

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### JAMES IRA McMURPHY (1871 – 1943)

James Ira Wilson McMURPHY, Professor of Biology, Emeritus, died in Palo Alto on November 20, 1943. At his retirement in 1936, he had completed his 25th year as a member of the Stanford faculty and had served many years as the university's consultant on the diseases of our local trees and shrubs. His quiet, unassuming, ready performance of these services to his students, to campus residents and to fellow townsmen may well characterize the finer, less tangible qualities of our deceased friend and colleague.

Professor McMURPHY was born in Illinois in 1871, but while still a small boy he came with his parents to Kern County, California. The family later settled in Mendocino County on a sheep ranch. There, after a few years, the complete destruction of their home by fire marked the beginning of severer hardships which apparently continued during the years that James, the oldest child, alternately attended school and worked to help support the family.

These handicaps of course retarded McMURPHY's formal education but not without some compensations. Following his high school graduation he taught in the country schools, and he also found time further to satisfy his intense interest in the plant and animal life around him. Thus at the turn of the century, he was locally well known, not only as a successful teacher but also as a promising young naturalist. This led, in 1900, to an introduction to Dr. Jordan who invited McMURPHY to attend Stanford. He enrolled here for the three winter months of that year, and of several succeeding years - these months being then the winter vacation period for Mendocino country schools. He spent his full senior year here as a student and as teaching assistant. He graduated in 1908 and received his M.A. degree the following year. He was appointed instructor in botany in 1912, after a year of study at the University of Wisconsin, and he continued actively on our faculty without leave of absence up to the time of retirement.

Professor McMURPHY was an able teacher in his courses on fungi and plant pathology. He was an authority on local mushrooms and toadstools, to whom the laity as well as students and faculty came for information and advice. It was unfortunate that he could never bring himself to publish the accurate, first hand, invaluable knowledge he possessed, especially on our local fungi. It seems he preferred to transmit that knowledge orally to any and all enquiring minds, and this he did always willingly and well. His knowledge also of birds and mammals and of many groups of invertebrates was both extensive and exact. Probably his chief delight was to roam the woods and hills with children and to help them learn of the plant and animal life they could see and discover on every hand.

Services of this sort to young and old alike, given so freely, modestly and honestly, will long be remembered and may never be lost. They combine to help make the spirit and traditions of the community of which the giver was once a living part.

C. H. Danforth  
G. F. Ferris  
C. V. Taylor, Chairman