

## EDITORIAL

**Herbert Deignan** was a Free Member of the Siam Society. This alone would not merit the publication of a Special Memorial issue of one of the organs of the Society in his memory. **Deignan** was however the outstanding authority on the birds of Thailand, justly so as he had published two important books on the subject as well as numerous papers over a period of 30 years or more.

The Council of the Siam Society felt that some special recognition of his passing was due and that it would be apt for the Society to provide this. They consequently authorised the production of a Special issue of the Natural History Bulletin. It takes issue No. 3, in volume 23 and a short number which will come out next will carry the number 4. Pagination will be continuous.

In soliciting contributions from other ornithologists, colleagues and correspondants of **Deignan** the response was enthusiastic and when, occasionally, regretful letters were received asking to be excused from contributing on account of the pressure of work, such as organising the next International Ornithological Congress, in every case the writer asked whether there would be a place for short personal comments about him. It was clear that each person felt the loss even though some of the people approached held professional opinions opposed to **Deignan's**

In putting together this issue particular assistance has been received from Mrs. Stella **Deignan**, who kindly allowed me to take over Bert's own cardex of the papers he had written— which greatly simplified the compilation of the bibliography; from Dr. Richard L. **Zusi** at the United States National Museum, who arranged to send to me zerox copies of some of the earlier papers by Bert, to which I had no access here, which I needed for the annotated notes; to Dr. George E. **Watson**, who made available ex the archives of the Smithsonian Institution a choice of photographs for the frontispiece; to Dr. Herbert **Friedmann** and to Dr. O.L. **Austin**, Editor of THE AUK

for permission to reprint the obituary written by the former and published in *THE AUK*, Volume 87, No. 1, January 1970, and to Mrs. Dorothy Dickinson for much secretarial assistance.

It should appear on record that several other important friends of **Deignan** would have contributed to this issue if they had not felt that the deadline set for receipt of manuscript was too close.

Another point deserves explanation. The contributions that were solicited were to be not longer than approximately 12 printed pages. The article by Dr. Leon **Croizat** is very much longer but it has been accepted in its full length. Why? The major works of Dr. **Croizat** have been privately published and it is doubtful whether they have received the attention they deserve, save perhaps amongst botanists (See *ECOLOGY*, Vol. 48, No. 4, pp. 704-5: 1967). It takes a patient man to tackle these volumes *in toto*, but **Deignan** at least found the digging worthwhile and came to support publicly some of **Croizat's** views. **Deignan** would have very much wished that this paper was accepted in full. Dr. **Croizat's** views are thought-provoking and some would term them iconoclastic. **Deignan** used to tell of his visit to Hawaii to the Tenth Pacific Science Congress in 1961 and of the paper he delivered "Birds in the Tropical Pacific". After he had spoken another scientist said "Why can't you ornithologists make up your mind?" to which Bert used to say he had replied "Professor **Mayr** has made up his mind and I have made up mine. There is nothing to say that we have to agree." What then is iconoclastic about putting forward a theory which disagrees with those that are most widely taught (all too often without a caution as to the limits of hard facts and the commencement of guesswork)? One would have thought that in addition to putting evolution in perspective **Darwin** would have taught us to keep an open mind and a ready ear.

E. C. D.