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G. THOMAS ROBBINS (1916-1960)



Early on the morning of February 11th, 1960, a few days after his forty-fourth birthday, G. Thomas Robbins, Herbarium Botanist in the Jepson Herbarium of the University of California Botany Department, died quietly in his sleep. The resultant sense of shock and loss among his botanical colleagues, especially those in Berkeley, was both deep and lasting.

Tom Robbins was born in San Francisco on February 6, 1916. While

he was still a boy, his family moved to Windsor in Sonoma County, California, and in the local schools and those in Santa Rosa, Tom received his elementary and high school education. His early interest in matters botanical was stimulated by the guiding hand of Mr. Milo S. Baker, who was his Professor of Botany during the two years of Tom's attendance at Santa Rosa Junior College. Later he attended the University of California at Berkeley, working meanwhile as a valuable student assistant in the University Herbarium, and graduating there in Botany in 1938 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Later, he spent a profitable year at the University of Colorado during which he wrote an excellent monograph of the North American species of *Androsace*, which was later published in the *American Midland Naturalist* (Vol. 32, pp. 137-163, 1944). This work earned him the Master of Arts degree in 1941.

In 1946, Tom was appointed Associate Professor of Biology at the East Central State College at Ada, Oklahoma. Tom enjoyed his teaching activities greatly, but increasing deafness, which had been plaguing him for several years, became so acute as to force his retirement from a teaching career at the end of the school year in 1949.

Subsequently, for nearly three years, Tom was engaged as one of several botanical assistants aiding Dr. Herbert Mason, Director of the Herbarium of the University of California, in the preparation of "A Flora of the Marshes of California." Tom carried on some of the field work in connection with this project, contributed the final draft of the manuscripts of the Gramineae and Cyperaceae as well as of some genera in which he had a special interest, and aided in the solution of many taxonomic, bibliographic, and nomenclatural problems. Early in 1952, Tom joined the staff of the Jepson Herbarium as Herbarium Botanist, a position which he filled most capably, contributing manuscript on selected genera treated in the still unpublished portions of Jepson's "A Flora of California," which position he held at the time of his lamentably untimely death.

For some years, Tom gave unstintingly of his time and effort to fulfill the often thankless chores associated with his activities as Corresponding Secretary of the California Botanical Society.

As in the case of so many of his other pursuits, Tom's passion for excellence eventually resulted in his becoming a very fine photographer of close-up studies of native flowers, as the Kodachrome collection which he built up for the Jepson Herbarium well attests. Thus, as in his botanical endeavors, his life was enriched by a happy merging of vocational and avocational pursuits. Purely on the avocational level, Tom's interest in and understanding of music brought meaningful enjoyment, often shared with his closest friends, to his leisure hours.

Tom Robbins' outstanding characteristics were his gentleness, charity in judgment, an unusual ability to keep his own counsel, a passion for accuracy, and a tendency to reserve his judgment, either botanical or otherwise, until all pertinent data had been fully assessed and "digested."

To quote from a letter from Joseph Ewan, who was his professor while he attended the University of Colorado, "his meticulous care, almost fanatical, in the handling of records, and extreme interest in assembling all the pertinent literature on a topic before committing himself by way of a botanical judgment" were among his most valuable assets. These characteristics are amply exemplified in his last published work, "Notes on the Genus *Nemacladus*" (Aliso, Vol. 4, pp. 139-147, 1958), in which two new species and new interpretations of already published taxa were published.

Tom's name is commemorated in *Phacelia strictiflora* Gray var. *Robbinsii* Constance (Contr. Gray Herb. 168:20, 1949), which was based on one of Tom's collections in Oklahoma.

Besides his membership in the California Botanical Society, he was a member of Sigma Xi, the Society for the Study of Evolution, and of the International Association for Plant Taxonomy.

Tom Robbins will long be missed by those whose good fortune it was to know him at all well.—RIMO BACIGALUPI, Jepson Herbarium, Department of Botany, University of California, Berkeley.

STUDIES IN THE PERENNIAL GENTIANAS: G. NEWBERRYI AND G. TIOGANA¹

CHARLES T. MASON, JR.

Gentiana newberryi Gray is the name applied to a group of dwarf perennial gentians of Section *Pneumonanthe*, which occurs in the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains of California and Oregon. The name is used in many manuals (Abrams, 1951; Jepson, 1925; Munz, 1959; Peck, 1941) to embrace not a single species but two species and a number of intermediate forms. While the author was studying the western perennial gentians under a National Science Foundation grant, the problem came to light, and an attempt is here made to resolve the difficulty.

Asa Gray described *Gentiana newberryi* from material collected in Oregon by Newberry, a member of the Williamson Pacific Railroad expedition of 1855. He first presented the new name in a hand-written description on the type sheet in the Gray Herbarium. Only the Newberry specimen was cited with this description. However, by the time the name was published (Gray, 1876), the circumscription was modified to include California material, and a Bolander collection from Mariposa County was added as a syntype.

Three other names have been applied to this complex. In 1931 Eastwood described *G. copelandii*, which she separated from *G. newberryi* on the "much broader leaves and dark purple flowers." The name *G. copelandii*, having been used previously by Greene (1904) and by Elmer

¹ Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station Technical Paper No. 568.



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