

Albert W. “Al” Franzmann

Alaska and the wildlife profession lost a pioneer moose research biologist on February 13, 2009 when Dr. Albert Franzmann died at his winter home in Green Valley, Arizona.

Al was director of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Moose Research Center near Soldotna, Alaska from 1972 until 1987. During this period Al made a lasting and impressive mark on moose management in Alaska. His work had a major influence on moose management through out North America. Al published over 250 papers in scientific journals, primarily on moose physiology and assessment of moose physical condition, but he also published his research results on predator-prey relationships, moose nutrition, animal immobilization techniques, and moose population health. In 1989, he compiled and edited the definitive book on moose. It was titled “Ecology and Management of the North American Moose” and published by the Smithsonian Institution Press.

Al was born in Hamilton, Ohio in 1930. He attended Ohio State University and received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine in 1953. Following graduation, Al served for two years as a captain in the United States Air Force Veterinary Corps. Al practiced veterinary medicine in Ohio from 1956 to 1968 and then decided to change careers. He enrolled in the graduate program at the University of Idaho and earned his Ph.D. in Forest Science in 1971. His Ph.D. dissertation was on the physiology of Rocky Mountain Big Horn Sheep.

In 1972, Al and his family moved to Soldotna, Alaska where Al began his illustrious career as a moose research biologist at the Moose Research Center. He was also appointed as an affiliate associate professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Institute of Arctic Biology. Following his outstanding career with the Department, Al pursued his long-time desire to work in international wildlife management. He formed the International Wildlife Veterinarian Service, Inc. and served as its director for the next decade. Al conducted wildlife research in 11 foreign countries as well as the United States. He did notable work in India, Argentina, Indonesia, and Zimbabwe. Due to his tremendous knowledge about immobilization methods he was often asked to participate in projects to relocate wildlife species.

Al was very active in professional activities throughout his career. He was a long-time member of The Wildlife Society, served on the council and Emeritus member of the Wildlife Disease Association, was a founding President and council member of the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, he helped organize the American Association of Zoo Veterinarians and was selected by the I.U.C.N. Species Survival Commission to their deer, bear and veterinary specialty groups.

Over his career Al was honored with numerous awards, some of the most noteworthy were: In 1983, Al was recognized by his peers and awarded the Distinguished Moose

Biologist Award “in recognition for outstanding contributions to the field of moose management. He received the Einarson Award from the Northwest Section of the Wildlife Society “in recognition of long-standing unselfish dedication and professionalism to wildlife resources. He was awarded the first Honorary Diplomat by the American College of Zoological Medicine in 1990 “in recognition as a specialist with extensive experience who has provided important service to and achieved eminence in the field of zoological medicine.” In 1992, The Wildlife Society awarded the Moose Research Center its Group Achievement award for “outstanding achievements benefiting wildlife and objectives of The Wildlife Society.” He was recognized as an outstanding Alumnus at both Ohio State University and the University of Idaho.

Al was appointed to the Alaska Board of Game by Governor Walter Hickel in 1992 and he served on the Board until 1995. Al was active in many organizations that promoted wildlife conservation. He was a life member of Isaac Walton League, The Nature Conservancy, The National Rifle Association, the National Wildlife Federation, and the Alaska Outdoor Council. He served on the Board of Directors of the Alaska Outdoor Council.

Al was a dedicated professional through out his distinguished career. He greatly enjoyed his work and served as a mentor to many young biologists who went on to productive careers in wildlife management. I will always remember sitting with Al on the cabin porch at the Moose Research Center as we listened to the wolves howl or watched the Arctic loons. Al would often remark that he could not believe we were getting paid to do such fun things. I have lost a valued friend and the wildlife profession has lost one of its giants.

Al is survived by Donna, his wife of 55 years, his son Karl, daughter Louise Billaud, and 3 grand children. — *Wayne Regelin*



Photo by Chuck Schwartz