



Richard Moreland Taylor
(1887 – 1981)

Born in Owensboro, Kentucky, Richard Moreland Taylor, MD, PhD, received a medical degree from the University of Michigan and a doctorate degree in public health from Johns Hopkins University.

From 1923 to 1945, he served in Europe and South America for the International Health Division of the Rockefeller Foundation. His first assignment was Montpellier, France, where an epidemic of undulant fever (brucellosis) was creating havoc. In 1936 he was sent to Hungary to establish what would become, in his words, "the first influenza listening post". It triggered the groundwork for influenza virology in RF-initiated institutes of hygiene and epidemiology in Eastern Europe. The next stop was Brazil, where one of his major contributions was to illuminate the mechanisms of jungle yellow fever transmission.

After World War II had ended Taylor was back in the New York laboratories of the RF. At this time little was known about "arthropod-transmitted pathogens" and so he set up a global research program on arthropod-borne viruses (arboviruses). At age 65 he went to Cairo, Egypt, to establish a scientific program at the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit (NAMRU-3). Rigorous epidemiologic studies led to the isolation of mosquito- and tick-borne viruses, and elucidation of their cycles of transmission.

The 5-year studies of the ecology of West Nile virus which emerged from this second career eventually led to the creation of the American Committee for Arthropod-borne Viruses (ACAV), which first met in 1959 at the Gould House. More arboviruses were characterized, more became associated with disease, and it was obvious to Taylor that both the establishment of a catalogue and a system of scientific information exchange were needed. Arbovirologists from all over the world were invited to contribute their most recent pre-publication information for a newsletter, and the first issue of the "Arthropod-borne Virus Information Exchange" was printed in 1960. The first facsimile edition of the working catalogue (204 entries) was published in 1966. By now Taylor had finally decided to retire, but William C. Reeves, then a professor of Epidemiology at the University of California, School of Public Health at Berkeley, secured for him a teaching appointment to insure the continuation of his work with the ever-growing catalogue.

In his honor, and to him as first recipient, the American Committee on Arthropod-borne Viruses established the Richard Moreland Taylor Award.