

For Birds: Dale and Marian Zimmerman

Gene Jercinovic

I. Dale

The migration of chimney swifts (*Chaetura pelagica*) to their summer range carries them from their wintering ground in South America as far north as the Canadian border. Massive flocks fill the skies all over the eastern United States as they sail crazily through the air, harvesting tiny insects. To a young preschool child in Imlay City, Michigan, their aerobatics were completely thrilling. He watched, frozen, as a swirling cloud with a mystical intelligence funneled to roost in a tall chimney beside the school building a couple of blocks down the street, a school he would ultimately attend. Dale Zimmerman was hooked on birds.

Pearl and Landis (Doc) Zimmerman had only one child, Dale Allen, born on June 7, 1928. Doc was a successful dentist and dental surgeon in Imlay City. The family lived in a two-story house a short walk down the street from the Imlay City school grounds. Pearl and Doc imbued Dale with a passion for knowledge and encouraged his every curiosity. The house was full of books. Pearl was a teacher, as was her sister, "Aunt Ruby," who lived not far away in Imlay City. Both spent many hours reading to the youngest Zimmerman. Even before he began to read, he would pull down books and page through them. He could spend hours under the dining room table with books on Africa, poring over the pictures of lions, elephants, and giraffes. By the time he entered kindergarten, he was reading and was startled to see that many other students were just beginning to learn the alphabet.

But it was outdoors where his real interest lay. As he grew older, he found a world filled with creatures to be observed, to be captured, to be studied. Both parents cultivated an interest in natural history, which flowed smoothly into Dale. Swifts actually nested in the Zimmerman chimney.

"I can remember as a youngster climbing up. We had this peak on the roof, this one peak that went up toward our chimney. I would see swifts going down there occasionally and so I had to determine whether or not we had chimney swifts nesting in our chimney. One day I climbed up and I took a flashlight and I looked down the chimney and there not two feet below the top was this wonderful nest of twigs glued together with their saliva."

He began collecting insects and embarked on the study of butterflies, a hobby he continued into high school, leading to his lifetime involvement with Lepidoptera. With the assistance of Doc and through his own reading he became familiar with Linnaean binomial nomenclature before he was even ten years old.

By the time he was in junior high, Dale felt the need to begin preserving dead birds he found. The Zimmerman library included a number of books by the noted naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton, in which the basics of animal speci-

men preparation were outlined. Doc was a hunter, had been a trapper, and knew a good deal about skinning animals. In addition, as a dental surgeon he was very skillful with scalpels and needles. Thus, while still in junior high, Dale began a long career of collecting and preserving bird specimens. Pearl was supportive in her own way.

"Mother was very tolerant of having dead birds and partially skinned birds and other things in her refrigerator."

It was during this time that he started sketching and drawing birds. He also began to dabble in photography of birds, but was frustrated by the extreme slowness of film at the time.

Meanwhile, there was the issue of going to school. To Dale, school was a place to which every person between the ages of six and eighteen was sentenced with no early release program for good behavior.

"My own education came from my parents and my own reading and from my adult associates elsewhere."

For the first few years he dutifully did what he was expected to do, just like other children, enduring times tables and spelling tests. By junior high school, he began to rebel. The worst problem was study hall.

"... because the assignments were so infantile that you could dispose of them in ten or fifteen minutes and you had another half-hour, forty-five minutes to sit there and do very little."

He read some, but soon he and another like-minded student got started drawing cartoons, often involving school administrators.

"We would have run into difficulties if they were discovered."

He also got into writing.

"I started writing a story, a novel, The Life of Mabel Hastings. Gradually it grew into several volumes over several years of high school. It was not the sort of thing you would show around. It was a little bit blue in places, like deep indigo."

Other forces were at work as well.

By the time he entered high school, some pleasant spots appeared in the curriculum. One of the few teachers he enjoyed taught all the sciences. Dale enjoyed basic chemistry. The elegance of the periodic table of the elements impressed him. The formation of compounds made great sense. Test tubes and flasks tasted of real science. He and Doc set up a serious chemistry lab upstairs at the house. Biology was also an enjoyable class, although his own exploration of the local biological environment occasionally left him biting his tongue. In terms of subject matter in school, there was only one subject area that was really problematic for Dale. That was math. Arithmetic, fractions, decimals and the like were simple enough, but algebra was a disaster.

"It was not making any sense to me. I remember very well doing homework in algebra at the kitchen table every evening."

I never had to do homework in other classes because I'd dispose of these in short order while I was in school. I'd have it all done and have plenty of spare time to get into trouble while I was in school. I can remember sweating and having both Mother and Dad, especially Mother, explaining how to do these things. . . . I would go over and over this stuff and it still made no sense."

He somehow managed to make it through Algebra I. He was actually fairly successful in geometry, but other higher-level math classes were horrid. From this point forward, math was anathema to him.

By the end of his junior high school years, he found study hall unbearable.

"I played hooky by the time I was old enough to carry our gigantic wooden step ladder, which weighed a ton. There was a wooded lot close to our house. I would race home. I'd just go out of the building. I'd leave school, get the ladder, go down to the woods and watch birds."

He continued the habit into high school. After he was old enough to drive, he would tie the ladder to the side of the "big blue Dodge" and drive several miles to a nearby lake to study birds. He worked hard at sneaking out of the building and getting people to cover for him, but eventually a staid and stiff principal summoned Pearl to discuss the exploits of her errant son.

"I don't remember whether I actually overheard this statement or whether Mother mentioned it later but he [the principal] said: 'Your son is just not normal. He doesn't behave normally. He doesn't do the things that normal children or normal people do.'"

Pearl was incensed that he could say her son was not normal. The relationship between Dale's parents and the school administration remained forever uncomfortable.

Despite issues with the public school, there were very positive developments in Dale's high school years. His

involvement with the study of birds had grown quite serious. In his forays into the woods he had begun to photograph birds successfully. He began to use Doc's darkroom in the basement. His dexterity in preserving bird specimens was growing. He was keeping extensive records on birds migrating through and living in the area. He was not only sketching birds but had begun painting them as well. Dale was quite familiar with the bird artistry of George Miksch Sutton, who painted from live or freshly killed specimens. Dale tried to do the same. The family came into possession of an eastern screech owl (*Megascops asio*) that had been found on the highway with a badly injured wing. Doc built a large cage for it. It became a family pet named Otis (the genus name at the time was *Otus*). Dale would carry him upstairs and place him on a perch beside an easel to be painted. The watercolor, completed years later, hangs in Dale's home. Perhaps these activities were not "normal," but their significance eluded no one in the Zimmerman household.

Dale's ongoing study of birds familiarized him with not only the work of George Sutton but also that of Josselyn Van Tyne, ornithologist, both then at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He began corresponding with both and received their encouragement and support. Doc, a University of Michigan graduate, made frequent trips to Ann Arbor, about sixty miles southwest of Imlay City. He attended dental conventions there and took short courses in specialized techniques. Dale made arrangements with Van Tyne for a tour of the research facilities at the Museum of Zoology at



Dale (age 17) with his pet owl, Otis



"Otis," painted by Dale

the university. Doc accompanied him. They took a special elevator that opened behind the large iron gates that separated the research section from the public museum. Dr. Van Tyne gave a thorough tour of the bird division. Over the remainder of Dale's high school days, he made numerous trips to Ann Arbor with Doc, and spent all of his time at the Museum in the bird division. He got to know Van Tyne, Sutton, and other staff members, and gained a great deal of knowledge about proper methods of specimen preparation, general ornithology, and techniques in drawing and painting. With this remarkable affirmation of Dale's passion for birds, high school was only a matter of endurance. His future was clear. In the fall of 1946, he became a fixture at the Museum of Zoology by enrolling at the University of Michigan. His plan was to major in zoology and become an ornithologist.

The freshman curriculum at the University of Michigan was standardized, with quite limited choices for students. Dale attended his classes and did the required work. His spare time was spent at the Museum surrounded by the actual pursuit of science. By the spring semester of his sophomore year he had more course options. He expected that his time in the Museum of Zoology would make for a smooth transition into the zoology department at the university, but it turned out that, although Museum staff members occasionally taught in the zoology department, the two divisions were not closely related. In fact, there was friction.

"All of the people in the zoology department knew that I was very closely aligned with these other people over there in the Museum and they didn't really like it. . . . This bothered me no end."

In his junior year, Dale became a botany major, although continuing to take zoology courses he considered important for his long-term goals in ornithology.

The botany department was planning a significant collecting expedition deep into Mexico for the summer of 1949. Dale and a fellow birder from the forestry school decided to join the group. His contacts in the Museum and his new-found friends in the botany department arranged for the appropriate permits. Dale borrowed the big blue Dodge from Doc, and the pair set off for Mexico. They drove south to Louisiana and did some birding along the Gulf Coast before entering Mexico at Matamoros. They began collecting plants as they drove through the shimmering heat of Tamaulipas on the way to Mexico City where they were to pick up their firearms permits. Once past Mexico City, heading west through Michoacán, they couldn't resist visiting Paracutín, the volcano that appeared in a cornfield in 1943 and was still erupting. Finally, some ten days after leaving Michigan, they reached Autlán in Jalisco, their base of operations for the next couple of months. Days were spent in the field collecting plants, birds, and even small mammals, all specimens carefully labeled. In the late afternoon they would return to their quarters in the picturesque, old-time adobe Hotel Valencia. With the car parked safely in the courtyard, they could have dinner and prepare for the next day. But even their dinner could become an adventure.

"One evening several people came in, quite rough-looking hombres. There must have been six or eight of them. They were sitting along the sides of the table and at each end. They didn't

serve liquor there, but these guys did have some liquor they brought with them. It was getting rowdier and rowdier, and noisier and noisier. It didn't take very long, because all this took place while we were ordering our evening meal, waiting for it and getting and eating it, but these guys were getting pretty unruly and, at one point, suddenly it just was like a scene from some damn Wild West movie. The guy at one end of the table jumped up and back. His chair went over behind him and he drew his gun and shot at the other person at the far end of the table. Well, it was just one of those things. We didn't know what was going to happen. It was all over in just a few minutes, but boy, were they hot-blooded individuals. They were wild. It was truly scary, just like a scene out of some movie. Nobody was hurt. The shot went wild. Maybe it went wild intentionally. Probably did . . . but that was life at the Hotel Valencia."

At the end of the summer, they packed the Dodge full of specimens and returned to Ann Arbor for the beginning of Dale's senior year.

II. Marian

Christmas was always an exciting time at the Allen house in the rural town of Kresson, about six miles east and south of Haddonfield, near Camden, New Jersey. There were the usual shopping trips to Philadelphia and the hanging of stockings on the mantle and the decorating of the tree, but this Christmas morning was special. A loosely tied cardboard carton was handed to the smallest Allen. Before she could untie the string, some fur appeared in the gap between the flaps and the little girl knew she had the most wonderful gift she had ever received, a pet kitten.

Marian Jeanette Allen was the second (and last) child of Pearl and Horace Clifford (Cliff) Allen. She was born on the 8th of July in 1930 in Camden, New Jersey. Her brother Bob was born in 1926. Cliff was an electrical engineer. He had started his career with General Electric in Schenectady, New York, but had accepted a job with RCA in Camden in the late 1920s. The Allens lived in a three-story brick house. The third floor was an unfinished attic filled with out-of-season clothes and a trove of old trunks and odds and ends. The floors of the house were hardwood, with linoleum in the kitchen. Heating was accomplished with radiators filled with steam from a coal furnace. The furnace and coal bin were in the basement, along with two other rooms. The first was quite large, with a photographic darkroom at one end and a metal-working lathe, a workbench, grinding tools, bench saw, and hand tools. The other room was smaller, with shelves for fruit preserves and canned vegetables. The kitchen had an electric refrigerator and an electric stove, but the old coal-burning stove graced the sun porch when Marian was very young.

Pearl and Cliff had elected to live in a country setting rather than in the city environment of Camden. Marian could remember listening to the whip-poor-wills calling as she went to sleep at night.

"Once Cliff took us into the woods behind the yard, across a little stream where purple violets and dog tooth violets grew, and showed us a woodcock on a nest with eggs."

Cliff built a number of birdhouses for the back yard. One by the back door was used regularly by a pair of house wrens. Another, mounted on a silver maple, was special for bluebirds. Birds were an important aspect of country life for the Allens.

"We had three small bird guides with paper covers, each a different color, which I used to study."

Concord grape vines covered an arbor beside the driveway. During summers when the vines bore heavily, Pearl, with Marian's help, would put up juice, jelly, and jam. Fruits and vegetables from their large garden were preserved in Mason jars.

Inside the house, reading was a common pastime. Both parents frequently read to Marian when she was young. As they grew up, reading was important to both Allen children. They often received books as Christmas and birthday gifts. The radio was also part of almost every day—Jack Benny, the Lone Ranger, Fibber McGee, the Green Hornet, concerts from the New York Philharmonic. On Saturday, there were the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts. Since Cliff worked for RCA, the Allens were able to acquire a phonograph early on, and amassed a large collection of "78s." Cliff and Pearl were serious opera buffs. They not only enjoyed performances on the radio and on the phonograph, but also would travel to Philadelphia to attend live performances, even bringing Bob and Marian on occasion. The parents even belonged to an opera study group, which sometimes met at the Allen house. Music was a constant presence. Pearl played the piano, Cliff the violin. Now and then they would play together. Pearl gave both Marian and Bob lessons on the piano.

Both children attended the Kresson School. The school consisted of two rooms separated by a long hall. Entering from the front of the school, the room on the left was for grades one through four with Mrs. Wood and the room on the right for grades five through eight with Catherine Smith, who also served as principal.

"The only toilets were behind the school, separate for boys and girls, each enclosed by a square of adult-height walls."

The playground was between the back of the school and the toilets. The school was a mile and three-quarters from home. She walked to and from school until she was old enough to ride her bicycle. Marian was quite comfortable with school. She was there with friends and found school-work pleasant enough. The closest she got to trouble came as she approached the end of her elementary school years.

"By fifth or sixth grade, Beverly, Pearl, Ruth and I sometimes left the playground, going straight back and uphill to a small grove of pines. There we played 'pretend games,' including characters from Pinocchio (the film) such as the blue fairy. When the bell announced end of recess, we had to run to get back to the building."

During her sixth-grade year, the United States entered World War II. In the summer of 1942, Cliff was transferred to a new RCA facility in Princeton, New Jersey, to do research for the war effort. Marian's time in the Kresson School was at an end. The Allens moved north to Princeton. At the point she was to enter seventh grade, she found herself in a completely new world.

"I went from there [Kresson] to Princeton Township School,

which was a big school in which they had separate teachers for different disciplines, and you went from one room to another for your English and so on. It was quite a change."

Yet the education she received in Kresson, coupled with much she had learned at home, allowed her to easily make the transition to the Princeton schools. The family's new house sat just outside the Princeton city limit. As a result, she had to attend the Princeton Township School, requiring her to take a bus to the other side of town. Despite this difficulty, her seventh- and eighth-grade years passed smoothly.

In the fall of 1944, she began her career at Princeton High School.

"I was a B student. In high school I was on the B honor roll. Sometimes got As. I had good-quality teaching in Princeton. That's where I got interested in plants, in botany . . . through a science teacher. He had us make plant collections for one quarter. My folks were always interested and knowledgeable in the outdoors and plants, but that's where I actually made a plant collection—my first one. I was a freshman in high school."

Marian took four years of math, with the hope that she wouldn't need to take any more in college. She joined choirs as soon as she got into high school. When she was a junior a select group of girls' voices was formed. She was not selected. She discussed this with the director, who indicated that he had assumed that on account of her long bus ride she would have problems with after-school practice. Marian found another bus available later in the day and became a member of the select choir. During her senior year, the music department decided to put on the Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera *The Pirates of Penzance*. Marian auditioned and she was selected as one of three girls to sing the lead role of Mabel. She



Marian (age 17), as Mabel

did a matinee performance for the students at the high school and also one evening performance for a wider audience.

"That opened up new worlds for me. It gave me all sorts of confidence."

As her senior year drew to a close, it was time to make plans for college. She had an uncle who had attended Syracuse University. Pearl's brother taught at the University of Michigan. Marian applied to both. Syracuse was a private university. Tuition costs were "pretty high." The University of Michigan, as a state college, had more reasonable tuition. Marian also began to feel that she wanted to be someplace farther away, someplace different. In the fall of 1948, she entered the University of Michigan. She had visions of becoming a medical technician.

She got right into the swing of things. She pledged in Alpha Gamma Delta sorority and began living in the league house. There wasn't sufficient room in the actual sorority house for freshmen. She joined a choir at the Presbyterian Church and a university choir. Her freshman year was fairly structured. She took a biology course and beginning chemistry. She couldn't seem to master the use of a slide rule.

"I ended up my first year with maybe one B, mostly Cs. It was really disappointing, but the one highlight was the one lecturer in the general botany course, very well spoken and very interesting to listen to. So I went to see him at the end of the year and said, 'Do you think I could major in botany?' He said, by all means, try it, and he ended up presenting me with my own copy of a little book called Michigan Trees. I had always been interested in pressing leaves and figuring what they were and this sort of thing."

With her first year of college under her belt, Marian made a fateful decision to major in botany, and in the fall of 1949 she signed up for two classes in the botany department, one in applied botany and one in dendrology.

III. DAZMAZ

Fresh from the excitement of his first Mexican adventure, Dale began his senior year fully engaged with his scientific future. Having become a botany major during his junior year, he needed to pick up a few basic botany courses. For the fall semester of 1949 he enrolled in two courses. One of them was Professor C. D. LaRue's dendrology class, which met at the University of Michigan Botanical gardens.

"All of the students and perhaps a couple of assistants were sitting on the ground under some trees discussing some botanical matter, I don't remember what, but that's when I first saw her. She was wearing a beige corduroy skirt and a beige corduroy jacket."

He soon discovered that the same girl was also in his other botany class. Dale had met Marian Allen. They became friends.

"He and I just started chatting a little and discovered that we had some things in common and ended up walking to one of the local drugstore places or something one afternoon to sit down and go have a coffee or a soda or something-or-other and spent all afternoon chatting."

Neither Dale nor Marian was particularly involved in the social scene at Michigan. Marian was not enamored of sorority life. Dale had absolutely no use for fraternities. They discovered that beyond the fact that both of their mothers were teachers named Pearl and Dale's middle name was the same as her surname, they had much in common and there were many immediate empathies between them. By the end of that semester it was clear to each that their relationship was deepening. Marian actually met Dale's parents for the first time in December of 1949. Pearl and Doc came to Ann Arbor in order to drive Dale and Marian to Detroit so that Marian could catch a train back to Princeton for Christmas.

During the spring semester of 1950, they began attending dances and concerts. Marian had done very little dating, but quickly realized that she had found someone special in Dale.

"And he found someone that was very unusual at Michigan, somebody who didn't smoke, who was in a sorority but didn't go out and get drunk and soused all the time and wasn't high on all the sorority things. So he didn't let me slip through his fingers."

Dale decided to accompany Marian to Princeton during spring vacation to meet her parents. He borrowed the car from his parents.

"We drove out. I think we had one of the girls from the sorority that lived in New York or somewhere out in the east, Philadelphia perhaps, I think we took her along and maybe stayed overnight at her place. Back in those days, you know, you just didn't take your girlfriend and drive across the country unchaperoned."

Dale spent a week in Princeton getting acquainted with Pearl and Cliff.

That spring Marian completed her sophomore year and returned to Princeton. Dale graduated with a B.S. in botany. By this time, they'd decided that they were engaged. Dale decided that he would try to teach at a community college for a year to make enough money so that they could get married. This required his enrollment in a couple of education courses over the summer. He found them almost unbearable. In the meantime, war was rapidly brewing in Korea. By the end of June, it had become clear that U.S. troops would be involved. Unmarried young men were going to be drafted beginning in August. In early July, he called Marian in Princeton and hinted at "advancing our plans." He wrote a letter to Pearl and Cliff asking for Marian's hand in marriage.

Marian's parents approved of Dale and agreed to the marriage with two conditions. First, Marian was to stay in school and get her bachelor's degree. Second, she was not to get pregnant. The wedding occurred on the 29th of July at the Zimmerman house in Imlay City and Marian became Marian Allen Zimmerman. The newlyweds honeymooned in Doc's deer-hunting cabin near Luzerne, in Oscoda County in northern Michigan. Shortly thereafter, Dale abandoned his plan to teach at the community college and applied for graduate study at Michigan. That fall, Marian began her junior year and he entered grad school. He received an M.S. in botany in 1951 and began working towards his PhD. He continued to spend much time at the Museum of Zoology, where he had workspace provided by Van Tyne. Dale continued to work



Wedding July 29, 1950

with Van Tyne and others on specimen preparation and other ornithological matters, and with Sutton on painting and drawing birds. Both Van Tyne and Sutton would spend occasional weekends birding with Dale at Doc's cabin on forty acres in northern Lapeer County, not far from Imlay City.

The next year Marian completed her B.S. in botany and got a job in the circulation department at the general library in Ann Arbor. By this time Dale had decided to do his dissertation on the flora and ecology of the jack pine community of northern Michigan. Conveniently, this allowed him to study Kirtland's warbler, for him a special member of the community. He received his PhD in the spring of 1956.

Dale and Marian decided to spend the summer on an extended trip into Mexico. They entered Mexico at Matamoros, following the same route Dale had taken in 1949. They drove a Plymouth Suburban station wagon with room enough for two five-gallon "carboys," glass water jugs in wooden crates, two five-gallon gasoline cans, as well as the rest of their gear. Their first big stop was Rancho del Cielo in southern Tamaulipas, a "Mecca for naturalists" entering Mexico in those years. They were quartered in a guest hut with a thatched roof, complete with lizards and bats.

"I remember the first morning Marian went out to wash. We had a wash basin on a stand, a little tripod-like arrangement out in front of the only door of our little dwelling. The little wash basin was settled into this little basket-like affair with a water pitcher to fill it. And when Marian went out to wash, here was this gigantic spider, must have had this three, three-and-a-half-inch leg spread, with the most intriguing lavender eyes. I didn't know how she was going to react to this sort of thing, but she thought it was the most intriguing arachnid and she too was intrigued by its eye color."

This typified Marian's spirit in finding the joys and fascinations in every adventure.

After a few days at the Rancho, they headed south into San Luis Potosí, Hidalgo, and the Distrito Federal, and began

an expedition that would take them to every Mexican state but Sonora. The route had to be planned very carefully since gasoline was not universally available, nor was it of consistent quality.

"We had once, maybe twice, major problems with the fuel line clogging up because of materials in the gas. It was not refined gasoline at all. Pretty crude stuff. I can remember we'd have to overnight in some towns where there'd be a mechanic and we'd have to leave the car out on the street because the mechanic didn't have a shop in which to work. They worked on the street, little cobblestone streets in those villages. I can remember looking with horror at the car, sometimes two or three days in succession with all these parts scattered around on the sidewalks, in the gutter."



Marian & Plymouth in Oaxaca

Water was also a serious concern. It was possible to exchange an empty five-gallon jug for a new one at a bottling plant, but pure, uncontaminated water was never a certainty. Halazone tablets were constant companions. For the most part, they camped out, sleeping in their jungle hammocks or in sleeping bags in the back of the unloaded Plymouth. They ate canned goods, consumed many bolillos, and washed it all down with a glass of Nido, powdered milk that came in resealable cans useful for storing specimens.

Part of their purpose south of the border involved working with Irby Davis, a somewhat prickly expert in recording bird sounds. With him, they decided to go into the Yucatán Peninsula, an area without roads at that time. To enter they needed to go by train, so the three of them secured Irby's jeep to a flat car and they rode the rails across the border. They spent a few days exploring where they could and then secured the jeep again for the ride back across the border. At the border between Campeche and Tabasco, a railroad employee checking each car discovered that only Irby had a ticket and told Dale he would need to disembark and purchase tickets. As he was receiving the tickets, he noticed that the train was rapidly leaving the station. He sprinted out the door and dashed after the train, just barely catching hold of the ladder of the last

car on the train. The train then proceeded onto a long bridge a hundred feet above a river where cars were switched out of and into the train with much banging and clanging. Dale, still clinging to the ladder for dear life, thought he surely would never see his wife again. Eventually, the switching was completed and Dale finally was able to rejoin Irby and Marian on the flat car. Adversity has always been an essential portion of adventure.

That summer established a pattern for what would become many journeys all over the world. For the moment, however, Dale and Marian headed back to Michigan. It was time for Dale to become gainfully employed. They traveled to New Jersey to investigate a possible position with the Audubon Society. The job did not work out. While there, Marian realized that she was pregnant. With no alternatives in the east, they returned to Ann Arbor. Marian was able to land a temporary position at the library. Dale went to an employment service and found a job at the University of Michigan Women's Hospital doing cytological examination of pap smears. In the spring of 1957, he began exploring for employment more suitable for his skills. On May 26, Allan Dale Zimmerman was born at the Women's Hospital. Since Dale was working there, the birth cost them very little.

Early in the summer, Dale found out about a couple of possible opportunities, one in the midwest and one in the northwest. Neither particularly appealed to them. Suddenly they got notice of an opening for a teaching assistant at a small teacher's college in a place called Silver City, New Mexico. Familiar with Silver City from bird records in Florence Merriam Bailey's *Birds of New Mexico*, and definitely pleased with its proximity to Mexico, Dale accepted the job. The Zimmerman family arrived in August, ready to build a future.

A new science building had just been completed. For Dale, there was much work to do in preparing for his teaching assignment. They rented a house on Mississippi Street just a few blocks from campus, but felt that the price was a bit high. One of Dale's students was a senior and lived just around the corner on West Florence Street. It turned out that he and his wife had built their little house themselves, but were now planning to leave town. They offered to sell the house to Dale and Marian in the spring of 1958. The Zimmermans bought the house that would be their home from that time forward. The next couple of years flew by.

By 1961 Dale felt well enough established to consider pursuing old interests. He decided that he had to fulfill a childhood dream of going to Africa to study birds. He read an advertisement in *Audubon Magazine* giving suggestions for trans-African guides and responded. A guide from Nairobi wrote back and the project was underway. Dale spent his spare time over the winter preparing his own Kenyan bird guide. Arrangements were made for Marian and Allan to stay in Imlay City and Dale flew off toward the Dark Continent. His letters back displayed the immeasurable mystery and majesty of Kenya, and conveyed his strong desire for Marian to experience the taste of Africa. He was also able to spend time in both Uganda and Tanzania. Two years later Marian was able to spend four weeks with Dale in the plains and



Dale with Masai tribesmen

forests of east Africa observing and photographing birds and other animals. Six-year-old Allan stayed in Michigan with Pearl and Doc. In 1965, Dale secured a National Science Foundation grant for two summers' work surveying Kenya's birds. Both Allan and Marian were able to come along. Birds were observed, collected, documented, photographed, and had their songs and calls recorded. Marian, in fact, became the recording specialist. Fieldwork in Kakamega Forest was the height of joy. For the next several decades, Dale and Marian would continue seeking and studying birds in the world's wild and natural places.

Of course, most of each year was spent in Silver City. When Dale first arrived, the biology department was a single individual, John Harlan. There was no herbarium. There were fewer than ten pressed plant specimens and no bird or mammal specimens. There were courses to be designed, field studies to be done, students to be taught. In those early days, every academic year was a challenge. In Dale's third



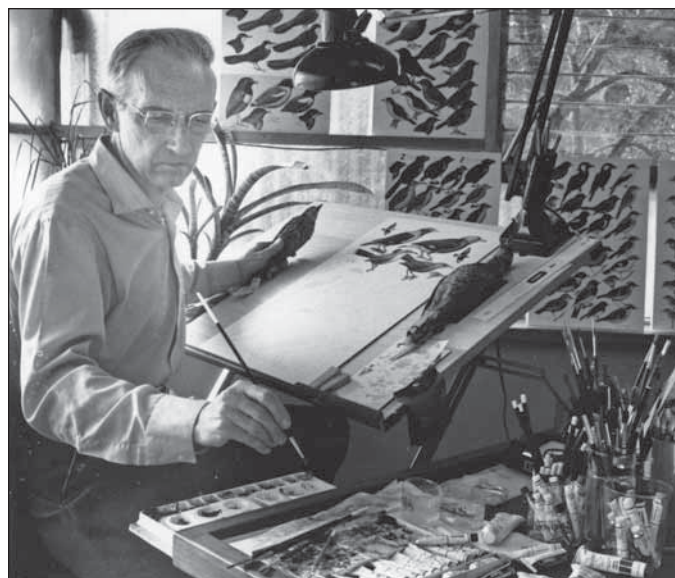
Marian recording birds

year, Bruce Hayward, a mammalogist, was hired and took over courses in mammalogy, genetics, and others that Dale disliked. By 1965, Dale had become an associate professor, and upon John Harlan's retirement, took over as department chair. He collected plants extensively and initiated a thorough study of the flora of the Pinos Altos Range of Grant County, establishing Western New Mexico University's first herbarium. Both in Africa and locally he collected many birds. His most important African specimens were placed in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Some of the African birds and his local specimens, supplemented by gifts from his old associates at the Museum in Ann Arbor, formed the basis of the first major bird collection at Western New Mexico University. He also prepared a small number of mammal specimens, the inception of a mammal collection greatly enhanced by Bruce Hayward. In the late 1960s Marian worked with others in Silver City to found the Gila chapter of the Audubon Society, the first chapter in the state. Visits to Panama and the Galápagos Islands closed the decade for the Zimmermans.

By the early 1970s, Allan had already become quite interested in plants, animals, and insects. He began making collections. Herbarium records indicate that he made more than 450 collections of plants in New Mexico, as well as serious collections of moths and butterflies, before entering college in 1975. Dale became a full professor and continued gathering specimens locally and abroad. No decade would have been complete without time in Kenya. The first of several trips that decade came in 1970. In the fall of 1973, Dale took a leave of absence from the university to investigate an unknown corner of the world. After a stint in Kenya, he toured southern Africa, including a visit to the Namibian Desert, where he observed the strange endemic plant *Welwitschia*. Then he was off to India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Other travels for Dale and Marian in the seventies included Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, New Guinea, Columbia, Peru, Trinidad, Venezuela, Surinam, Madagascar, and once again Ecuador and the Galápagos.

In the spring of 1981 Dale undertook a somewhat more perilous trek that he considered unsafe for Marian, visiting Russia and traveling across Siberia to Mongolia. After returning to Moscow, he caught a flight to Nairobi, arriving just in time to join Marian and Allan in order to lead an east African tour. Over the next few years, journeys included the Himalayas via India, Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Borneo, Argentina, Morocco, and Kenya again. During the Eighties notable changes would develop for the Zimmermans. At the beginning of the decade, Dale began work on preparing the illustrations for *Birds of New Guinea*, a book being written with two other authors for Princeton University Press. For five years, when not teaching, collecting, or travelling, he worked designing and painting watercolor plates. This often involved acquiring bird specimens from his contacts in museums around the country. Each plate contained from 9 to more than 35 true-to-life bird images painted by hand. Dale created 38 of 47 color plates and 6 of 8 black-and-white halftone plates. The volume was published in 1986.

In 1985 Allan received his PhD in botany from the Uni-



Dale painting bird plates

versity of Texas at Austin. Also in 1985, WNMU hired a new president, who began instituting numerous changes. Dale began to feel uncomfortable, but continued teaching. In 1986, he undertook a new project, becoming senior author, once again with two other authors, on another book for Princeton, *Birds of Kenya*. Once again he began designing and painting plates.



Kenyan bird plate

Then, in 1988, disaster struck. Marian was in Florida visiting Pearl and Cliff. Dale was driving outside of Tucson when he suddenly noticed all the power poles and tree trunks were no longer straight, but had a bulge in them. Ophthalmologists discovered he had developed a macular hole. Surgery was performed to stop the hole from enlarging, but central vision in the eye was permanently damaged. With his situation at the university continuing to decline, he retired that year. Having spent decades collecting plant specimens and feeling that the herbarium was threatened under conditions at that time, he and Allan moved the specimens to the University of Arizona until 1995. He also placed his African bird specimens and important state record bird specimens at the Museum of Southwestern Biology at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Work on the book slowed but continued to progress. Dale and Marian also returned to Kenya in 1988 to do more research for the book. They reexamined certain areas and tracked down species for which more information was needed. In 1991, they spent several weeks in England and Scotland visiting and meeting with a co-artist, co-authors, and the publisher. They managed to squeeze in some birding in the Farnes Islands in the North Sea. That summer they were able to relax for a month of birding in Ecuador. Dale spent the first five weeks of 1992 back in Kenya visiting areas he had not seen and locating and studying ten more bird species. In June they had a week of birding in Churchill, Manitoba. Late in 1993 they spent three weeks on a dream vacation, flying to Chile and then taking a tour ship from the Falkland Islands to South Georgia Island and Antarctica. The early nineties, however, were primarily devoted to the completion of *Birds of Kenya*. Dale designed all of the 124 plates and painted 80. The last of them were completed in 1995. Of the 1114 species then known from Kenya, all but 9 were illustrated. Dale wrote the vast majority of the text. Marian and Allan assisted with editing. The book appeared in 1996.

As the Nineties progressed, serious health issues began to dog both Dale and Marian, considerably curtailing their activities. In 1997, they were able to spend three delicious weeks birding in Alaska, from Anchorage to Point Barrow to Nome, even visiting offshore islands. During that winter they returned to the Hudson Bay area to observe and photograph polar bears. Despite setbacks, the century ended on a special note for Dale. In 1999, he was elected as a Fellow of the American Ornithologists Union. With the possibility of foreign travel diminished, Dale had to turn his energies to more local projects. He began drafting a memoir of his life and times in Africa. He also rekindled his intermittent avocation in studying Lepidoptera, particularly moths. In April of 2003, Marian dragged Dale to Harlan Hall at WNMU "on a ruse." There, a surprise crowd awaited the dedication of the Dale A. Zimmerman Herbarium. In 2007, Dale and Marian decided on one more trip to South America. He headed to Peru in mid-July to hunt for the spatule-tail hummingbird. Luck was with him. At the end of July he met Marian in Quito for a bit more birding in Ecuador.

* * *

Any attempt to capsulize lives as busy and complex as those of Dale and Marian would always be incomplete. There were many

more trips to Mexico. Dale and Allan intermittently spent ten or fifteen years travelling in Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico studying cacti. Dale and Marian were receiving royalties for the use of many of their photographs in a number of books and magazines. Dale published almost ninety scientific papers on both ornithological and botanical matters. During his thirty-year career at WNMU, he saw biological science at the school develop from humble beginnings to a serious natural history curriculum. Marian contributed much time and effort to the Gila chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico. Dale served in a number of advisory and editorial positions. They led many birding tours in many places. Their contributions to ornithology and ornithological organizations have been numerous and significant. Records at the Museum of Southwestern Biology credit Dale with 3240 plant specimens, making him the eighth-most-prolific collector in the state's history. At the time he was actively collecting New Mexico's birds, his collections, with the exception of vagrants and particularly rare birds, represented all birds known in the state at that time. A massive collection of Lepidoptera still remains downstairs at the Zimmerman house.

Before Dale left for his extended journey in 1973, Marian decided that he needed a companion. She created a cloth beanbag in the shape of a frog, which became known as Gleep. Dale traveled with his amphibian associate on the trip. Gleep eventually accompanied Dale and Marian to every continent on the planet over the next quarter of a century, surviving merciless attacks from several wild creatures.

"No one ever realized how silly Marian and I were."

Their times had silliness. And days of joy. And days of sadness. And moments of mystery. And moments of discovery. Dale came out of childhood with a strong sense of purpose. There would be birds. There would be Africa. Marian became perfectly part of both. The future that grew carried them to anywhere birds could fly. They captured the sights and the sounds. They produced science and art. They escorted their dreams to fruition.

Marian's death, just after Thanksgiving in 2011, stole the wind from his sails for a time. Yet, for Dale, the treasures of their quests together continue to breathe life into all that has been. He has completed the text of his memoir and is gathering appropriate photographs from his vast reservoir of images. Resting about the house there are miniature habitats in which various moth pupae and larvae are proceeding to maturity. There will always be time for more study.



Gleep botanizing