

## OBITUARIES

### **Professor Emmanuel Asuquo OBOT** (April 11, 1952 – June 3, 2012)

Professor Emmanuel Asuquo Obot was born 60 years ago at Uyo in the then Uyo Province of Eastern Nigeria (now Akwa Ibom State). He attended the Lutheran High School, Obot Idim, Akwa Ibom State and the University of Ife, Ile-Ife where he obtained all his three degrees in Botany viz: B.Sc. 1977, M.Sc. Plant Ecology 1980; and Ph.D. Plant Ecology, 1984). Rather fondly, he cherished his tutelage under Prof. W.W. Sanford, the Father of Plant Ecology at the University of Ife and a renowned Orchidologist who supervised his Postgraduate studies. As a student he was very active, easily noticed in the class and quite popular with his mates..

He joined the services of the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1978 as a Graduate Assistant in the newly created Institute of Ecology. He joined the services of the then Kainji Lake Research Institute (later renamed National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research), New Bussa, in 1979. As a Research Officer, he carried out studies on options for the management of wildlife habitats in the Kainji lake national park. It was during this period that he carried out studies that led one of his landmark publications: A model for estimating the optimum tree density for maximum herbaceous production in the



**Prof. Obot at the April 2012 Annual Business Meeting of the Nigerian Field Society, OAU, Ile-Ife**

Guinea savanna of Nigeria (*Journal of Arid Environments* 14, 267-273: 1984). When the mandate of the Kainji lake Research institute was changed to research on freshwater fisheries, he applied himself to investigations on the utilization of *Echinochloa stagnina*, a grass that was then invading the Kainji Lake and making fishing difficult. He developed a computer based model for the management and utilization of the aquatic macrophyte, *Echinochloa stagnina* (that invaded Lake Kainji) as dry season livestock fodder for nomadic livestock that otherwise lose weight and form due to inadequate feed during the usually long dry season associated with the dry areas of Nigeria. Today, the results of this work is of direct benefit to people because the harvesting, drying and sale of *Echinochloa* "hay" based on the models is a full time occupation of a section of the population of villages around Lake Kainji especially in Birnin Yauri. He rose quickly through the ranks to become a Principal Research Officer (1985 - 1987) at National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research (NIFFR) New Bussa.

Emman as he was fondly called by friends and associates left NIFFR in 1987 for the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST), Port Harcourt (Rivers State) as Senior Lecturer and familiarized himself there with wetland, especially mangrove, structure and function. His stay at RSUST was brief as he soon left in 1989 to the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), Kaduna as Senior Lecture and Acting Dean, Faculty of Science. It was at NDA that he was promoted a Professor of Botany in October 1991. He was the Dean, Faculty of Science at NDA up till 1994. His quest for field 'action' and rather fortuitously, for familiarity with all the ecologies of Nigeria, made him join the WWF-UK Cross River National Park Project (Okwango Programme) as Biological Research Specialist. As the Coordinator of the Okwango Programme he worked closely with the local people to develop options for the rational use of the biological resources of the Park. His four-year stint at the Okwango National Park (1994-1998) adequately prepared him for the position of Director, Technical Programmes, Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) from 1998 to 2003. He supervised NCF's field projects as well as coordinating conservation awareness and advocacy. He was Executive Director, NCF from 2003 until his death in the DANA air crash at Iju, near Lagos in the afternoon of Sunday, 3 June 2012.

Endowed with a sound academic training from Great Ife and his very rich and varied working experience, Emmanuel Obot established himself as a world class ecologist and a conservationist par excellence. He was a member of the Forestry Association of Nigeria, Nigerian Environmental Society, IUCN Orchid Survival Group (OSG) and IUCN Working Group on Extractive Industry and Biodiversity (WGEIS). He was also Co-Chairperson (South) IUCN Commission on Environmental Economics and Social Policy (CEESP). He was the President, Ecological Society of Nigeria and Fellow, the

Botanical Society of Nigeria (BOSON). We were reliably informed that his bag had been packed ready for him to travel to Ile-Ife on arrival from Abuja, to participate at the 21st annual conference of the Botanical Society of Nigeria that was scheduled to commence on the day of the DANA crash.

Prof. Emmanuel Obot published very widely and altogether had over 100 publications. He contributed to two film documentaries, conferences and national discourses. His other accomplishments include the following:

- (i) Development of a strategy for the control of the invasive nuisance aquatic weeds on Lake Kainji through their utilization as fodder for cattle and livelihood resource for the rural riparian dwellers of the Kainji Lake basin;
- (ii) Development and testing the governance structure that now allows communities living in close proximity of National Parks to have a voice and contribute to the management of the parks;
- (iii) Promotion of a paradigm shift among Niger Delta wetland communities and Governments from the oil and gas dependence to sustainable management of renewable natural resources towards the realization of the trade value of biodiversity and poverty reduction;
- (iv) Promotion of watershed conservation and the wise use of renewable natural resources through the Participatory Sustainable Management of Renewable Natural Resources in Buru, Taraba State, Nigeria; and
- (v) Development of small-scale processes to add value to local forest products and improve family income earned from the collection and processing of non-timber forest products (NTFP).

One of the befitting honours to Prof. Obot was the naming of a new (species *nova*), butterfly subspecies *Acraca oreas oboti* after him. This honour was in appreciation of his in-depth knowledge of the Nigerian flora and his conservation efforts. Prof. Obot was a true field man and this must have attracted him to the fold of the Nigerian Field Society (NFS). In his element, he was admiring orchids, butterfly, mimicking birds or exchanging pleasantries with the drills. He was elected Editor of the Society's journal, Nigerian Field at the 2011 Annual Business Meeting (ABM) of the society held in Benin-City, Edo State at a critical time in the life of the journal. He was very committed to the Society and the Journal, his short time as Editor notwithstanding. He worked with a characteristic enthusiasm and speed to get the journal out in due time.

Prof. Obot was the first Council member to arrive for the 2012 ABM of the society

held at Ile-Ife in April 2012 and with him in office the society became very confident of a rosy future for the journal. The news of his tragic death in the ill-fated DANA air crash of 3rd June 2012 came to all members as a rude shock. For a long time, we hoped and prayed it was all a dream, at worst a nightmare. However we have course to thank God for his good life of remarkable service to humanity, science and the Nigerian Field. We pray that all the good tributes of his exemplary life shall live very long after him. Our deep sympathy goes out to his wife Ema and their four children. May light perpetual shine upon his soul!

Prof. I.F. Adeniyi  
President, Nigerian Field Society

C/o Zoology Department, OAU, Ile-Ife.

Prof. Augustine O. Isichei  
President, Botanical Society of  
Nigeria

C/o Dept. of Botany, OAU, Ile-Ife

### **Hon. Christopher Agboola Ajao 1932-2011**

Hon. Christopher Agboola Ajao was the son of David Oladele Ajao, Senior Tutor at Iwo Baptist College and Comfort Adeduntan Togun, a nurse at the Baptist Hospital, Ogbomosho. He was educated at the Baptist Day School, Abeokuta (1945-50). After obtaining a Grade One in his Cambridge School Certificate, he continued his education overseas, qualifying as a physiotherapist with specialisation in hydrotherapy. He joined the services of the Oyo State Government where he rose to the post of Chief Physiotherapist, also serving as Hon. Physiotherapist at the 2nd All Africa Games in 1973 and at the Commonwealth Games in 1974. He also held the post of Chief Physiotherapist at King Khalid Hospital, Saudi Arabia, for some years.



Pa Ajao was one of the pioneers of the physiotherapy profession in Nigeria, being a co-founder of the Nigerian Society of Physiotherapy in 1959 and the pioneer secretary of the organisation. He served in various capacities and led as president on various occasions. He pioneered the community physiotherapy service in 1974, taking physiotherapy to the rural areas. In recognition of his services to the profession, he was awarded the singular Silver Jubilee Meritorious Honour in 1985 and received the Honorary Fellowship Award in 2001.

Pa Ajao was a keen scouter, becoming Secretary of the Association in the former Western Region of Nigeria and later State Commissioner and President of the

Association in the former Oyo State. He was deeply concerned for the welfare of children with special needs and was a Life Member of the Board of Management School for Handicapped Children, Ibadan, from 1967 until his death.

Pa Ajao's deep knowledge of Nigerian history and culture with his concern for the environment attracted him to organisations such as the Nigerian Field Society, Legacy and the Nigerian Society for Information, Arts and Culture. His interests made him the best informed Commissioner for Information that Oyo State has ever had!

Though by no means parochial in his outlook, Pa Ajao made invaluable contributions to his home town, Ogbomoso. He was the pioneer Secretary of the Ogbomoso Investment Club, dedicated to the economic development of the town. He also belonged to the Ogbomoso Environmental Heritage and Cultural Association, Ogbomoso Community Foundation and was patron to many other societies.

He is survived by his widow, Ajike, children Olaitan and Dele, and grand children.

—Pat Oyelola  
(based on funeral brochure)

#### **In memoriam: Christopher Agboola Ajao (1932-211), a personal tribute**

Death has deprived the Ibadan Branch of the Nigerian Field Society of one of its staunchest members and our family of a dear friend. Since he attended Baptist Boys' High School in Abeokuta, Mr. Ajao considered himself an honorary Egba and we would have many a long, good-humoured discussion about Egba history and tradition. He was keenly interested in arts and culture and we frequently exchanged related newspaper cuttings and snippets from the Internet. This led to our organizing a symposium on 18 November 2004 on "The preservation and restitution of Nigeria's cultural heritage," in conjunction with the National Museum of Unity, Ibadan, and Legacy. His enthusiasm for the social, intellectual and physical benefits of "Ayo" (Nig. Fld., vol. 70, part 2, pp. 172-173) resulted in an Ayo tournament organized under the auspices of the Society for Information Arts and Culture.

Pa Ajao was a great motivator, operating quietly, modestly, but very effectively—a veritable "Baba s'ale". He attended all Nigerian Field Society Ibadan Branch events and all national business meetings of the Society until incapacitated by health problems. He maintained his wit and good humour right until the end. Pa Ajao was a great humanist, appreciative of everyone who made genuine and honest efforts for the improvement of humankind. He was a man of integrity, without being smug, a man

of wit, without being vicious. Above all, he was a profoundly modest and unassuming person. This was reflected in the instructions he gave for his own burial, which was conducted without advertisement or fanfare in Ogbomoso. He will be missed in the many organizations which he animated with his ideas and supported with his benign presence.

We in "The Nigerian Field Society" will miss his enthusiastic support and encouragement for everything connected with the Nigerian Field Society and its Journal. We extend our sincere sympathy to his wife, Ajike, and his children, Dele and Olaitan, on the loss of a caring husband and father, whose unblemished name will endure as an inspiration to those he has left behind.

Alagba, sun re o!

Nat & Pat Oyelola  
Nigerian Field Society, Ibadan

### **Chris Ajao fondly remembered**

Chris Ajao was one of those rock solid persons you could always count on, and he also had a great sense of humor.

One incident comes to mind which I will always remember. A few years ago, Ibadan Branch hosted a lecture by an American historian on the women's protest in Abeokuta during WWII about unfair taxation. The reaction from the pro-and anti Alake groups in the audience was fantastic and spontaneous. Indeed, at one point Professor Olurin (nee Odutola) got up and sang a song which she remembered singing as a school girl in support of the Alake.

After which Chris Ajao, bristling with humor, stood up and said that he was just a "strapping young lad at the time, but he recalls riding across Abeokuta on his bicycle delivering messages on behalf of the protesters, and that of course 'women of the elite' (meaning Professor Olurin) were always in support of the Alake!" Perhaps it misses something in translation, but it was indeed an excellent rejoinder to pro-Alake forces in the audience. Chris Ajao will be dearly missed.

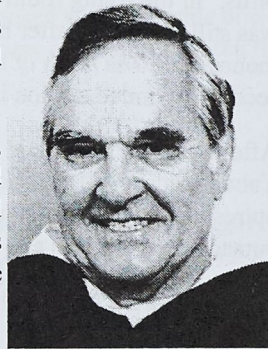
Chris Bankole, Vice Chairperson, Ibadan branch



**Fr. Richard Robert Farmer, O.P. (9 January 1924-18 August 2006)**

Born on January 9, 1924, the son of the late Arthur William and Edith Genevieve Farmer of Omaha, Nebraska, he was the brother of the late William, Margaret Mary Jackson, and Patricia Atwood.

Father Farmer graduated from Creighton Preparatory School, Omaha, and went to Iowa State University where he studied electrical engineering. After his second year, he was drafted into the army to serve in World War II. Because of his training in electrical engineering, he was assigned to the Army Signal Corps.



The army sent him for some training at the University of Arizona. In that capacity, he served in New Guinea and the Philippines. He returned to Iowa State after the war and earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. He worked in New Jersey after graduation.

There, one Sunday, a visiting Dominican priest preached at his parish. Richard was impressed. That, and his reflection in the army on life's meaning, led him to give up a promising career to join the Dominican Order. After a year's novitiate at Winona, Minnesota, he made his first profession on 30 September 1950.

At the Dominican House of Studies, River Forest, Illinois, he obtained a Licentiate degree in Philosophy, and went to the Dominican House of Studies, Oakland, California, for theological studies. After being ordained a priest on 10 June 1955 in St. Mary Cathedral in San Francisco, he was sent to the new Dominican Priory at Dubuque, Iowa, to complete a master's degree in theology. Thereupon, he received an assignment to Nigeria, where he served for 33 years.

Coming by ship, he arrived at Lagos on 16 October 1957. From there he went immediately to Gusau, where he handled the parish and outstations. When I joined him there in 1964, I enjoyed his disquisitions on birds and their migrations, even from Europe. Following the coup d'état and riots in the North in January 1966, he left for Lagos.

In October 1967, he took up the post of lecturer in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at the University of Ife (now OAU), where he taught Philosophy. He also was Catholic Chaplain of the University.

Fr. Farmer was a foundation member of the Ife Branch of the Nigerian Field Society.

He had a particular interest in birds, and set nets in the forest to capture and photograph specimens. I had the privilege of accompanying him once on an outing to photograph birds. In the living room of his house hung a beautiful nest of a weaver bird, which was still there long after he left Ife. He gathered his research in a privately published monograph, *The birds of the University of Ife Campus*, the first edition in 1971, and a second expanded edition in 1973.

After a ending 1 October 1978, he was appointed Pastor & Superior at St. Dominic's, Yaba, Lagos. In December 1989, after fell very sick, he returned to the U.S., and took up residence in at the Dominican Priory in River Forest, Illinois, where he served as bursar for eight years and Catholic chaplain at O'Hare International Airport.

Father Farmer came to the Washington D.C. area in 2002, where he resided at St. Dominic's Priory in the District, and served as chaplain at both Reagan National Airport and Dulles Airport. I last visited him in Washington D.C. in 2008. Shortly after that, he retired to Chicago because of cancer, and died there on 18 August 2006.

Even more than his natural family, his Dominican brothers, and the many whom he taught, served and worked with, both in Nigeria and in the United States, appreciate this outstanding man—who sought no reward here (Mt 6), but whose deeds follow him beyond (Rev 14:13).

—Joseph Kenny, O.P.

#### **Peter Denzil Alexander-Marrack (1946-2011)**

Peter Alexander-Marrack was born in 1946 in Hammersmith, London, and educated at Hendon County Grammar School, and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (1965-1971). He obtained a double first in Natural Sciences, specialising in Geology, and gained a Ph.D. for his geological work in east Greenland. He was a member of the Cambridge Bird Club, and also took part in a university botanical expedition to Turkey.

He joined the Shell Group in 1971, specialising in the geological interpretation of seismic data for oil and gas exploration. After basic training, he worked in the Netherlands, Brunei and Sarawak, Nigeria, Thailand, Gabon and Norway. He was in Lagos, Nigeria, from 1977-1981, where he extended his studies of birds, joined the Nigerian Field Society and was an active member of the Lagos Branch. His friend David Watters remembers many weekends visiting forest reserves and other places of interest. Peter was Secretary of the Society's Resident Committee from 1980-81, and was a member of the NFS for the rest of his life.



In 1994, he married Johanna Draisma, whom he had first met in Borneo. He continued bird watching, and was also interested in butterflies, dragonflies, spiders, robber flies and orchids. In 2000, he took early retirement and he and Jo moved to Heerenveen, Netherlands. They enjoyed many trips looking at plant and animal life, and he also researched his family history. In January 2010, he was diagnosed with incurable bowel cancer. At first he could go out in a wheel chair, but later was only able to watch the garden birds from his bed. He died on 25 December 2011.

We extend our sympathy to his family and friends.

—Joyce Lowe and David Watters

(based on an obituary written by Peter himself for his Cambridge College)

#### Peter Rutherford McKenzie



Peter McKenzie, who has died aged 87 after a long illness, was a lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Ibadan between 1965 and 1970. His experiences and field work while in Nigeria resulted in an increasing and enduring fascination with traditional belief systems and their devotees, as well as their encounters with Christian Missionaries in the 19th century. He founded and edited 'Orita', a journal devoted to academic study of the three 'religions' in Nigeria, namely Christianity, Islam, and traditional religions. In 1970 he moved to England and went on to head the Department of Religions at Leicester University, though he retained a strong interest in African affairs through many links with former Nigerian colleagues and close friends.

Peter continued to pursue his academic research interests even into retirement, and published widely (e.g., *Inter-religious Encounters in West Africa, Leicester Studies in Religion*, Blackfriars 1976; 'Dreams and Visions from Nineteenth Century Yoruba Religion' in M C Jedrej & R Shaw (eds.) *Dreaming, religion and society in Africa*; Leiden 1992; *Hail Orisha! A Phenomenology of a West African Religion in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Brill, 1997. He attended and presented papers at many international conferences and was past chair of the British Association of the Study of Religion.

He spent his last years surrounded by the extensive library of books he had collected throughout his life, learning and applying book-binding skills, and enjoying his growing extended family.

Peter is survived by his wife Renate, Ann Barbara, Eva and Immanuel, and seven grandchildren.

—Immanuel McKenzie