spent the school year at the University of Michigan getting my masters degree and my license to teach chemistry and mathematics. Thus without a coach the veteran entomologists never got that opportunity to prove that they were capable of being state champs.

REBIRTH PROCESS

Upon returning to Converse from the University of Michigan it was back to square one again. From our 4-H club were some young boys who had taken 4-H entomology projects. Their interest and experience were valuable assets in reviving the entomology judging teams. Converse had become Oak Hill and within three years we reached that goal of being state entomology judging champions. Kenny Malott and Jeff Feller, cousins, in 1962 became the first Oak Hill team to win the state. The next year Zody Feller & Jan Hacker next door neighbors were the second Oak Hill winning team. Jan made entomology his career as the state entomologist for West Virginia. Since Oak Hill consisted of Miami & Grant county students we were able to double our teams by having two teams from each county. Thus Jerry Renbarger & Norman Smith became the first students from Grant County in 1964 to become state champions.

TEAM MAKE-UP & ELIGIBILITY

In the 1950s & through half of the 1960s a team consisted of two members. Then they increased the team to three members, but counted only the top two scores with the third score being classified as an alternate. Then after the year 2001 a major error in computer programming at the state contest resulted in increasing the team to four members. All other contests had four members so rather than using a computer program for three member teams Purdue took the easy way out and made the entomology a four member team.

To be eligible to compete the team members had to be a member of 4-H or FFA. Both 4-H & FFA competed in the same contest. Until 1991 once you were on the winning state team or were the top contest individual you were barred from ever competing in the entomology contest again. Thus every year during all those years Oak Hill had to come up with a new team to defend their

title. There was one year we had only one person with any experience in competition returning but we still won the following year with “rookie” contestants.

CONTEST MECHANICS

When we started the county and area contest they included only 50 possible different insects. Then they added 25 new insects for the state contest. Then they gradually increased the number to our present 146 different insects for all levels of competition. Our first state contest included identifying 50 insects to common name and scientific order name. These names were hand written. They added 20 true-false questions to serve as a tie breaker if needed. Every answer was worth one point. All kinds of weird rule changes were made over the years. The hand written common and order names at one time were increased to ten points each with correct spelling being worth 5 points. The entomology contest became a spelling contest. About one-fourth of the insects were “beetles”. Then there was the era when the “Beatles” were extremely popular and spelling became a serious problem for my musical contestants. When spelling became such a grading problem I convinced Purdue to provide a numbered alphabetical list of common names and order names. From this list each contestant selected the correct number from the list and placed it on their answer sheet. Thus it was grading numbers not spelling. Today included with each insect specimen are 5 multiple choices with the correct choice being marked a scantron sheet. Going from identifying each insect specimen from a list of 146 to 5 choices definitely inflated the scores especially of the poorer teams.

The written questions which include their knowledge of insect habitat, economical importance, overwintering stages, metamorphosis, mouthparts etc. have changed over the years. The number and type of questions and the value of each question have undergone many changes. The most absurd “hair brain” idea was when instead of 20-25 questions worth one to two points each they reduced it to three questions worth fifty points each or 37.5% value of the contest. Each team contestant went before a different set of Purdue students. After receiving the questions they were given one minute to study the questions and then verbally explain their responses. The subjective evaluation by different evaluators created serious problems. One of those years I placed a sixth grader, a seventh grader and a senior on the high school team. The sixth grader was quite small for his class. On the insect identification segment of the contest this sixth grader was easily the top contestant in the entire state scoring 246 out of a possible 250 points. However, the committee questioned whether he was in the wrong place and in their subjective evaluation gave him just 80 points out of 150 possible. It was the senior on the team that scored exceptionally well on the verbal questions. He was an outstanding speech student and also was the winner of the Indiana 4-H public speaking contest. For a few years the contest seemed like a speech contest. I used my influence on a 5 member state committee to replace the three questions with 25 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each. Somehow we survived all of those contest idiosyncrasies. After winning the state contest 43 years since 1962 and currently for 27 consecutive years it is obvious that youth can adjust to new circumstances much easier than their coach.

WHO ARE THESE WINNING ENTOMOLOGISTS?

The members of the Oak Hill teams that won or were runner-ups in state competition are a very diverse group. Of course several pursued entomology as a career. Their career specialties included being an insect consultant, pest control operator, sales, research, and insect inspection at such places as airports where foreign flights are common. Others have become doctors, engineers, preachers, missionaries, teachers (at all levels from elementary to administration),

college professors, lawyers, computer specialists, accountants, pharmacists, chemists, nurses, geologists, business operators, farmers, etc. When speaking before a service organization the question was asked “what is the common denominator for the young people who compete in insect identification”. My response was “would you believe that on the sidelines on a Saturday afternoon of a college football game are three different individuals who were the number one individuals in the state entomology contest”? One was an assistant coach, another the team trainer, and the other one was a student manager. You don’t usually associate college football with insects.

LOCATION & DATE of CONTEST

For a few years the state contest was held at the beginning of the Indiana State Fair. Then a banquet was held for the winners just before the fair closed. Then the contest remained at the Indiana State Fairgrounds but was held in late May or early June. Then early in the 1980s the contest was moved to Purdue University but kept the May date. Coaches who prepared for several contests decided in 1991 to move the entomology, forestry, and crops contests to December so they could concentrate on fewer teams. They left the remaining contests for the spring. The December date resulted in some problems with weather and good road conditions. One year the contest was postponed a week moving it to the Christmas break time for most schools. There were years when we lost great contestants to the flu bug. One year we took the healthy members from two different teams to make a new team. This newly created team just happened to be the state winner that year.

HOW DID YOU BECOME A STATE CHAMPION?

In the early years we had a county contest followed by an area contest consisting of 8-10 counties. At each level only the top two teams could advance. Therefore, we were limited to only two teams in state competition. When we first became Oak Hill, Grant and Miami counties were in different areas. Thus we could send two teams through each area contest. Other schools were not pleased that we had twice as many teams competing as any other school. If we were not winning they would not have had a problem. Then the state reorganized the counties with Grant and Miami counties being in the same area. So for a few years they allowed a fourth of the area teams to advance to state. Thus we were advancing three to four teams each year. Eventually they allowed each county to have three teams with the top six teams from the area competing in the state contest.

To my knowledge from the very first entomology contest until 1990 there was only one state champion team for 4-H & FFA. However, the FFA teams never won a state contest. The top five teams, the top five individuals, and the members of the winning team received plaques. Thus each year 13 plaques were being awarded. In the three preceding years 1990 Oak Hill took home 35 of those 39 plaques. My hunch is that if an FFA team ever expected to win any plaque we must divide the 4-H & FFA. Thus, in 1990 the entomology contest became like Indiana class basketball with two state champions. When we arrived at the 1994 state contest we were surprised to learn there was a junior entomology contest for students not yet in high school. They were only able to keep the secret from us for one year. We then started in 1995 with three fifth graders with no prior knowledge to win the junior contest on our first try. We repeated as junior state champions for the next 4 years. In 2001 we moved into the sacred territory and entered a team in the FFA division. That year Oak Hill won the state senior 4-H, senior FFA, and the junior contests. We gained no popularity with that decision!

WHO WERE THE STATE CHAMPION TEAMS?

Note: The number on a winning team varies due to having just a 2 member team, to a 3 member team & counting the 2 best scores to some years with a 4 member team & counting 3 best scores.

1962
Kenny Malott
Jeff Feller

1963
Jan Hacker
Zody Feller

1964
Jerry Renbarger
Norman Smith

1966
Ron Leap
Gordon Towe
Dick Crandall

1967
Mark Ragan
Don Cates
Dan Renbarger

1968
Ron Hoyt
Kenneth Beckley
Roger Leap

1969
Tom Strayer
Larry Abernathy
Bill Foust

1970
Gail Power
Darrell Downam
David Shafer

1972
Ann Power
Mike Power
Jean Troyer

1974
David Vadas
Jim McWhirt
Tim Cain

1975
Kyle Sturstman
Jeff Lindhorst

1976
Beth Power
Heidi King
Paul Lake

1977
Mark Middlesworth
Mark Satterwhite
Paul Tesdahl

1978
Jerry Hall
John Hall
Jerry Knight

1979
Andrew King
Todd Reyburn
Sherri Harvey

1980
Dave Bostwick
Gary Green
Louise Beam

1982
Trent Austin
Brian Ferrand
Brent Smith

1983
Cary Smith
Darren Webb
Larry Phillips

1984
Jeff Meyer
Todd Helt
John Lake

1985
Mike belcher
Gregg Helt
Clay Edwards

1986
Mike Neff
Gary Phillips
Jeff Goff

1987
Jeff Goff
Julianne Stout
Kim Belcher

1988
Scott Goff
Kim Belcher
Judy Neff

1989
Chad Fauber
Tom Wimpelberg
Julie Harts

1990
Mike Wlodarski
Mary Ann Green

1991
Nathan Renie
Catina Shafer
Sarah Shafer

1992
Catina Shafer
Heath Banter
Sarah Shafer

1993
Nathan Renie
Catina Shafer
Evan Hiple
Ryan Horner

1994
Nathan Renie
David Goodpasture
Evan Hiple
Holly Shafer

1995
Nathan Renie
David Goodpasture
Kyle Banter

1996
Nathan Renie
Kate Holderman
Evan Shafer

1997
Kate Holderman
Evan Shafer
Clay Slaughter

1998
Clay Slaughter
Amy Chism Walls
Josh Needler

1999
Josh Needler
Amy Chism Walls

2000
Josh Needler
Amy Chism Walls

2001
Josh Needler
Amy Chism Walls

2002
Amy Chism Walls
Josh Needler
RyanHovermale

2003
Amy Chism Walls
Josh Needler
Caleb Rennaker
Ryan Hovermale

2004
Nate Linna
Josh Needler
Caleb Rennaker
Alex Linna

2005
Nate Linna
Caleb Rennaker
David Marshall
Andrew Horner

2006
Caleb Rennaker
Nate Linna
Andrew Horner
David Marshall

2007
Lorrie Newhouse
Caleb Rennaker
Andrew Horner

2008
Lorrie Newhouse
Thomas Linna
Andrew Horner
Dan Bowen

WHO WERE THE RESERVE STATE CHAMPIONS?

1963
Robert Finney
David Petterson

1965
Ron Leap
Gary Rivers
Gordon Towe

1966
Mark Ragan
Don Cates
Dan Renbarger

1968
Abby Ragan
Joe Power

1969
Gail Power
Lynn Troyer
David Shafer

1970
Ann Power
Gary Worden
Mike Power

1971
Rex Cunningham
Marsha Neeley
Roy Neeley

1973
Jenny Fagan
Sharon Riley
Patty VanDeWater

1974
Beth Neeley
Lou Ann Agness
Lora Beigh

1975
Becky Sherritze
Mark Satterwhite
Lou Ann Agness

1976
Becky Sherritze
Mark Satterwhite
Lana Green

1977
Cary Anderson
John Boyer
Gary Green

1978
Andrew King
Sherri Harvey
Royce Rennaker

1981
Todd Helt
Jeff Meyer
John Lake

1982
Jeff Meyer
Todd Helt
John Lake

1983
Jeff Meyer
Todd Helt
John Lake

1984
Gregg Helt
Mike Belcher
Clay Edwards

1985
Angela McDonald
Gary Phillips
Tom Johns

1986
Angela McDonald
Julianne Stout
Kim Belcher

1989
Diana Brown
Scott Goff
Margaret Austin

1990
Nathan Renie
Michael Curtis
Matthew Gerber

1991
Ryan Hubbard
Evan Hiple

1992
Mary Ann Green
Geoff Horner
Steve Shugart

1993
David Goodpasture
Sarah Shafer
Kyle Banter
Evan Shafer

1994
Sarah Shafer
Kate Holderman
Kyle Banter
Evan Shafer

1995
Kate Holderman
Evan Shafer

1999
Clay Slaughter
Jared Stitz

THE STATES TOP FIVE SENIOR CONTEST INDIVIDUALS

1961
4. Jeff Feller

1962
2. Jeff Feller
5. Kenny Malott

1963
2. Jerry Renbarger
3. Jan Hacker

1964
1. Jerry Renbarger
2. Ron Leap
3. Robert Finney

1965
2. Ron Leap
4T Gary Rivers
4T Robert Finney
4T David Petterson

1966
1. Ron Leap
2. Mark Ragan
3. Dan Renbarger
4. Gordon Towe

1967
2. Mark Ragan
3. Joe Power
4. Don Cates
5. Bryan Hoyt

1968
1. Abby Ragan
2. Bryan Hoyt
4. Kenneth Beckley
5. Larry Abernathy

1969
1. Tom Strayer
2. Larry Abernathy
3T Lynn Troyer
3T Gail Power
5. Bill Foust

1970
2. Gail Power
3. Darrell Downam
4. Rex Cunningham
5T Ann Power
5T Gary Worden

1971
2. Ann Power
4. Rex Cunningham
5. Gary Worden

1972
1. Rex Cunningham
2. Ann Power
5. Mike Power

1973
2. David Vadas
3. Jenny Fagan
4. Lou Ann Agness

1974
1. David Vadas
2. Jim McWhirt
3. Beth Neeley

1975
1T Lana Green
1T Kyle Sturtsman
3. Jeff Linhorst
4. Becky Sherritze
5. Mark Satterwhite

1976
1. Beth Power
2. Paul Tesdahl
4. Becky Sherritze
5. Mark Satterwhite

1977
1. Mark Middlesworth
2. Stuart McDougall
3. Mark Satterwhite
5. Paul Tesdahl

1978
1. Andrew King
2. Jerry Hall
4. Todd Reyburn

1979
1. Todd Reyburn
2. Stuart McDougall
3. Andrew King

1980
3. Dave Bostwick
5. Gary Green

1981
2. Todd Helt
3. Trent Austin
4. Brian Ferrand

1982
1. Jeff Meyer
4. Cary Smith

1983
2. Angela McDonald
3. Cary Smith
4. Todd Helt
5. Jeff Meyer

1984
2. Angela McDonald
3. Gregg Helt
4. Jeff Meyer

1985
1. Mike Belcher
2. Angela McDonald
3. Gregg Helt
4. Julianne Stout
5. Gary Phillips

1986
1. Mike Neff
2. Angela McDonald
5. Judy Neff

1987
1. Jeff Goff
2. Julianne Stout
3. Scott Goff
5. Kim Belcher

1988
1. Mike Neff
2. Scott Goff
4. Margaret Austin
5. Julie Harts

1989
1. Chad Fauber
2. Tom Wimpelberg
3. Diana Brown
4. Judy Neff
5. Scott Goff

1990
1. Mike Wlodarski
2. Nathan Renie
3. Michael Curtis
4. Scott Goff
5. Tom Wimpelberg

1991
1. Nathan Renie
2. Catina Shafer
3. Ryan Hubbard
4. Heath Banter
5. Sol David

1992
1. Catina Shafer
2. Heath Banter
4. Mary Ann Green
5. Geoff Horner

1993
1. Nathan Renie
2. Catina Shafer
3. Evan Hiple
5. David Goodpasture

1994
1. Nathan Renie
2. Evan Hiple
3. Sarah Shafer
4. David Goodpasture
5. Kate Holderman

1995
1. Nathan Renie
2. Kate Holderman
3. David Goodpasture
4. Kyle Banter

1996
1. Nathan Renie
3. Kate Holderman
5. Evan Shafer

1997
1. Kate Holderman
2. Evan Shafer
4. Clay Slaughter

1998
1. Clay Slaughter
4. Amy Chism Walls
5. Josh Needler

1999
1. Josh Needler
2. Clay Slaughter
4. Andrew Cook
5. Amy Chism Walls

2000
1. Josh Needler
2. Amy Chism Walls
4. Ryan Hovermale
5. Andrew Cook

2001
2. Josh Needler
3. Amy Chism Walls
5. Jared Stitz

2002
2. Amy Chism Walls
3. Josh Needler

2003
1. Amy Chism Walls
2. Andrew Cook
5. Josh Needler

2004
1. Nathan Linna
2. Josh Needler
3. Caleb Rennaker
4. Alex Linna

2005
1. Nathan Linna
2. Caleb Rennaker
5. David Marshall

2006
2. Caleb Rennaker
3. Nate Linna
4. Andrew Horner
5. David Marshall

2007
1. Lorrie Newhouse
2. Caleb Rennaker
3. Andrew Horner
4. Thomas Linna

2008
1. Lorrie Newhouse
3. Thomas Linna

THE SENIOR STATE COMPETITORS 1955 to 2008 ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY

Abernathy, Larry
Agness, Lou Ann
Anderson, Cary
Austin, Margaret
Austin, Trent

Boyer, John
Boyer, Sue
Brown, Diana
Burk, Bill
Cain, Tim

Fagan, Jenny
Fauber, Chad
Feller, Jeff
Feller, Zody
Ferrand, Brian

Banter, Heath
Banter, Kyle
Bartholomew, Christian
Beam, Louise
Beckley, Kenneth

Cates, Don
Cook, Andrew
Crandall, Dick
Cunningham, Rex
Curtis, Michael

Ferrand, Michelle
Finney, Robert
Foust, Bill
Gerber, Matthew
Goff, Jeff

Beigh, Lora
Belcher, Kim
Belcher, Mike
Bostwick, Dave
Bowen, Dan

David, Sol
Douglass, Mark
Downam, Darrell
Dubois, Scott
Edwards, Clay

Goff, Scott
Goodpasture, David
Green, Gary
Green, Lana
Green, Mary Ann

Gribbin, Kathy
Hacker, Jan
Hacker, Marcus
Hall, Jerry
Hall, John

Harts, Julie
Harvey, Brian,
Harvey, Sherry
Heckman, Doug
Helt, Gregg

Helt, Todd
Hiple, Evan
Hogan, Jim
Holderman, Kate
Horner, Andrew

Horner, Geoff
Horner, Ryan
Hovermale, Ryan
Hoyt, Bryan
Hubbard, Ryan

Hudson, Aaron
Hudson, Gabriel
Hunter, Kenny
Hunter, Scott
John, Tom

Kelsey, Bruce
King, Andrew
King, Heidi
Knight, Jerry
Knight, Randy

Laird, Dennis
Lake, Jennifer
Lake, John
Lake, Paul
Leap, Roger

Leap, Ron
Linna, Alex
Linna, Nathan
Linna, Thomas
Lorenz, David

Lorenz, Eric
Malott, Kenneth
Marshall, David
McDonald, Angela
McDougall, Stuart

McWhirt, Jim
Middlesworth, Mark
Mobley, William
Needler, Josh
Neeley, Beth

Neeley, Marcia
Neeley, Roy
Neff, Judy
Neff, Mike
Newhouse, Lorrie

Petterson, David
Phillips, Gary
Phillips, Larry
Power, Ann
Power, Beth

Power, Gail
Power, Joe
Power, Matt
Power, Mike
Ragan, Abby

Ragan, Mark
Renie, Nathan
Renbarger, Dan
Renbarger, Jerry
Rennaker, Caleb

Rennaker, Royce
Reyburn, Todd
Riley, Sharon
Rivers, Gary
Satterwhite, Mark

Shafer, Ben
Shafer, Catina
Shafer, David
Shafer, Evan
Shafer, Holly

Shafer, Sarah
Shepherd, Mark
Sherritze, Becky
Sherritze, Cathy
Shugart, Steve

Slaughter, Clay
Smith, Brent
Smith, Cary
Smith, Corey
Smith, Norman

Stitz, Jared
Stitz, Lindy
Stout, Julianne
Strayer, Tom
Sturtsman, Kyle

Tesdahl, Paul
Towe, Gordon
Troyer, Jean
Troyer, Lynn
Vadas, David

VanDeWater, Patty
Vogel, Pat
Walls, Amy Chism
Webb, Darren
Wimpelberg, Debbie

Wimpelberg, Tom
Wlodarski, Mike
Worden, Gary

INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS & STATS

1. The number from the same family who competed in the state contest is topped by the Power family with six members. Somehow we missed getting the two oldest members of that family involved. Next with three from the same family were the Lakes, Linnas, Neeleys and Shafers. There were 26 other families with two members who participated in state competition.
2. The next stats were only possible after the late 1980s. Before then once a contestant was a state winner they lost their further eligibility.
 - A. My first experience using an elementary student in the senior contest before the start of the junior contest in 1994 was Nathan Renie. He started studying a few weeks before the state contest. To my surprise he was the sixth placed individual behind five other Oak Hill contestants. The next year he was the second individual. He never lost again and ended up winning top individual honors for five years. Other multiple state individual winners with two each were Mike Neff, Josh Needler, Nathan Linna and Lorrie Newhouse.
 - B. The greatest number of times an individual was on a state winning team was Josh Needler with nine (7 in senior & 2 in junior contests) and Amy Chism Walls was close behind with eight. Her and Josh were team mates on all of her eight championship teams. Others on several state championship teams were Caleb Rennaker with six (5 senior & one junior); Andrew Horner (4 senior & 2 junior); Nathan Linna with six (3 senior & 3 junior); Nathan Renie with 5 seniors; Lorrie Newhouse with four (2 senior & 2 junior) and Alex Linna with four (one senior & three junior).

FINALE

It was nearly impossible to envision in 1954 that the journey from then until 2008 would be filled with so many rewarding moments. Yes, there were goals. But looking back those goals were very mediocre. As a young vocational agriculture teacher I thought it would be wonderful to coach just one state championship team during my career. That came too easy. By 1960 there were 7 state champion teams but none were entomology. As schools consolidated the entomology was the area I decided to focus upon.

In reflecting back it became evident that the Lord had located me in the right community. This school community is blessed with supportive parents who believed their children should seek the opportunities to excel. The amazing thing is that this philosophy has remained unchanged during six decades.

Each year it was a pleasure to witness the response of the youth as they were rewarded for their accomplishments. Hopefully their satisfaction was in the pursuit of the goal as much the recognition of their achievements. God has certainly blessed me. Those who elected to participate in this unique study were likewise a segment of that blessing. Thanks to the many for being a part of a great joyful journey! May the sequel begin in a like fashion!