

Robert M. Melampy: First President of the SSR (1909–1984)



Robert M. Melampy

The formalized study for the scientific discipline of reproductive biology was developed in Great Britain around the early 1900s. F.H.A. Marshall and Sir John Hammond, and their colleagues and students at Cambridge University, had a huge impact on elucidating reproductive phenomena, with a primary focus on livestock species. In the United States, studies on reproductive biology were reported in scientific meetings and journals of various scientific societies (primarily the *American Physiological Society*, *Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine*, *American Association of Anatomists*, *American Society of Animal Production* [later *Science*], *Endocrine Society* and in *Experiment Station Bulletins* of universities). In England, The Society for the Study of Fertility initiated *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* in 1960.

Robert Melampy was instrumental in creating a symposium on reproduction in Farm Animals, convened at Iowa State College (Melampy, R.M., D.T. Mayer, and J. reproduction and infertility. In 1953, he organized the Conference on Female Reprod. Meites. 1953. In: Proc. 1st Symp. on Reproduction and Infertility. Iowa State College, Ames, July 7-10, 1953. Iowa State Col. J. Sci. 28:1-138). The second, third and fourth symposia on reproduction and infertility followed at Michigan State University, East Lansing, in 1955; Colorado State University, Fort Collins, in 1957; and University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in 1959. This conference then emerged as the Biennial Symposium on Animal Reproduction held in conjunction with annual meetings of the American Society of Animal Science.

Robert Melampy's research in reproductive biology focused on spermatogenesis, testicular and reproductive duct development, the role of the uterus in corpus luteum function, the physiology of relaxin, and the improved reproductive efficiency of livestock. This research was summarized in invited lectures at the Symposium on Neuroendocrinology, Miami, Florida, December 1961; the USDA Conference on Estrous Cycle Control in Domestic Animals, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, July 1964; the VIII Biennial Symposium on Animal Reproduction, University of Illinois, Urbana, June 1967; and the Laurentian Hormone Conference, Mount Tremblant, Quebec, Canada, August 1968. He was recipient of the Animal Physiology and Endocrinology Award of ASAS and Honorary Fellow of ASAS and was elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

At the VIII Biennial Symposium on Animal Reproduction of the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Animal Science convened at the University of Illinois, Urbana, 22–25 June 1967, one evening was devoted to discussion, proposing and successfully creating, the Society for the Study of Reproduction. A slate of officers was proposed and voted on by the members present. In gratitude for his extensive scientific contributions to reproductive biology, Professor Melampy was asked and accepted the nomination for election to President of this new scientific society. This was a major undertaking that included formation of a new journal *Biology of Reproduction* [1969], a prestigious journal currently in its 77th volume, and initiating the first meeting of the new society that was convened at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, in 1968 with the onsite leadership of Professor Larry Ewing. The new scientific society had strong support of the founding members by participation in scientific meetings and publication in *Biology of Reproduction*. Forty years later, SSR is a vibrant scientific society with a young heart in its enthusiasm to enjoy the exchange of new information and camaraderie. In 1987, the XVIII Biennial Symposium on Animal Reproduction, at Utah State University, was dedicated to Robert Melampy in recognition of his many contributions.

Robert Melampy was born on April 1, 1909, on a small family farm in Lebanon, Ohio, on the outskirts of Cincinnati. During his early school years, Robert had a keen interest in animals and how they functioned. Upon graduation from Mason High School, he enrolled in Wilmington College, Wilmington, Ohio, and graduated (1930) three years later with a B.S. degree in chemistry. He received an M.A. degree in chemistry (1931) from Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania, and a Ph.D. from Cornell University with a major in biochemistry and minors in physiology and animal nutrition (1935).

Melampy was a scientist (nutrition) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Beltsville, Maryland (1935–1936), where he researched the nutrition and physiology of the honeybee and cockroach. Reassigned by USDA to their Bee Culture Laboratory on the campus of Louisiana State University (LSU), Baton Rouge, he also taught courses in physiology on the LSU campus. He joined the faculty of LSU as assistant professor of zoology (1936–1942). Melampy became a nationally recognized authority on the physiology and metabolism of the honeybee and the chemistry of royal jelly. This research resulted in the publication of 22 articles in prestigious journals. On 18 December 1937, Robert married Dr. Carolyn Tiebout, Director of Testing and Guidance, Department of Psychology. Their daughter, Kathleen, was born in 1940.

With the outbreak of World War II, Melampy requested a leave of absence from LSU to join the U.S. Army as nutritionist, in the Sanitary Corps, and served from 19 November 1942 to 5 May 1946, holding the rank of 1st lieutenant, captain, and major. His relentless work ethic and attention to detail were rewarded by the Award of the Legion of Merit and by a letter of commendation. He served at Walter Reed Army Hospital, Washington, D.C.; Camp Shelby, Mississippi; Camp Gordon Johnston, Florida; Thayer General Hospital, Nashville, Tennessee; Camp Ellis, Fulton County, Illinois; 312th General Laboratory, APO 75; and 120th General Hospital, APO 1011; and was awarded the Luzon Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal with one Bronze Star and the Victory Medal of World War II.

Melampy returned briefly to LSU as associate professor of zoology in 1946. At the urging of the eminent embryologist Carl G. Hartman at the University of Illinois, Urbana, he joined the teaching and research faculty of the Department of Physiology. In 1949, Melampy moved to Iowa State College as associate professor in physiology in the Zoology Department. Soon thereafter, Dean Floyd Andre of the College of Agriculture asked him to lead a newly created Physiology of Reproduction Section in the Animal Husbandry Department, a position he held until 1974.

Melampy set rigorous standards. He established a biochemistry laboratory and small animal facility (rats, guinea pigs, mice) in Curtiss Hall. He also used dairy and beef cattle and pigs at the experiment station farms in his early studies. In 1964, a 40-acre farm near campus was purchased for an animal reproduction laboratory. Melampy's basic and applied studies in the reproductive biology of laboratory animal models and livestock species received generous extramural funding from NIH, USDA, and the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station. His expertise in reproductive biology was recognized by membership on study sections of NIH and review panels of USDA. He taught a popular undergraduate course in animal reproduction for 27 years and was a careful mentor of more than 21 graduate students, with daily involvement in their research progress. On a light note, Melampy was a familiar sight walking across the campus with a cigar that could end up on your laboratory bench, only to be discovered and reignited the next day.

A special symposium was convened in the Iowa State Memorial Union, 23 October 1979, to honor Melampy's outstanding contributions to the Department of Animal Science, College of Agriculture, and the University. He became emeritus professor in 1979. After prolonged illness, he died on 27 May 1984.



Bob's been here.

L.L. Anderson
Iowa State University

B.N. Day
University of Missouri–Columbia

S.P. Ford
University of Wyoming