

FORWARD

**George C. Wheeler —
An Appreciation**

James C. Trager

As a child, I spent many summers in northern New Mexico, surrounded by meadows, great expanses of sagebrush desert, and the southern Rocky Mountains. This bucolic setting was short on neighborhood children and long on opportunities to observe wildlife. I was dazzled by the spectacular slaving raids of *Polyergus breviceps* and *Formica puberula* on sunny afternoons, by the great mounds of *Pogonomyrmex occidentalis* with the fleet-footed *Conomyrma* foraging fearlessly among the viciously-stinging mound builders, and by the many other common ants making up northern New Mexico's ant fauna. The enchantment has never worn off. Much later, I learned that the Taos area had been a favorite collecting spot of another myrmecologist, A. C. Cole, but I stray from the point. In the Taos city library were housed several books on insects, including W. M. Wheeler's classic ant book which I gradually read in its entirety. Unaware at the time that W. M. Wheeler was long gone, I hoped that one day I would have the opportunity to make his acquaintance.

In a sense, I have been able to do so through my association with W. M. Wheeler's student, George C. Wheeler. For me, a myrmecologist at heart since childhood, George Wheeler is a living and personal link to the "Classical Period" of North American myrmecology dominated by W. M. Wheeler. In addition to the intrinsic value of his studies of ant larvae and of several regional faunas, Dr. Wheeler (G. C., that is) has been and continues to be a valued colleague and mentor to several generations of American ant-students, who have been blessed by his longevity in a very real way. Dr. Wheeler's familiarity with and insights into the persons and issues of virtually the whole of twentieth century North American myrmecology (save, perhaps for the last ten years, when it seems none of us can keep up with it all) provides us with a unique opportunity to gain a clearer perspective on the history of our field.