Tribute to Robert Earle Buchanan

As the International Journal of Systematic Bacteriology begins its 21st year, it is fitting that high tribute be paid to Professor R. E. Buchanan, who started, edited, promoted, and helped elevate the journal to its present eminence.

The foreword of the first issue of this international journal states: “Nomenclature must be agreed on an international basis if a proper understanding is to be achieved... and to reach agreement discussion is essential. A publication such as this will enable opinions to be seen, criticized, and discussed by all those interested.”

During the past 20 years these objectives have been fulfilled, but in doing so there have been some heated discussions. Dean Buchanan in his devotion to systematics as a discipline has always adhered to taxonomic perfection. Several persons who pay lip-service to laws and codes in biology have committed errors, or they have disagreed with him in their writings or openly in discussions at meetings of the Bergey’s Manual groups, of the Judicial Commission, or of committees of the International Association of Microbiological Societies. But the critics have always had to be well versed in their Latin and Greek, the rules of nomenclature, and the characteristics of organisms if they wished to gain a point in their discussions with the Dean.

All the various scholarly, academic, national, and international activities of Dean Buchanan since he first became Professor and Head of the Department of Bacteriology at Iowa State University in 1910 are too numerous to list here in connection with his work on the systematic aspects of biology. His publications, for example, date back to 1903 and number over 100, including 5 books.

Dean Buchanan’s interest in systematic microbiology began long before this journal was founded. In 1911 he described new species in the genera Cephalosporium and Thyrococcum. From 1916 to 1920 he published 10 authoritative papers on studies in the nomenclature and classification of bacteria, and with members of a committee of the Society of American Bacteriologists published the outstanding 100-page report on the families and genera of bacteria. His book General Systematic Bacteriology appeared in 1925.

In 1930, Professor Buchanan presided over the Bacteriology Section of the Fifth International Botanical Congress in Cambridge, England, and attended the First International Congress of Microbiology in Paris. At these meetings he proposed that a commission be appointed to determine what should be done to systematize bacteriological nomenclature. A commission was designated and recommended establishment of the international Committee on Bacteriological Nomenclature.

During the 1939 microbiological congress, the international committee formed a Judicial Commission, with R. E. Buchanan as Chairman. One of the charges to the Commission was to develop and publish a tentative Code of Bacteriological Nomenclature. The draft code, prepared mainly by Buchanan, was reviewed and accepted at the 1947 congress in Copenhagen; it was published in 1948. Since that time the code has been amended and published in English (International Code of Nomenclature of Bacteria and Viruses, 1958, Iowa State College Press, Ames), French, German, and Japanese.

At the Fifth International Congress for Microbiology in Rio de Janeiro (1950), an Editorial Board for the international committee and judicial commission was formed, with Dean Buchanan as Chairman. It was agreed that all official acts of the commission should be published. The International Bulletin was established in 1951 for this purpose, and Buchanan became Chairman of the Editorial Board.

Although his 27-year term as chairman of the International Committee on Nomenclature of Bacteria ended in 1966 at the time of the Ninth International Congress for Microbiology in Moscow, he was elected to a life term on the committee.

Dean Buchanan contributed in many ways to the first six editions of Bergey’s Manual of Determinative Bacteriology, and, upon the death of Robert S. Breed in 1956, he became chairman of the Board of Trustees and helped with the final publication, in 1957, of the...
seventh edition of the manual. Since then he has worked tirelessly with the board and committees on manuscripts for the eighth edition. He served as Chairman of the Editorial Board for *Index Bergeyana*, an annotated alphabetical listing of the names of the taxa of the bacteria; this 1472-page companion volume to *Bergey's Manual* was published in 1966.

For many years Dean Buchanan has maintained close contact with various committees, commissions, and trusts working on international codes of nomenclature in botany and zoology. His opinions have been sought frequently by these groups.

Recognition of his distinguished record in the entire field of systematic biology was warmly expressed in *A Salutation* read by O. N. Allen at the meeting of the International Committee on Nomenclature of Bacteria on 13 August 1970 during the Tenth International Congress for Microbiology in Mexico City. The statement expresses the feeling of everyone who has ever associated with Professor Buchanan, and it deserves to be repeated here:

“Some of you may not know that Dr. R. E. Buchanan is retiring as Editor of the *International Journal of Systematic Bacteriology*. Dr. Buchanan has been Editor of the Journal since its beginning in January, 1951.

“Over the ensuing years the Journal has improved greatly in style and coverage. The high quality that the Journal exhibits today reflects in large part Dr. Buchanan’s sponsorship, his dedication to taxonomic perfection, his loyalty, and his devotion to bacteriological systematics as a discipline.

“Each of us has profited from Dr. Buchanan’s counsel, his cooperation, his brilliant mind, his knowledge of the classical languages, and his guiding principles in the pursuit of accuracy. These are qualities all too rare in these or in any other times.

“Dr. Buchanan has given unstintingly of his time, his energy, and his talent. He has shown to each of us the precious gifts of courtesy and cooperation.

“May I request that we stand in applause of our profound thanks and sincere appreciation.”

J. Roger Porter