

# Congratulations to the winners of the new HBES Awards!



## **HBES DISTINGUISHED SCIENTIFIC AWARD FOR LIFETIME CONTRIBUTION TO HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND EVOLUTION**

### **Richard D. Alexander**

Richard D. Alexander is the recipient of HBES's inaugural Lifetime Career Contribution Award. Dr. Alexander grew up as a farm boy in central Illinois during the great depression. He worked the land with horses, which he still does today. He started his formal education in a one-room schoolhouse, received his Ph.D from the Ohio State University in 1956, and took a job at the University of Michigan, where he stayed throughout his career and currently is emeritus professor and curator of insects in the Museum of Zoology. Dr. Alexander gained recognition as a world expert on singing insects and speciation, winning the AAAS Newcomb Cleveland Prize, the NAS Alfred Giroud Elliot medal, and membership in the National Academy of Sciences.

Dick Alexander has always had a deep interest in understanding human behavior. In a couple of early papers (1968, 1971), he proposed that competition among coalitions was especially important in human evolution. He developed an interest in cultural diversity, and suggested new ways to approach classic issues in anthropology such as matrilineal and patrilineal kinship, cousin marriage systems, infanticide, incest taboos, and grandparenting (e.g., 1974, 1975, 1979). He also emphasized the importance of understanding unusual physical traits of humans, including menopause, lack of estrus swellings, large brains, hairlessness, altricial infants, and a long childhood. Later, he addressed the problem of human cooperation and reciprocity, including ethics, morality, and legal systems (e.g., 1977, 1987, 2005, 2006). Alexander published a comprehensive model of human evolution that incorporated all of these diverse attributes of humans in his 1989 and 1990 papers "Evolution of the human psyche" and "How humans evolved."

In addition to his classic books "Darwinism & human affairs" (1979) and "The biology of moral systems" (1987), and co-edited volumes "Natural selection and social behavior: recent research and new theory" (1981) and "The biology of the Naked Mole Rat" (1991), Alexander has written several collections of children's stories, poetry, and a book on horse training.

Professor Alexander influenced a generation of students at the University of Michigan with his immensely popular courses on Evolution and Human Behavior. He helped develop one of the finest cohorts of graduate students in evolutionary biology – Mary Jane West-Eberhard, Gerry Borgia, Bernie Crespi, Steve Frank, John Hoagland, Paul Sherman, Beverly Strassmann, Randy Thornhill, and many others.

Dick Alexander steadfastly championed the ideas of his fellow evolutionary biologists George Williams, Bill Hamilton, and Bob Trivers through thick and thin. He worked to bring together scholars from the biological and social sciences when it was not always popular to do so. He was a catalyst for the interdisciplinary meetings that eventually developed into our Human Behavior and Evolution Society, and served as president from 1995-1996.