

"Gelukkig hij, die het milieu heeft weten te vinden, waarvoor zijn individuele aanleg hem het geschiktst maakt en die zich niet behoeft te verwijten, dat hij zijn kunnen en kennen dienstbaar heeft gemaakt; aan het zinloos vernietigen van het buiten zijn toedoen geschapene"
[Happy is he, who has succeeded in finding the environment for which his individual disposition makes him most suitable and does not have to blame himself that he has used his abilities and knowledge for the useless destruction of that in the creation of which he had no part]

Prof. Dr H.J. Lam cited in van Rossem, 1966c.

Obituary and bibliography of Gerard van Rossem (1919-1990)

C. van Achterberg

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The obituary and bibliography of Gerard van Rossem (18.x.1919-26.xii.1990) is given.

C. van Achterberg, Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum, Postbus 9517, 2300 RA Leiden, The Netherlands.

Obituary

Gerard van Rossem died unexpectedly after a few days of illness at Boxing day 1990. Retired from the Plantenziektenkundige Dienst (Plant Protection Service) in Wageningen since 1983, he still worked at home on his Ichneumonidae.

He was born on 18 October 1919 in Delft as the son of a professor in rubber technology. His family expected him to go in his father's footsteps by taking a scientific career. However, he refused to go to university and instead went to the Hogere Tuinbouwschool (Horticultural College) at Frederiksoord. He took up an interest in biology and to a certain extent in drawing. After having finished his training in 1939, he went in 1940 to Leiden where he worked with Dr S.J. van Ooststroom (a keen botanist and entomologist) at the Leiden Hortus Botanicus. The start of the second world war, and especially the German occupation of The Netherlands, posed difficulties on his young career. He managed to avoid deportation to nazi-Germany by arranging a job in agriculture or horticulture; these positions were considered too important by the Germans to be taken away from. First he worked in Aalsmeer and Utrecht (Heidemij), but luckily he could start at the Plantenziektenkundige Dienst in 1943. He was the first taxonomic entomologist to enter this organisation, despite lacking an education in entomology. Van Rossem worked hard to acquire the knowledge necessary to identify all (supposed) pest species and to get acquainted with specialists who could help him. Fortunately, he had good tutors in his life-long friends A. Stärcke, P.M.F. Verhoeff, O.W. Richards (all hymenopterists) and C.G. Johnson (a specialist on flight activity of aphids). He frequently travelled to England to visit relatives of his English mother and he corresponded regularly with many hymenopterists.

Within ten years his department was enriched by two colleagues, Herman Burger (who was buried the day after van Rossem's death) and Chris van de Bund. Much later Wies de Goffau joined the team.

In 1969 I worked as a trainee under his guidance (as part of my agricultural train-

ing for five months. He taught me how to prepare small Hymenoptera (on min-utins!) and how to make labels. This may sound simple but it is of great importance for a beginner in entomology. He pointed out to me that I should stop studying Ichneumonidae (my primary interest) and agriculture, and suggested to me to start with Braconidae and to study biology. He claimed nobody (!) was working on the Braconidae and that several jobs would be available after I had finished proper training in biology. Both statements were exaggerated, but essentially correct. So he advised me to start an academic biology study at the Rijksuniversiteit Leiden and to take an extensive training in systematics. This was against my original plans, but I followed both his advices, with far reaching consequences, and I never regretted it.

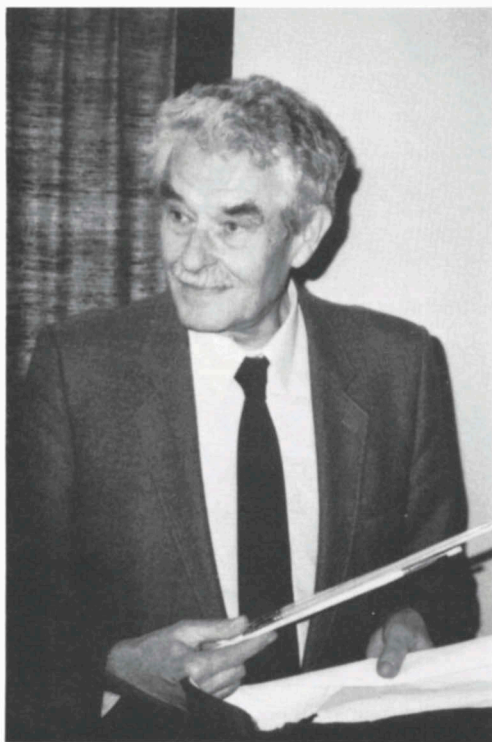
He himself started in the early forties with Aculeata because of his contacts with Verhoeff, Stärcke and Richards. Soon he focused his attention to the largest family of Hymenoptera, the Ichneumonidae and therein the largest subfamily, the Cryptinae (= Phygadeuontinae). Later he also worked on the subfamilies Microleptinae and Oxytorinae. He made an important collection of Ichneumonidae, mainly from The Netherlands and Sweden (where he loved spending his holidays), and for me he collected Braconidae. His private collection has been deposited in the Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum at Leiden, and other material is present in the collection of the Plantenziektenkundige Dienst. To clear his desk he destroyed most of his correspondence, sometimes to his regret later.

He helped a lot of amateurs with identifications, especially if this effected a better understanding of insects by the general public. It is worthwhile mentioning his early contacts with his colleague Piet Zonderwijk (Wageningen) who later made important contributions to more naturally maintained road-sides, parks and other suburban areas. For a long time he has been trying to diminish the use of insecticides (van Rossem, 1970b). At the beginning of his career in the Plant Protection Service he was the only person advocating reductions in the extensive use of insecticides. Later he got support of his second director (C.J. Briejèr). It was often difficult to get his view as a biologist expressed among the management of the Plantenziektenkundige Dienst (sometimes called by him the "Politburo"!).

In 1983 he left the Plantenziektenkundige Dienst as head of the entomology department, despite a lack of academic training. The latter caused some mixed feelings: on one hand he disliked the use of academic titles, on the other hand he regretted (as a self-made taxonomist) not having these titles because of people's judgements.

In the Nederlandse Entomologische Vereniging (Netherlands Entomological Society) he played an important rôle as a contact person in the Society between applied entomologists and taxonomists. As such he was a member of the board during 1952-1955 and 1970-1976, and he became "lid van verdienste" (honorary membership) for his contributions to the Society. His annual talks on the recent findings of (supposed) noxious insects, mites, and other arthropods by the Plantenziektenkundige Dienst were topics of the autumn meetings of the Society and resulted in a series of papers on this subject.

He was a very charming man, who could talk for hours. It may be worthwhile to recall one of his many stories. Once he was asked to advise the local authorities of the Isle of Terschelling (one of the Dutch Frisian Islands) about an outbreak of the brown-tail moth (*Euproctis chrysorrhoea* Linnaeus). Tourists got allergic problems walking through the dune area and the authorities wanted to start chemical treatment. After visiting the area he claimed that chemical treatment was wrong and that



G. van Rossem, 1919-1990.

tourists should accept some inconvenience or otherwise leave the area. While he was telling this he felt his face and eye-lids swelling and at the end he could barely see his hosts! He loved to include a lot of understatement mixed with anecdotes; an attitude according to him inherited from his mother. He also got from her an interest in painting (she was befriended by painters of "De Stijl" group). Apart from his love for painting he was interested in the lives of famous painters. One of his favourite stories relates to his journey to the places where Vincent van Gogh worked in southern France. There he found the "paint on the bark", which he was sure van Gogh left after cleaning his brushes. He loved to recall that Vincent van Gogh was also an amateur entomologist because he had assembled a small collection of insects.

We will miss this charming man, a good teacher and a good friend.

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