

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Plans for the herbarium's new home are making good progress. The architects have nearly finished the design of the Sciences Laboratory Building that will house the new facility, and the plans were approved by the UC Board of Regents at its July meeting.

Nearly \$400,000 of the herbarium's now \$2.6 million goal has been raised to date from a dozen contributors. Donors to the effort include local businessman John Brinley, whose gift of securities valued at more than \$10,000 was received in December. Mr. Brinley is a long-time supporter of the herbarium and the conservatory.

Faculty and staff members have also been stepping forward with donations ranging from \$10 to \$100,000. The Society particularly wishes to acknowledge the support it has received from Dr. Arnold Bloom, chair of the Department of

Vegetable Crops & Weed Science Program in the College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, and Dr. Debbie Delmer, chair of the Section of Plant Biology in the Division of Biological Sciences.

If members would like to contribute to the fundraising campaigns for either the herbarium or the conservatory, please call Jackie Schad at 530-754-9253.

J. Schad

LASTHENIA

LASTHENIA, the Newsletter of the Davis Botanical Society, is published by the Society in collaboration with the staff of the UC Davis Herbarium and Botanical Conservatory.

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LASTHENIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAVIS BOTANICAL SOCIETY

IN MEMORIAM, JUNE McCASKILL, 1930-2001



June McCaskill in the then-new Herbarium, ca. 1960.

Many of us were saddened recently by the death of June McCaskill, following a sudden heart attack on May 9, 2001. Her career at the University of California, Davis, spanned more than 32 years. First joining the Botany Department in 1953, she retired in 1991 as Curator Emerita of the UC Davis Herbaria. June had suffered from Alzheimer's disease for about a year, and had moved to southern California to be close to her sister and brother.

June was born in Altadena, California, June 2, 1930, and grew up in Pasadena, where her parents had established a small nursery. Her father was adept at hybridizing camellias and developed a number of new cultivars. He named two of the most attractive for his wife and for June: *Camellia japonica* Billie McCaskill and *C. japonica* June McCaskill, respectively. Over the years the business thrived, and in time "McCaskill Gardens" became the largest camellia nursery in southern California. After attending public school in Pasadena, June spent one year at Pasadena City College, where she took a botany course. She opted to continue at Mills College in Oakland, where she

took courses from and worked closely with the widely known plant taxonomist, Prof. Howard McMinn. June graduated in 1951 with a degree in Botany.

After graduation she had a summer job at CalTech in 1951, working with several renowned experimental plant physiologists. She then returned to Mills to work for two more years, helping McMinn in the small teaching herbarium and the greenhouses, and serving as an assistant to Dr. Lucile Mason in the courses she taught.

I first met June early in 1953 at the California Botanical Society's annual dinner in Berkeley. She had come with McMinn, who knew I was looking for a herbarium assistant. Both he and Lucile Mason had recommended June highly, and I was very favorably impressed after this one meeting. So in due course June was hired in the summer of 1953.

In preparation for the move to Davis, she spent several days at the UC Herbarium in Berkeley observing the whole operation of a major herbarium. She also learned the fine points of mounting specimens, working alongside the experts. This brief stint, coupled with the two years experience with

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DESIGNING THE NEW BOTANY HERBARIUM

*ca. 1960, A Conversation with
John M. Tucker*

Those of you who have been reading UC Davis publications in the past few months know that John Tucker, Director for nearly 40 years of the Botany Department Herbarium (now the J. M. Tucker Herbarium), generously donated \$250,000 to the herbarium building campaign. I am in the process of designing the new space for the Herbarium, which will be housed in the Laboratory Sciences Building, and it has been challenging at times. Our current space in Robbins Hall dates from 1960, and it was designed by none other than John Tucker and June McCaskill. What challenges did John and June face in designing a new herbarium?

John says that he and June completed the design for the Robbins Hall space in record time, although they had been dreaming and planning for several years. They based their plans on the design of the UC Berkeley Herbarium, and there are some distinct similarities. Those of you who remember the Berkeley Herbarium in the old Life

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Conservatory

Conservatory tours have dominated the schedule this Winter and Spring with 2,000 non-university visitors, from kindergarten to senior citizens and over 700 University students on small, interactive, group tours. Ruth Williams, an intern who is facilitator for the Students for Environmental Education at Davis, coordinated the tours. The excited student discussions as they leave the conservatory and report of continued understanding and appreciation make the effort worthwhile. Off-site, Intern April Levens, Ernesto, and Tim

gave botanical presentations and/or terrarium building workshops to hundreds of students at Del Paso, and Fairbanks Elementary Scholars Academies and the Caesar Chavez Elementary School Science Faire.

Many Conservatory plants also trekked across campus during winter and spring quarters to classes such as Introductory Plant Biology, Morphology and Evolution, Angiosperm Systematics, California Floristics, and even a new course on herbs.

The Wednesday night volunteers, a group which varies from seven to seventeen individuals, junior high

students to retired engineers, is busy propagating choice specimens for the October 6 Arboretum Plant Faire. The carnivorous plants and succulents being produced are particularly diverse and alluring.

Due to the threat of power outage and the resulting lethally high temperatures inside the greenhouses, Doug researched and installed a device which will phone the Conservatory staff as soon as the electricity is off so we can respond immediately. Even after backup generation is installed, we will need to check the greenhouses to assure the essential equipment is operating.

The DBS Open House February 10 was well attended with a steady flow of animated people throughout the afternoon. Picnic Day crowds were exceptional. Seeing people turn away because of the congestion in spite of our opening the south doors for easy traffic movement is a further motivation to design a larger facility with multiple loop paths.

SOCIETY PROFILES

Jackie Schad



Jackie Schad

INTRODUCING JACKIE SCHAD, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, DIVISION OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

We would not have blueprints for a new herbarium space in the Laboratory Sciences Building without the hard work of several people who took leadership roles early in the project planning stage. First, Tom Rost, Associate Dean of the Division of Biological Sciences included the herbarium in the project in the first place. Second, Arnold Bloom, Chair

of the Department of Vegetable Crops and Weed Science, with faculty support, arranged for a key donation to our campaign last spring, allowing us to stay in the project. Third, Elizabeth Bishay (whom we profiled in our last issue of *Lasthenia*) was the first development director to give the project essential support. And fourth, Jackie Schad, current Director of Development of the Division of Biological Sciences has picked up the challenge of raising funds for the project. Without the guidance of these four people, we would not have had the chance to build a new herbarium.

The main contact for those currently interested in the project, and the person who manages our fundraising campaign, is Jackie Schad, who has been Director of Development for the Division for the past two years. Many of you have met Jackie, as she holds an ex-officio position on the botanical society board and has attended most of our events over the past two years, including driving vans on some of our field trips. She is a delightful person with a keen sense of humor. She is assisted in her work by Diane Forrest and Armida Wahl, also of the Division of Biological Sciences.

Born in South Dakota, and with a degree in English Literature, Jackie came to her position at Davis from UC Berkeley, where she worked as a Regional Development Director. As part of a 1.4 billion-dollar capital campaign, she raised nearly ten million dollars over a three-year period. Before that position, she worked for five years with the San Francisco Tides Foundation, where she matched worthy projects with interested donors. And before that, she worked in Chicago for eleven years, for the Crossroads Fund, raising money from donors for grassroots organizations. We are truly fortunate to have such an experienced person directing our campaign. We welcome Jackie, Diane, and Armida to the Botanical Society. If you are interested in becoming involved in the campaign please contact Jackie Schad at 530-754-9253.

E. Dean

Herbarium

We wound up a very busy academic year with record numbers of students working in the herbarium. Beecher Crampton's father's collections were finally mounted after nearly a century; Harold Olmo's valuable *Vitis* collections collected in California, the New World tropics, and the Middle East were labeled after half a century; and interesting new weeds collected by Joe DiTomaso were labeled and mounted after just a few months.

We were very lucky to have so much help in the herbarium this spring, with eight student mounters, one Graduate Student Assistant (Katie Borland), and four volunteers (Eva Bayon, Kook-Hyun Chung, Layne Huiet, and Kate Mawdsley). Eva took it upon herself to refile our *Ericameria* according to the synonymy of the Jepson Manual; Layne curated the ferns; Kate helped in a thousand ways (filing, labeling the *Vitis*, and so much more); and Kook-Hyun has been helping Jean Shepard with insect control and filing. We thank all of our students and volunteers for their hard work.

The Herbarium received good news this spring, when the University increased Jean Shepard's position to 75% time. With her increased time, she will be taking on some of the tasks required by our outreach events as well as handling our increasing load of speci-

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In Memoriam, Jack Major, 1917-2001

Jack Major, Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Davis, died February 13, 2001 at the age of 83. He had a profound impact on the direction of plant ecology in the United States during the second half of the 20th century.

Jack's academic home for most of his career was the Department of Botany, where he taught from 1955 until retirement in 1981. His spiritual home, however, was in the mountains: Uinta Mountains of Utah, Sierra Nevada of California, Grand Tetons of Wyoming, Brooks Range and Juneau Ice Field of Alaska, and the Himalayas of Nepal. This was the environment that he most often shared with graduate students and those undergraduates fortunate enough to take his plant ecology classes.

Jack was born March 15, 1917 in Salt Lake City, UT. He received a BS in Range Management in 1942 from Utah State Agricultural College (now Utah State University). For the next several years he served in the Army's 10th Mountain Division, the justifiably famous unit of 1000 skiers and alpinists who trained in the mountain west before participating in the Italian campaign of World War II. Afterwards, a number of men from the 10th went on to become conservationists, ecologists, and leaders in the promo-

tion of recreational skiing. Between 1946 and 1953, Jack attended the University of California, Berkeley, obtaining a Ph.D. in Soil Science under the direction of Professor Hans Jenny. During this time he also met and married Mary Cecil, thanks to an introduction from brother Ted who had met Mary by chance on a rock climbing expedition in the Grand Tetons. She, too, had a love for the mountains.

Jack was then hired into a young weed science group in the Department of Botany at UC Davis. However, with his strong interest in the ecology of undisturbed mountain vegetation, he gradually moved away from weed science, and a 1964 Fulbright Fellowship to Innsbruck, Austria was to cement a lifetime's focus on vegetation science.

One measure of Professor Major's vision and impact is that several of his earliest papers are still cited today. Four articles published between 1951 and 1966—on topics that ranged from the theoretical to the descriptive—have collectively been cited 620 times in the past 25 years and continue to be described in textbooks published a half-century later. Throughout his career, Dr. Major was as well known for his reviews of ecological books written in other languages as he was for his research. The American journal *Ecology* alone published 158 of his reviews, most of

them of books written in French, German, and Russian. In 1975 the Ecological Society of America gave him its first Distinguished Service Citation, specifically for his reviewing activity, judged to be an outstanding service to Society members.

His forte in teaching was with small groups and in the mountains themselves, where his great love and knowledge of mountains, together with his great kindness and generosity, was a tremendous source of information, inspiration and encouragement for his many students. He was mentor to more than 20 graduate students of his own and to many more via correspondence or by way of serving as a member on their thesis/ dissertation committees. Besides his immediate family—brother Ted, wife Mary, and sons Paul, John, and James—he left behind many students and colleagues who fondly remember his great academic gifts to them and who join the family in grief at his loss.

M.G. Barbour, P.A. Castelfranco, R.W. Pearcy, and M. Rejmanek; edited by M. Burke.

The Society joins Mary Major in inviting contributions to the Student Research Grant fund in Jack's memory. Please contact Ellen Dean for details.

DESIGNING THE NEW HERBARIUM (CONT FROM PAGE 1)

Sciences Building will remember that each floor of the herbarium had a long counter by the windows which looked out onto a courtyard filled with ponds, large trees (including a *Metasequoia*), and plants used for teaching botany. The Robbins Hall herbarium certainly has a long counter and windows, although we look out onto a roof! The arrangement of the herbarium cases, which are placed in aisles perpendicular to the aisle that parallels the windows, was also taken from the Berkeley herbarium. When it was new, the Robbins Hall herbarium had rows and rows of empty cases; 61 new cases were installed as part of the move. Also included in the Robbins Hall herbarium were a large library area with tables (since taken up with more herbarium cases), a storage room (our current library), John's office (our current computer room), a desk for June near the entrance, and the mounting station. June and John thought the space was large enough to last for

decades; the Chair of the Botany Department at the time (Vernon Cheadle) told them to plan with the future in mind.

John remembers coming over to look at the construction of the space—the building was open and anyone could enter. He would come and check to see how it was going. Then one sunny Saturday, it was finished, and he came in alone to see the wonder of it all—a beautiful (air-conditioned!) new space, new metal herbarium cabinets, and a new office.

All of this was a far cry from the space the herbarium occupied in the 1950s in the Botany Department annex—a World War II surplus green metal building. The herbarium had one row of cabinets (perhaps 16 by 1960), and John and June sweltered in the summer heat as they identified specimens. John not only directed the herbarium, but he also taught introductory botany in the fall semester and

Plant Taxonomy and Poisonous Plants in the spring semester. He didn't have a teaching assistant or help collecting material for his courses until after the move to Robbins Hall.

The new space that we are currently planning for the UC Davis Herbarium will have a temperature-controlled collections area to help us combat our insect infestation, a movable aisle system for the herbarium cases and library, a larger area for identifying plants, a larger mounting area, a computer room, and a freezer/storage room with an area to examine unfumigated plant material. We appreciate John Tucker's having the vision to see the importance of a new space for the UC Davis Herbarium twice! The space that he and June designed served its users well for decades, and he is now helping us on to the next phase. Thank you, John.

E. Dean

IN MEMORIAM, JUNE McCASKILL, 1930-2001 (CONT FROM PAGE 1)

McMinn, had prepared her very well for her new position.

Initially her most important responsibility was to take care of the frequent requests for plant identifications, as a public service. These came from farmers and farm advisors, veterinarians and horticulturists, and also from the general public. Usually a specimen was involved—either fresh or pressed and dried. On occasion, however, the “specimens” arrived so thoroughly pulverized as to be recognizable only as plant material or decomposed and reeking from shipment in a plastic bag. With her cheerful acceptance of these and other duties, and with her careful and meticulous work habits, June proved to be an ideal assistant and co-worker.

Expanding the herbarium’s library became an important early priority, and, over the years, her efforts to use the most authoritative references were an important factor in the accuracy of her identifications. And it was this high level of accuracy, as well as her prompt, dependable, and helpful responses that earned her an ever-widening “clientele” among California agriculturists. As June’s reputation grew, she became a highly valued source of information for agriculturists of many stripes, as well as academic faculty at UCD and elsewhere, veterinarians, regional poison centers and police officers in various communities. Although she was never called to testify, she provided plant identifications that were highly useful in two murder trials, as well as in a number of drug cases, e.g., marijuana.

Her service to Fresno County Farm Adviser Bill Fischer led to co-authorship of the *Growers Weed Identification Handbook*, a loose-leaf book published by UC Agricultural Publications. She established several new weed records for California, one of which was apparently “new” to the Western Hemisphere, *Monochoria vaginalis*, a member of the Pickernel Weed family (Pontederiaceae).

Throughout her years in the herbarium, part-time student assistants were her main source of additional help, either for pay or as interns for university credit. June was always very patient and helpful in training and supervising them, and in time developed an informal but comprehensive course in herbarium procedures. She once estimated that over 35 years she had had close to 200 student assistants.

June had also been interested in the

Arboretum since her earliest years at Davis. In 1971 when the university suffered a severe cutback in its budget, the Arboretum was especially hard hit. Many in Davis—townspeople as well as the campus community—were deeply concerned and quickly rallied to express support. Thus the Friends of the Davis Arboretum was born. From its inception June was actively involved, serving as membership chairman for over twenty years. Her special interest in the Friends’ trip program led her to participate as organizer and tour leader. Begun in a small way, the trips soon became more ambitious. Working with travel agencies, she organized and led a number of longer tours, which contributed materially to fund-raising for the Arboretum. Destinations between 1982 and 1996 included Santa Barbara, Southern California, Hawaii, Canada, the Mid-Atlantic states, Costa Rica, Catalina Island, Texas, Scandinavia and Russia, the Atlantic Seaboard from Charleston to Montreal and New Zealand.

In the summer of 1985 June participated in a very different kind of tour, a UREP expedition to Greece led by Prof. Louis Grivetti, a cultural nutritionist at UCD. His broad objective was to study the food habits in rural Greece. June, with a team of 10 other participants, collected and pressed plants for 135 miles along the Peloponnesus Peninsula. Approximately 2,500 specimens resulted. For June it was a frequently exhausting but tremendously exhilarating experience.

In 1991 the Herbarium also faced a grim future. Director Grady Webster was emeritus and unreplaced; June was approaching retirement; the budget was reduced. Again a support group was formed, the Davis Herbaria Society. Its first members, in 1991 were Grady Webster, June, and Dr. Larry Mitich. Others soon joined the founding trio, and within a year or so the new organization was functioning vigorously. June agreed to continue in the herbarium on a part-time basis. The new Director/Curator, Dr. Ellen Dean, was eventually appointed starting July 1, 1995.

June eventually rose to the top level in her classification at the University, Principal Museum Scientist. Always quiet and unassuming, she received recognition that was clearly earned by years of dedicated service, performance of sterling quality and a willingness to help in many ways. Awards and honors included: Outstanding Performance

Award, Botany Department, UCD, 1974, 1987; selection (as one of 18 participants nationwide) to attend a workshop on Developing, Managing, and Maintaining Collections at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1977; Award of Excellence, California Weed Society, 1985; Oral History in the Women in Botany Project: “June McCaskill, Herbarium Scientist, University of California, Davis,” 1989. Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley; Award of Distinction, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, 1991.

J. M. Tucker

Note: Space limitations required abridging Dr. Tucker’s article. A full version is available on request from the Herbarium. A previous article about June appeared in Lasthenia in the Spring and Fall issue, 1992: “Our Lady of the Weeds carries on,” by G. L. Webster.

The Society invites contributions to the Herbarium building campaign in June’s memory. Please contact Ellen Dean or Jackie Schad for details.

NEW FORMAT, NEW LOGO

Alert readers of Lasthenia will have noticed the professional

new layout of the Davis Botanical Society newsletter which premiered with the last issue. We owe this new format to Susan Gloystein, who also created the DBS logo, which combines the oak theme of the Tucker Herbarium and the rare grass emblematic of the Crampton Collection with the cycad logo of the Botanical Conservatory Greenhouse. Susan lives with her family in Davis and is employed as a graphic designer with Sutter Health. She came to our attention because she did the design and composition of the Jepson Prairie Manual. The Davis Botanical Society has clearly benefited from Susan’s expert eye for design and her strong interest in things botanical, and we thank her for her efforts on our behalf.

J. Jernstedt

ANNUAL MEETING ELECTS OFFICERS, HEARS DR. KIM STEINER

The annual business meeting of the Davis Botanical Society was briskly conducted by Judy Jernstedt, 2000-01 President. After a concise review of the year's activities, officers and Board members for the coming year were elected by acclamation. New officers and the terms they will serve (as we continue to phase in the staggered terms approved last year):

President-elect: Barry Meyers-Rice, one year

Vice President, Membership: Bill McCoy, one year

Secretary: Jean Shepard, one year

Treasurer: Elizabeth Bishay, two years

Members-at Large: Emily Griswold, Evelyn Healy, Ernesto Sandoval, one year

Student Member-at-Large: Tanya Sher Khan, one year.

Art Shapiro will succeed to the presidency, and Judy will become Past-President. Continuing as ex officio Board members are Ellen Dean, Kate



Grady Webster, Kim Steiner, Mary Burke, and Judy Jernstedt chat after the Spring program.

Mawdsley, Tim Metcalf, and Jackie Schad.

Grady Webster introduced the speaker, Dr. Kim Steiner, who has recently returned to California from South Africa to become Research Botanist in the Botany Dept. at the California Academy of Sciences. Kim received his Ph.D. in botany from UC Davis, where he was Grady's student. Using slides that confirmed the absolute

necessity of one day seeing the South African flora in person, Kim reported on his investigation of the morphological specialization of oil-secreting flowers in some genera of the Scrophulariaceae and Orchidaceae and also of the oil-collecting bees of the family Melittidae which pollinate them. An extended and convivial reception concluded the well-attended evening.

K. Mawdsley

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OUR BOTANICAL SOCIETY VOLUNTEERS



Marjorie March, Johanna Kwan, Mandy Tu, and Charlotte Mitich display their volunteer appreciation awards.

We have had so much help this past year in putting on our talks, field trips, and classes, that I wanted to take a moment to thank a few people. One aspect of our events that we take pride in is that the refreshments are always terrific! This past year, a number of people have been responsible for this including: Kate Mawdsley, Judy Jernstedt, Tim Metcalf, Grady and Barbara Webster, Charlotte Mitich, Layne Huiet, Mandy Tu, Johanna Kwan, Ernesto Sandoval, Marjorie March, Bill McCoy, Evelyn Healy, Jackie Schad, Jean Shepard, Carol Witham, Barry Meyers-Rice, and yours truly. Many of these people are due thanks in other capacities, because as board members, they have taken on other tasks throughout the year. Judy, as board president, has done an excellent job of keeping us on track.

Barry Meyers-Rice has kept our membership up to date, and Elizabeth Bishay has kept our finances straight. Jean Shepard has done a great job as secretary, and Kate Mawdsley has done an excellent job as editor of our newsletter. Several people helped us with field trip organization or leadership including: Ernesto, Fred Hrusa, Jon Price, Evelyn, and Jean. This year for the first time, we gave out awards to thank volunteers that have helped us again and again with events planning and refreshments over the past years. The awards went to Marjorie March, Charlotte Mitich, Johanna Kwan, and Mandy Tu. Mandy, whom many of you met on our field trips, has moved to Oregon, and we all wish her well.

E. Dean

DBS SPRING FIELD TRIP: WALKER RIDGE WALKABOUT

There was almost nothing to see when Fred Hrusa declared that we had reached the peak moment of the DBS Spring field trip to Walker Ridge in Colusa County. It was the “almost” that caught most of our attention. Up to this point we had seen oodles of notables, but we wouldn’t have suspected this.

Having made our first few stops not long after crossing onto serpentine soil near the beginning of Bear Valley Road, we knew we were in for a full day of serpentinizing. *Calochortus* and *Clarkia* flowers consorted by the dusty road, and we of course paid our respects. It’s a little surprising how similar *Clarkia unguiculata* (elegant clarkia) and *Calochortus elegans* (splendid mariposa tulip) are, both with their slender stems and cerise goblet flowers. We had only gone a mile or two on the dirt road and already we had stopped four times. Would we ever make it to Walker Ridge? Thank the stars that Bear Valley itself was kaput; despite its fame as a wildflower mecca, the place was just achieving a toasty brown at this point in the season. We began the bump-and-swerve part of the trip as we ascended Walker ridge. No, we’ll stop again. And again. Such oddities as the itsy-bitsy California threadstem flax (*Hesperolinon californicum*) and the shamelessly blaze-orange flowers of Green’s senecio (*Senecio greenei*) thankfully made the stops well worth it.

We opted for lunch in a serpentine meadow, which sounds like an oxymoron and yet looks like a meadow. Aside from some of the usual things we see in meadows were some serpentinicolous favorites like *Stachys albens* (whitestem hedgenettle), which is famous for its white woolly leaves and infamous for its carpet factory smell. After some moseying near the ridge summit, we decided to cool off in Kilpepper Canyon. Working our way down into the canyon, we entered the shade of Sargent cypresses (*Cupressus sargentii*), yet another serpentinaceous treat, this time with an agreeable Pine Sol™ scent. As we walked along the rocky creek bed, we happened upon the stream orchids (*Epipactis gigantea*) and the lingering blooms of a few western azaleas (*Rhododendron occidentale*), which were near and dear to our trip leader, Fred Hrusa, whose graduate research involved these plants.

Fred led us up the creek a little to observe some interesting cypresses. They were strangely intermediate between Sargent cypress and MacNab cypress (*Cupressus macnabiana*); both grow on serpentine, but are usually quite distinct from each other. This made me squirm a little, since I thought everything was supposed to be well defined: weren’t those botanists doing their jobs when they described these things? As Fred emerged from the cypress grove and into a clearing his pace quickened. Treading gleefully onto a moonscape, Fred announced, “This is it, this is the peak moment of the trip!” He was standing in what was an almost completely bare hillside. Let me remind you of the word “almost” here. Because there, on a hillside with all the lushness of a mall parking lot, was a funny little plant having a grand old time. It was a *Streptanthus* or jewel flower. I can’t say what species it was, but then neither can anyone else. It didn’t seem to fit the key no matter how many times we doubled back, started over, or looked at a more “typical” specimen. Fred concluded that it might well be something new or at least the far-flung end of something known. I squirmed again. And then I couldn’t help but crack a serpentine smile.

J. Price

DIRECTORS’ CORNER (CONT. FROM PAGE 2)

men shipments and plant identifications. We thank the University for increasing her time.

Finally, I have been working on the plans for the new Herbarium and seeking funding for moving the collections. Along with teaching this spring, I have been supervising a plant collection project at Quail Ridge Reserve, which is located on Lake Berryessa. The final product will be a plant list for the reserve. If you are interested in volunteering in the herbarium or with plant collecting, please contact Ellen Dean at 752-1091 or eadean@ucdavis.edu.

*In memory of G. Ledyard
Stebbins*

Rick & Shirley Arthur

In memory of Jack Major

Pearl Ramcharan Crowley

Peter M. & Magdalene L.

Crowley

Carol L. Hotton

Mary Cecil Major

Cimarron Software, Inc.

In memory of Larry Mitich

Ron & Maureen Fitch

John G. & Ann Foster

Ernest & Jean Gifford

Lucky & Helen Harke

James & Catherine Murray

Robert & Roswita Norris

Patty Sanui

William A. & Madeline P.

Williams

To the Herbarium endowment

Cole & Priscilla Hawkins

Judith A. Jernstedt

Claire Kremen

Marjorie March

William F. McCoy

Ramona A. Robison

Cynthia Roy

Alan Whittemore

To the Student Grants Program

E. Eric Grissell

For Unrestricted DBS Use

Stephen P. Rae

Maxine Schmalenberger

Books

L.A. Baptiste

Robert Campbell

Marcel Rejmanek

Slides

Charlotte Mittich

Thank you

THE BOTANICAL SAGA OF LA FRONTERA

On April 24 a celebration was held at the UC Davis Herbarium to commemorate the publication of two botanical books written and edited on the premises. The first, *Plant Diversity of an Andean Cloud Forest*, by Grady Webster and Robert Rhode, was reported on in the last issue of *Lasthenia*; the second, published within three weeks later, is discussed below. By one of those strange synchronicities, within a few weeks another book on the *La Frontera* area, by Richard Felger, also appeared. A "golden age" for the botany of *La Frontera* may be blossoming.

Flora of the Gran Desierto and Rio Colorado of Northwestern Mexico.

By Richard S. Felger.
University of Arizona Press, Tucson. 673 pp. Jan. 2001. \$75.00.

The Pinacate volcanic shield and the Gran Desierto, in northwestern Sonora directly south of the U.S./Mexican border, occupy the driest place in North America and one of the most austere: from the flanks of the Pinacate volcano and the many craters below it stretch fields of rough lava, and beyond that the barren sand dunes that stretch westward stretch to the horizon. It is difficult to imagine a less likely place for flourishing plant life. However, a variety of shrubs and cacti persist, and in some years when there are winter or early spring rains, a colorful tapestry of spring annuals covers the sandy plains and extends into the craters and volcanic cinders and ridges. Pinacate and the eastern half of the Gran Desierto have been designated as a Biosphere Reserve, but because of the lack of surface water (except in a few scattered *tinajas*), the area remains undeveloped, to the delight of visiting geologists, botanists, lizard ecologists, and other desert connoisseurs.

Richard Felger, who works at the Arid Lands Institute in Tucson, is probably best known for his 1985 book on the Seri Indians, *People of the desert and sea*. However, in 1980 he had already published (in *Desert Plants*) an article on the vegetation and flora of the Gran Desierto. His book on *Flora of the Gran Desierto* therefore reflects extensive field work, for more than 25 years, in the great arid stretch in northwestern

Sonora between Pinacate and the mouth of the Colorado River. The list of contributing and collaborating individuals is long, and Richard Felger has displayed impressive entrepreneurship in orchestrating these collaborations and obtaining financial support for publication.

This is easily the most detailed flora yet published of any area along the 3,000 km borderline between the United States and Mexico. The text averages more than 1 page per native species, and the discussions of taxa are detailed and critical. Not all species or genera are illustrated, but the selected illustrations borrowed from various sources will be helpful to users. The introductory section is comprehensive, with maps, photographs, and discussions of climate, geology, vegetation, history of human effects and scientific explorations, and statistics of the flora. The summary of the flora indicates a total of 510 native species (plus 79 introduced), which is low for an area of 15,000 square kilometers, but this is not surprising for such an area of extreme aridity. Although it isn't pointed out in the introduction, there are even a few endemic species, including *Heterotheca thiniicola* and *Senecio pinacatensis*. This monumental work, evidence of great dedication by the author, carries on the tradition of desert floras by Shreve and Wiggins, and establishes a high standard for future floras of areas within *La Frontera*.

Changing Plant Life in La Frontera: observations on vegetation in the United States/Mexico borderlands.

By Grady L. Webster and Conrad J. Bahre (editors). University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque. 260 pp. Mar. 2001. \$60.00.

This book is a multi-author volume with 13 chapters, an appendix, glossary, foreword, preface, and epilogue. Three of the articles have Mexican co-authors, which seems appropriate for a work on the U.S./Mexico border regions, even without considering its history.

Changing Plant Life in *La Frontera* is the outgrowth of a symposium that took place at meetings sponsored by the American Institute of Biological

Sciences (AIBS) in San Diego in August 1995. The symposium was the First Past President's Symposium of the Botanical Society of America (BSA). By virtue of my retiring the previous year as President of the BSA, the responsibility of organizing the symposium fell to me. Since we were meeting only a few miles from the Mexican border, it seemed a good idea to have international participation with Mexican botanists on botanical problems of common interest. The meeting emphasized with environmental problems along the border, especially related to the recent spread of *maquiladoras* and urban sprawl.

After six years of editing, with a list of authors only partly corresponding to the original symposium participants, the volume has appeared with a beautiful dust jacket graced by leaves of *Quercus arizonica* and *Q. mcvaughii* and a foreword by Frederick Gehlbach. The contents include a preface and epilogue by the editors; 13 chapters; an appendix on oak taxonomy; and a glossary of plant names. Considerations of conflict of interest preclude a critical analysis of the individual chapters, but it can be noted that the volume covers a number of aspects of plant life in *La Frontera*: flora and vegetation, climate, paleohistory, history of land use by settlers, effects of fire and grazing on vegetation communities, floristics of strand vegetation, and taxonomy and ecology of oaks (a very important component of upland communities). In my opinion, the most lasting effect of the book may prove to be its delineation of *La Frontera* as a distinctive transect that needs to be studied and monitored as social and economic changes occur in the dramatic suture zone between Anglo-American and Latino-Mexican civilizations. Special thanks are due to the co-editor, Conrad Bahre, for his expert editing and cartography.

