

NANCY J LANE

MIRIAM ROTHSCHILD – A TESTIMONIAL

Miriam was a loyal and supportive friend, not just to me, but to many others too. In my case, I was lucky enough to meet her years ago when I was a lowly D.Phil student at Oxford. Since my surname happened to be the same as her married name, Lane, she always considered that we were somehow related. I worked with her as a scientist on various collaborative projects over the years, as did many others from around the world, for she had a global team of colleagues, owing to her charisma, contacts, travelling, and broad range of interests. Whenever I was with her at Ashton, other visitors nearly always turned up there too, to discuss research or just to talk. Her annual summer gathering of scientists at Ashton was an occasion to be relished and provided many memories to treasure. Her unique apparel with head scarf, flowing skirt and moon boots, rendered her immediately recognizable even across a vast terrain, as I recall from an encounter with her once in Tahiti.

Since I later worked in the Zoology Department at Cambridge in a group which concentrated on insect physiology, she and I shared a passion for "things entomological", and we both interacted over many years with some of the great insect physiologists, of which but one was the late Sir Vincent B. Wigglesworth, father of insect physiology, who was a life-long friend of hers. Miriam's own work on fleas involved among other things, a concern for their ultrastructure, (fine microscopical details of biological tissues), and one of her many publications was an Atlas of Flea Fine Structure, published in splendid colour. Her Seven Wonders of the World, divulged to the media, were all biological in nature. Books featured hugely in her life, and the latest publications were always piled up in the drawing room at Ashton.

Latterly she bemoaned her failing her eyesight that made it difficult for her both to read and to use her beloved microscope.

Her writings, both research and 'literary', encompassed a broad range of subjects as her interest was caught by so many topics, especially the Lepidoptera. Her book *Butterfly Cooing Like a Dove* was a somewhat biographical one, and particularly successful; the photograph of her in that revealed her stunning beauty as a young woman. Gardening, wild flowers and conservation engaged her deeply. Her passion for research was all consuming, and she never tired of hearing the latest developments in science, disliking the specializations that developed over time, which, for example, precluded the journal Nature's abstracts from being very intelligible to lay biologist. Her richly deserved election to Fellowship of the Royal Society came surprisingly late in her career, as her contributions to science were enormous. Indeed, she continued writing research papers to the very end of her long life.

Miriam's anecdotes of past events and persons were manifold and highly amusing, often full of near-wicked humour. It was a joy to sit and listen to her recollections of her past colleagues and acquaintances and times gone by. We shall miss her immensely, variously as friend, colleague, family member or scientist 'extraordinaire', which she most certainly was.