

A Tribute to Jack Luick

It is 1970 in Cantwell, Alaska. Early August, if memory serves. A borrowed bulldozer, pulling an ancient 2-wheel trailer, lumbers uphill toward 2 military surplus trailers and a rudimentary system of paddocks - in those days, the extent of our field facilities at the University of Alaska Reindeer Research Station. Perched precariously atop the trailer is a well-used outhouse «procured» from some abandoned cabin site in the Village suburbs.

An exciting day indeed, for we were about to install our very own convenience facility. Since placement of the bare essentials in 1967, the team had completed several batteries of field trials on reindeer, all of which required that some experiments be conducted in the dead of winter. The original field complex consisted only of an unheated handling barn and a drafty storage area. And if Mother Nature called unexpectedly, the recipient of the summons had but 2 choices, depending upon the degree of urgency. One could either hustle downhill to the automated equipment in the Village, or bare one's buttocks to the chill of the prevailing northerlies in a remote corner of the main paddock. Hence, the joyous anticipation on that particular summer day.

Jack, adorned in his colorful Lappish headpiece, supervises the caravan's progress with the sharp eye of a seasoned civil engineer, while Steve Person and Dan Holleman scurry about checking the ropes that secure the trailer's precious burden. Technician Dick Gau screeches commands and insults to yours truly whose incompetent hands are on the controls of the bulldozer. Bob White, our newly arrived token Australian, feigns participation, but maintains a safe distance from the crazy Yanks he has recently befriended, no doubt reflecting on the wisdom of his decision to relocate to Alaska. The only absentee is the amiable team greensleeve, Bob Dieterich.

Miraculously, the one-holer arrives on site more-or-less intact and is cautiously unloaded next to an excavation of the appropriate dimensions. At this point, an unexpected decision would have to be made. The unspoken assumption among most team members was that the entrance would have a southern exposure; on a clear day the occupant could then enjoy a spectacular, unobstructed view of Mt. McKinley. To Jack, however, the only logical choice was a northwest orientation toward the Village of Cantwell; that way, one might reflect on the past and contemplate the future of this quaint whistle-stop town along the Alaska Railroad, and note the comings and goings of its handful of friendly residents. Besides, he argued, one might spend an entire professional career on this remote hill and never be fortunate enough to synchronize the movement of bowels with a rare, cloudless view of the great mountain to the south.

Now you'd think that half a dozen scientists, having together braved the discomforts of frozen fingers and insect attack, as well as the frustrations of clogged catheters, hemolyzed blood, and malfunctioning field equipment, could make a unanimous decision on such a seemingly trivial matter. No such luck! Several arguments erupted and tempers flared. Compromises were formulated and promptly rejected. The negotiations reached an impasse, and heated exchanges continued while enroute to the local watering hole for the usual (or at least not unusual) pre-dinner cocktail hour(s). It is said that this was the worst argument in the 15-year history of the Reindeer Research Team. There never was a mutually acceptable solution.



Professor Jack R. Luick 1921 — 1983.

This tongue-in-cheek anecdote illustrates the atmosphere of comradery that typified Jack's relationships with friends and colleagues. He wisely recognized that the quality of research, or any other endeavor for that matter, could be maximized by a cohesive team approach. It is unclear whether Jack had an instinct for assembling compatible folks or if his mere presence fostered that compatibility. Some of each, I suspect. The wide assortment of coauthors on his list of well over 100 publications testifies convincingly that his personal relationships and professional achievements were closely interwoven.

Jack will long be remembered for a unique sense of humor. Laughter was his antidote for everyday stress, and he seemed helplessly attracted to the extraordinary, the unconventional, the unusual. Seldom would he introduce a speaker, deliver a lecture, or even give a paper without first sharing a joke or humorous story with his audience. Who among those attending the conference banquet in Røros will forget Jack's hilarious account of a fictional exchange of letters with Eigil Reimers? A friendly, jocular informality was his trademark. In fact, if Jack's greeting didn't include a wisecrack, or at least a warm smile, one knew that serious trouble was afoot somewhere. In his personal and professional philosophy, there was always room for enjoying the task, as well as delighting in a quality product.

Jack's various experiences are enviable and his numerous accomplishments impressive. After serving as Captain, U.S. Army Air Corps, for 4 years during World War II, he enrolled at the University of California, Davis, and subsequently earned a B.S. in Animal Science. Following a second assignment in the military during the Korean Conflict, he returned to Davis to work under the brilliant Max Kleiber and emerged as a charter member of the famous Davis Tracer Team, pioneers in the use of radioisotopes in animal research. Jack distinguished himself by making the first measurements of calcium metabolism in the high-producing dairy cow using radio-tracer techniques. In 1956, Ph.D. in hand, he joined the faculty at Davis where he remained until 1964. He then expanded the application of his expertise in tracer methodology, first in Yugoslavia under IAEA sponsorship and, a year later, in Australia as a Fulbright Scholar.

Jack ventured to Alaska in 1966 at the invitation of Peter Morrison, then Director of the Institute of Arctic Biology, to initiate a research program in the nutritional physiology of large animals. Appropriately, Jack focused his attention on *Rangifer tarandus* and promptly secured a major grant from the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission to investigate the climatic and nutritional adaptations of this unique Arctic species. He initiated, or was closely involved in, numerous studies embracing a broad spectrum of research disciplines - from intermediary metabolism and body composition to animal capture and artificial insemination. He traveled frequently and extensively, notably to the Scandinavian countries and the Soviet Union, in conjunction with his interests in *Rangifer*, and eagerly reciprocated with a special brand of hospitality to the many colleagues who visited Alaska. In the later years, Jack's research interests shifted somewhat toward reindeer husbandry and products marketing, with a specific interest in development of the industry in Western Alaska. However, he retained a keen interest in basic research, and was always quick with useful advice to colleagues and students alike.

Late in 1970, Jack pulled together a group of biologists, including Dave Klein and Peter Lent, to formulate plans for what was to become a series of international symposia on reindeer and caribou. The First, held at the University of Alaska, was extremely successful, but no more so than the Second in Norway, the Third in Finland, and now a Fourth in Canada. We all missed Jack's participation at the recent Whitehorse conference, as we will in Sweden in 1988.

The Cantwell Research Station is now famous throughout the circumpolar countries for a prolific output of research. To Jack, however, Cantwell represented a great deal more than an outdoor laboratory. He and his family spent many a vacation there, improving the station, hunting, fishing, and simply soaking up the casual village atmosphere. And the irony is bittersweet that Jack's last days were spent in the place he cherished. Perhaps he climbed that nearly hill and, with a wry smile at thickening clouds to the south, relaxed within a certain convenience facility to enjoy an unspoiled view of his favorite little town.

Ray Cameron