

Marius (Mort) G. Peacock passed away June 13, 2011. Mort was born in Missoula, MT in 1932. He served in the U.S. Navy Medical Corps from 1950-1954 and then attended the University of Montana where he received an A.B. in Bacteriology in 1959 and an M.S. in Microbiology and Public Health in 1960. He was employed at the Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah from 1960-1962. Mort returned to Montana where he was employed at the Rocky Mountain Laboratories for over 45 years. He worked with a number of investigators during his time at the RML. He spent several years working with Dr. Richard A. Ormsbee studying an unusual group of bacteria, then collectively known as rickettsia, that could not be cultivated on normal bacteriological media. Diseases he studied included primarily Q fever and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. Mort subsequently worked with Dr. J.C. Williams where he continued to work with these same organisms. He worked briefly with Dr. Jack Munoz on *Bordetella pertussis* before his retirement in 1990. Mort returned to the RML later in 1990 with Dr. Ted Hackstadt to resume the studies on Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Q fever that had been of his interest for so much of his career. He retired again in 2008.

Mort successfully isolated and cultivated many species of rickettsiae in a wide variety of tissue culture cell lines and embryonated hen eggs. Mort was instrumental in the development and application of many of the tissue culture and other specialized techniques required for the study of these difficult organisms including plaque assays, direct enumeration of rickettsiae in tissues and samples, foci assays, antibody and antibiotic plaque reduction assays.

He isolated many of the strains of *Coxiella* and *Rickettsia* still used today from natural sources including infected tissues and established pure stocks. Purified rickettsiae grown from these tissues have been extensively used in serological diagnostic tests, assays, immunoblots, electron microscopy, immunofluorescent, biochemical and related procedures. Mort was acknowledged around the world as an expert in rickettsial disease research. He published over 60 scientific articles during his career. His contributions to the study of rickettsia and rickettsial diseases was recognized by his election to a lifelong honorary membership in the American Society for Rickettsial Diseases. He was further honored by having a species of rickettsia he isolated named for him, *Rickettsia peacockii*.

Mort supported several scientists during his career at the RML and was instrumental in the training of many post-doctoral fellows and other technicians. Mort was a gentle and modest man that was always willing to help out or share his expertise. His knowledge and the depth of his expertise were immense. Mort was a wonderful source of both detailed technical expertise and the history of rickettsial diseases. When not in the laboratory, he could often be found hiking the Bitterroot Mountains of western Montana. He will be greatly missed.