

# Isabel Cooper's Arcturus Expedition colleagues



Naturalist William Beebe assembled a rich mix of talents and personalities for the *Arcturus* Expedition. His staff showed a focus on the practicalities of a scientific expedition, with skills and scientific knowledge in place to explore and gather for a range of interests from microscopic plankton to deep ocean animals to sea birds. But in the mix too were a few distinctly interesting people who may have been along in part because he knew them as gregarious, fun, and adventurous.

The expedition staff numbered about eighteen. There were scientists, artists, a cinematographer, a historian, and several men brought along because they could build, fix and catch things. Some of the scientists were guest professors from universities, and others were from the New York Zoological Society staff.

Two staff were avid pirate enthusiasts. More on them [[here](#)]. Another became the president of the University of Miami. Two others later helped make make *King Kong*.

Here is the rundown, in places with an insight on their colleagues from William Beebe, expedition artist Isabel Cooper, or 12-year-old David Putnam.



**John and Helen Tee Van**

Beebe's close assistant was John Tee Van of the New York Zoological Society. John had started working at the New York Zoological Society at age 14. He later became its general director.

Helen Tee Van, married to John, was one of the scientific artists. She was the daughter of Walter Damrosch, conductor of the New York Symphony. She and John were long friends of Isabel Cooper's after her scientific work ended. Isabel wrote in 1928, that Helen was one of her dearest friends.<sup>i</sup> The Tee Vans had also been part of the earlier Department of Tropical Research expeditions with Cooper.

### **William Merriam**

William Merriam is variously described on Beebe's expeditions as "Chief Hunter" and "Field Technician." In *Galapagos: World's End*, about the earlier expedition to the Galapagos, Beebe calls him "Our hunter in chief...the most enthusiastic and ingenious worker who ever outwitted fish, flesh or fowl..."<sup>ii</sup>

David Putnam, the teenager who traveled on part of the journey, wrote that "In the forward part of the ship there are two rooms fitted out as shops, one belonging to Bill Merriam, the general handy man, who always mends the nets, shapes a new dredge, puts another seat in one of the rowboats, makes a lobster pot, or fixes the motor boats."<sup>iii</sup>



**Dwight Franklin**

Dwight Franklin, a trained artist, is noted as “Assistant in Fish Preparation,” modeling plaster casts of some of the specimens, and painting them in their natural colors. Dwight Franklin was a sculptor and model maker. David Putnam summed up Franklin’s *Arcturus* work: “Dwight makes wax moulds and plaster casts of fishes and preserves them, as well as making drawings and paintings.<sup>vi</sup>” [Image: Dwight Franklin<sup>v</sup>]

### **Elizabeth Trotter**

Elizabeth Trotter, “Assistant in Fish Problems,” was also an expedition artist. She was from a wealthy Philadelphia family and Beebe acknowledged William Trotter, her father, as an expedition benefactor. Isabel wrote Charles about Elizabeth from Newport News before she got on the ship, “I have been very bright and have arranged to room with the nicest girl in the outfit, the Philadelphia ‘horse-woman,’ as the papers say, who has a nice look-neat, intelligent, and all that sort of thing.<sup>iv</sup>”



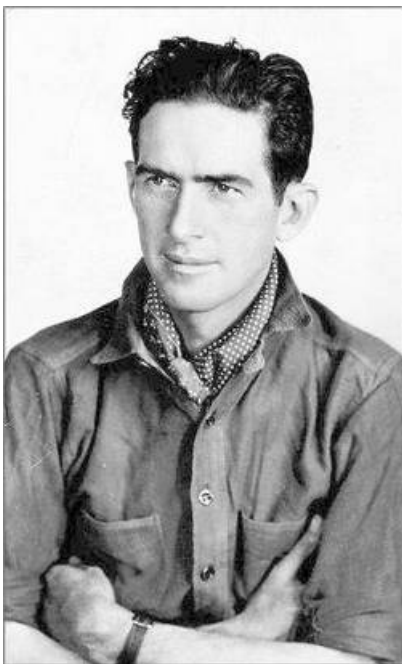
**Don Dickerman**

Don Dickerman was an artist, entrepreneur and a noted personality in the Greenwich Village community of the late 1910s and 1920s. Dickerman continued a long career after the journey as an entrepreneur, with pirate themed clubs in multiple U.S. cities.



**Ruth Rose**

Ruth Rose was a former stage actress. She served multiple roles for William Beebe, but chiefly was an recorder, historian and wrote about the journey for Beebe, authoring several chapters in his books. [Image: Ruth Rose with Otis Skinner in *Pietro*, Criterion Theater, 1920]



**Ernest Schoedsack**

Ernest Schoedsack upgraded the Department of Tropical Research's film capability to a full documentarian's level, serving as cinematographer. The year after the journey, Ruth Rose and Schoedsack married, and she joined him in filmmaking, working as a screenwriter. He was an established documentarian, but went on to make *King Kong*\_(1933), *Mighty Joe Young*\_(1949), and other films. [Image: Ernest Schoedsack<sup>vii</sup>]



**Jay F. W. Pearson**

Jay F. W. Pearson was a 23-year-old ichthyologist who later was the second president of the University of Miami (1952-62). His expedition title was "Assistant in Microplankton".

### **William K. Gregory**

Dr. William K. Gregory was noted as "Associate in Vertebrates". He was with the American Museum of Natural History in New York, and also taught at Columbia.



**Gregory Bateson**

Gregory Bateson was British, a 20-year-old, freshly degreed in biology from Cambridge, who later was noted for his work in Anthropology, and studied by most undergraduate anthropology majors. [Image: Gregory Bateson<sup>viii</sup>]

### **Serge Chetyrkin**

Serge Chetyrkin was an immigrant from Russia, who joined as the taxidermist and "preparateur". Isabel wrote: "The old Russian...Eats no meat, eggs, milk or butter. Used to act like that last year in South America, but we thought it was just his little way of avoiding monkey stew." The real reason, she noted, was that the expedition's perishables were in an increasingly unreliable chiller.



### **Lillian Segal**

Dr. Lillian Segal was a biological chemist. She was on the trip “for the specific purpose of studying the methods by which the light [of deep sea fish] was produced...”<sup>x</sup>. Her expedition job title was “Assistant in Special Problems.” [Image: Dr. Lillian Segal (L) with Mrs. C. J. Fish, inspect the fruits of a dredging<sup>i</sup><sup>x</sup>]

### **Marie Poland Fish**

On the staff list for the Arcturus expedition, Marie Poland Fish is listed as “Assistant in Larval Fish,” though her husband C. J. Fish was on the ship, she was a marine scientist in her own right.

### **C. J. Fish**

Dr. Fish was “Associate in Diatoms and Crustacea,” on loan from the United States Bureau of Fisheries.

### **D. W. Cady**

Cady was the expedition’s doctor, but participated also in the exploring and collecting. Isabel Cooper wrote that he let her help with some of the ministering to cuts and scrapes the staff got during their work.



**Dorothy Putnam**

Dorothy B. Putnam, the wife of Beebe's publicist George Palmer Putnam, and her 12-year-old son David, joined the expedition in Panama for its exploration of the Galapagos Islands, Cocos, and the Humboldt Current in the Pacific. They were noted as among a small number of "Guests of Honor" who joined for part of the journey. [Image: Dorothy Putnam]



### **David B. Putnam**

David Putnam, was the son of Dorothy and George Palmer Putnam. His publisher father sent him on the journey in part so he could publish a children's account by David, which was published soon after the trip as *David Goes Voyaging*.

[Image: David B. Putnam from *David Goes Voyaging*]

<sup>i</sup> Letter IC to CDM, February 18, 1928.

<sup>ii</sup> William Beebe, *Galapagos: World's End*, 1924.

<sup>iii</sup> David Binney Putnam, *David Goes Voyaging*, New York, G. P. Putman and Sons, 1925, p. 7.

<sup>iv</sup> Letter, IC to CDM, February 13, 1925.

<sup>v</sup> Image from askart.com

<sup>vi</sup> David Binney Putnam, *David Goes Voyaging*, New York, G. P. Putman and Sons, 1925, p. 7.

<sup>vii</sup> Image: Findagrave.com

<sup>viii</sup> Image: [http://www.genmedhist.info/reports/bateson\\_album/3200.jpg/view](http://www.genmedhist.info/reports/bateson_album/3200.jpg/view)

<sup>ix</sup> Wild Things, Blog of the World Conservation Society, [www.wcsarchivesblog.org](http://www.wcsarchivesblog.org)

<sup>x</sup> *The Literary Digest*, Vol. 86, 1925