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The story of Richard Archbold's expeditions, part 4

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The white-toothed mouse (*Brassomys albidens*), is named after Dr. Leonard Brass and found only in Papua, New Guinea: COURTESY/ZOOSFERA EM PERIGO

VENUS — Three earlier articles (July 8, 2020, Aug. 19, 2020 and March 10, 2021) were

published in the Highlands News-Sun and this is Part 4 of that series.

After personally leading three expeditions to the island of New Guinea, Richard Archbold was forced to rethink his plans for future Pacific exploration. By the time he and crew returned to America in 1939, the world was on the brink of war. Imperial Japan had already invaded Manchuria in 1935 and because of the instability in the region he put his plans to explore on hold. In fact, he would never again go to New Guinea nor anywhere else in the Pacific. By the end of World War II, he was a 38-year-old who had lived in Highlands County for four years. A combination of factors led to Archbold's decision to lead scientific expeditions no longer himself. However, before his death in 1976 he would sponsor six more expeditions to the South Pacific.

From 1948 through 1976 Archbold funded an expedition to the Cape York Peninsula in Australia, four more expeditions to New Guinea, and one to Sulawesi in Indonesia. He remained fascinated by the flora and fauna of the Southeast Pacific throughout his life and was a generous benefactor towards continued research in these locales. He mainly studied mammals while on expedition and ensured that these animals were researched in his absence. However, a variety of species of insects, birds, plants, reptiles and amphibians were collected during every expedition.

When Archbold had to choose an expedition leader to replace himself he decided on botanist Dr. Leonard Brass. Brass accompanied Archbold on the first three New Guinea Expeditions, and he was tasked to lead the Australian and three subsequent New Guinea Expeditions. According to Archbold Librarian Emeritus Fred Lohrer, "Brass led the Australian Expedition, the Fourth New Guinea Expedition which included Eastern Papua on Cape Vogel Peninsula and Goodenough Island, The Fifth New Guinea Expedition to the Eastern Papuan Islands, and The Sixth New Guinea Expedition to Papua New Guinea; Eastern Highlands, including Mt. Wilhelm."

Brass spent many years during the period of 1948-1959 in Australia and New Guinea leading these expeditions. While in America however he lived and worked at the Archbold Biological Station in Venus, Florida. All told he led or participated in six expeditions to New Guinea and one to Australia, during his lifetime.

The Seventh and final New Guinea Expedition took place in 1964 and a new leader was chosen: Dr. Hobart Van Dussen, who was a mammalogist by trade. Archbold and crew first explored New Guinea in 1933, and finally, 31 years later, the last scientist in his employ departed the island.

The Sulawesi Expedition was led by Dr. Guy Musser, who was also a mammalogist. This

expedition would be the last scientific exploration sponsored by Richard Archbold before his death.

Lohrer said of Musser and the expedition, “The Sulawesi Expedition was 1973-1976...Musser continued to publish on Sulawesi specimens well into his retirement. His Sulawesi publications were certainly a great contribution to the taxonomy and systematics of Asian Mammalogy.”

In the final installment of our series, we will dig deeper into the scientific legacy of the Archbold Expeditions, and how the specimens collected contributed to a variety of scientific disciplines.