

OUTLIVE MAN—Tortoises consistently top the century mark but no one has been able to prove the fantastic claim that they live to be 300 and more years old.

sire or an old retired sergeant as the same animal.

That sort of thing is known to have happened among human beings, where, for example, a John Smith is in a parish record as having been born in 1800, and a very old John Smith is equally well recorded as having died in the same place in 1940. But that does not prove that John Smith was 140 years old when he died. The John Smith who died in 1940 was perhaps the son or even the grandnephew of the John Smith who was born in 1800. If one death went unrecorded and one birth was similarly neglected, such a confusion could easily arise.

One quite understandable human trait helps to account for the easy acceptance of such fantastic claims, whether for old men or old animals. We all like to claim association with the biggest, the strongest, the oldest, even the loudest and funniest; there is some kind of nourishment for our self-esteem in this reflected glory, no matter how thin. So there is a temptation, usually unresisted because unrealized, to take your neighbor's word for it if he says his parrot was handed down in the family from his seafaring great-grandfather and is undoubtedly 200 years old.

There is a definite cash value, of course, in the claims to antiquity advanced by circuses on behalf of their

animals, especially elephants. Every circus elephant becomes a centenarian as soon as she has her full growth, and remains that way until she dies of old age at 60. This reversal of the glamorization process employed on female entertainers of our own species is one of the conventions of circus life; it is frankly fictional and nobody is expected to believe it. Ironically, too, although the people of the big top always refer to elephants as "bulls," all circus elephants are females—for the quite practical reason that they are much more docile and manageable. They don't even object to having their ages falsified upwards.

Science News Letter, January 24, 1948

ZOOLOGY

Protozoa Researchers Form New Scientific Society

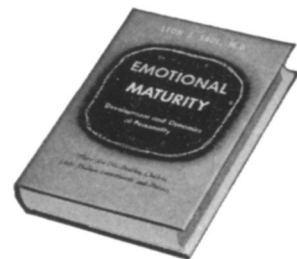
➤ **RESEARCHERS** on the smallest and simplest of animals, the myriad microscopic life-forms known as protozoa, have founded a new scientific organization, the American Society of Protozoologists.

First president of the new group is Dr. Ross F. Nigrelli of the New York Aquarium. Prof. Theodore L. Jahn of the State University of Iowa is secretary-treasurer.

Science News Letter, January 24, 1948



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