

DR. JOHN A. MULRENNAN RECEIVES AWARD  
FROM THE FLORIDA ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Dr. John A. Mulrennan (right) reflects on his award as "FLORIDA'S MAN OF THE YEAR IN ENTOMOLOGY" at the Society annual banquet at Orlando 5 September 1974. Listening (left) is Dr. A. J. Rogers, recipient of the same award in 1973. Photograph by Frank W. Mead.

"John Andrew Mulrennan is a hard man to praise. John is a bulldozer—not a sports car. More than 40 years ago he had decided what his life was to mean to himself and his fellow man. He settled into a low crouch and started moving steadily, relentlessly and irresistibly ahead. Down went marshes and bogs, fake exterminators and inert politicians, public disbelief and hesitant legislators. In the level ground behind him sprang up scientific chemical and engineering control measures, realistic laws, and sound financing of large expensive projects. The only way he could steer was straight ahead. The goal was a mosquitoless, midgeless, flyless, healthier Florida, and John kept his hard nose pointed straight at that goal. He loved God and his fellow man, and he made that plain in the way he lived and spoke. In 1955, in his final remarks as president of The Florida Public Health Association, John Mulrennan said: 'If you have faith in the mission to which you have dedicated yourself for suffering humanity—then, with your technical knowledge you will be able to open wide the eyes, minds and hearts of all mankind to the fact that public health is the preservation of the human body. Our responsibility is one of supreme importance when we realize that the human body is the most sacred of all temples—for therein dwells a soul which on that final day must give its accounting for its stewardship on this earth.'

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*Footnote:* Extensive quotes are from a presentation speech given 1 October 1971 at Miami Beach, Florida, when Dr. Mulrennan was presented with a Meritorious Service Award by The Florida Public Health Association.

"It is a true pleasure to honor a man who knows who and what he is, where he is going, and why. . . .

"John Andrew Mulrennan was born in 1906 on a farm near Bloomingdale, a hamlet in Hillsborough County, Florida. There his God-fearing, hard working, thoroughly Irish, dirt-farmer Cracker family raised citrus and cattle—and huddled indoors after dark listening to the whine of the billions of mosquitoes that made the night unlivable.

"But John Mulrennan was made of hard stuff. By the time he had graduated from Brandon High School, he knew what he wanted to do. He wanted to become an entomologist at the University of Florida and fight the scourge that so inhibited the life and prosperity of his state. While still on campus, he employed his traditional gift from the Emerald Isle to talk Catherine Williams of Leefield, Georgia, into marrying him. They have raised 4 fine children." His son, Lieutenant Commander John A. Mulrennan, Jr., is following in his father's footsteps and is today a medical entomologist in charge of the U. S. Naval Disease Vector Control Center, Naval Air Station, Alameda, California.

"In a world that was plummeting to the depths of the Great Depression John Mulrennan found a job. He worked for a year as entomologist for a large citrus firm. His ability was noticed, and the Rockefeller Foundation called him to Tallahassee to work on its research project on mosquito control. But in 1953 the Lone Star State needed an assistant state entomologist and named John to the post. The following year he assumed the top position in that field and remained until the Rockefeller group called him back to Florida and more research at Pensacola. Here his work came to the attention of the State Board of Health which appointed him to head its entomological effort in 1941. He has remained in that position to this day.

"World War II was just beginning, and the tremendous responsibility of malaria control around the state's many military training bases along with the training of entomologists, physicians and engineers for similar work in the armed forces fell largely on John Mulrennan. Men, machinery and chemicals were available—but he was the man who organized their use for the protection of our fighting men. After Hiroshima John was one of the key men responsible for the use of the same equipment and insecticides in the famous mass spraying that wiped out indigenous malaria in the southern United States.

"Now John Mulrennan was ready. He had seen what could be done. He set out to convince the state that the disease-carrying, tourist-repelling insect pests could be eliminated. In 1949 and 1953 he persuaded the legislature to pass the unique state aid law which provided assistance to counties and districts in operating mosquito control programs. It is estimated that such control is the key to the rise of annual tourist business from one to" over "six billion dollars in the past fifteen years. The number of insect-vectorized disease prevented is incalculable." There has been no indigenous malaria in Florida since 1948. His research program on St. Louis encephalitis in Florida in 1959-60 identified the probable mosquito vector, *Culex nigripalpus*, a species not previously incriminated as a disease vector, and resulted in a program of surveillance and control that has been instrumental in preventing epidemics of this disease in Florida.

"In 1947 John Mulrennan was the prime mover in the passage of the structural pest control law which drove out the thousands of quack exterminators who were bilking millions of dollars from the Florida public. The upgrading of this business in this manner is said to have saved countless millions of dollars to the people in the improved preservation of wooden structures. The research facilities established through John Mulrennan's

persuasion at Vero Beach and Panama City are well-known, and unique in the nation.

"In his field of science, John Mulrennan is known all over the world. One species of mosquito and one of the sand fly bear his name in international nomenclature." His outstanding services and contributions in the field of insect control and public health have been recognized and honored nationally and internationally, as well as at the state level. He is a past president of The Florida Entomological Society, The Florida Anti-Mosquito Association, The Florida Public Health Association, and The American Mosquito Control Association, and he was the first Chairman of the United States and Territorial Vector Control Conference. He is a member of Alpha Zeta, Phi Sigma, and Gamma Sigma Delta honorary societies and in 1961 received special recognition from Gamma Sigma Delta. In 1971 he was awarded the coveted Meritorious Service Award by The Florida Public Health Association. In 1972 he was recognized by his alma mater, the University of Florida, which conferred upon him an Honorary Doctor of Science degree. Today it is our pleasure on behalf of The Florida Entomological Society to recognize Dr. John A. Mulrennan as FLORIDA'S MAN OF THE YEAR IN ENTOMOLOGY IN 1974 and to present him with this plaque which reads, "To Dr. John A. Mulrennan For His Unselfish Devotion and Contribution In The Field of Entomology To The Nation, The State, And The Florida Society."

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