

OBITUARIES

JOHN THOMAS HOWELL
1903–1994

John Thomas Howell, Curator Emeritus of Botany at the California Academy of Sciences, died at his home in Marin County, California on 7 May 1994. Tom had served as both Secretary (1930, 1931) and Vice President (1955) of the California Botanical Society. Tom was born in Merced, California and by the time he entered high school there, he had become particularly interested in plants. He studied botany under W. L. Jepson at the University of California at Berkeley and received his M.A. in 1927. From 1927–1929, Tom was the first resident botanist at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden when it was still located on Susanna Bixby Bryant's ranch in Santa Ana Canyon. In 1929, Alice Eastwood offered Tom a position in the herbarium at the California Academy of Sciences where he spent the next 65 years in botanical exploration, research, and public education. Although Tom collected nearly 55,000 plants, mostly from throughout California and the western United States, tropical botanists recognize his enormous contributions to the study of the Galapagos Islands flora. From March to September of 1932, Tom was a botanist on the Templeton Crocker Expedition to the Galapagos where he collected 1627 plants on 14 of the islands. These collections formed the basis for some of the first serious revisionary studies of plant groups with significant radiation in the Galapagos Islands. Tom's publications on the Galapagos flora dealt with such groups as *Mollugo*, Cactaceae, Amaranthaceae, *Tiquilia*, *Scalesia*, and *Polygala*. In California, Tom collected plants in the Sierra Nevada for some 25 years with the prospect of writing a flora of that mountain range. The 20 herbarium cases housing specimens generated by those efforts are now being incorporated into the Academy's herbarium. Because they were largely unmounted, Howell's Sierran plants were not readily accessible for use by authors of the recent *The Jepson Manual*. Botanically, Tom was a generalist with a particular interest in regional floras. Plants named for Tom include an alga, a fungus, a lichen, a liverwort, a moss, monocots, and dicots. His "specialties" included the Asteraceae, Cyperaceae, Hydrophyllaceae, Poaceae, Polygonaceae, Rhamnaceae, and Rubiaceae. His bibliography includes more than 500 entries, most of which deal with California plants. He considered his editing and publication of the private journal *Leaflets of Western Botany* (10 volumes and index, 1932–1968) to be his most important contribution to California botany. Another of Tom's best known and most popular publications is *Marin Flora, Manual of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of Marin County, California*. Although Tom did not teach in a university classroom setting, he probably taught botany to nearly as many people as most college professors. His students included Junior Academy schoolchildren, Sierra Club chapters, the California Native Plant Society, and California Botanical Club. Tom served as leader of this latter organization (which was founded in 1891 by Katherine Brandegee) from 1950 to 1970. Over the years he was a mentor to a loyal following of amateur and professional botanists. Tom's influence extended beyond informal botanical instruction and encouragement. In many cases he nurtured dedication among his followers that led to important collaborative publications such as *A Flora of San Francisco* (1958), *A Flora of Lassen Volcanic National Park, California* (1961), *The Vascular Plants of Monterey County, California* (1964), and "A Catalogue of Vascular Plants on Peavine Mountain" (1992). In the years preceding his death Tom was actively involved in a collaborative study of the flora of Sonoma County. Tom was especially proud of having received the Willdenow Medal from the Berlin Botanical Garden and Museum (1979) and the Fellows Medal of the California Academy of Sciences (1986). Following his retirement, the John Thomas Howell Curatorial Chair of Western American

Botany was established at the Academy. The endowment for this chair continues to grow and it will be activated when sufficient funds become available. His many friends and colleagues will miss Tom's thoughtful counsel, ever present humor, and zest for the flora of his native state. A biographical sketch of Tom Howell's eventful and productive life appeared in *Fremontia* 17:11–19, 1989. A memorial service for Tom was held at the Academy on 8 July 1994.

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HERBERT L. MASON
1896–1994

Herbert Louis (né Lewis) Mason, Professor Emeritus of Botany, University of California at Berkeley, died peacefully in Bellingham, Washington, on March 26 at the age of 98. He served as editor of *Madroño* from 1935 to 1963, with the indispensable assistance of Ethel Crum, Helen Sharsmith, and, most importantly, Annetta Carter, transforming it from an almost parochial publication into an important botanical journal. From 1941 to 1963 he was Professor of Botany and Director of the University Herbarium (UC).

Mason was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, on January 3, 1896, one of a pair of identical twins who were the eighth and ninth children of Thomas and Harriet Mason. His interest in botany developed as a child, influenced by his mother's love of gardening and her informal teaching of botany to Herbert and his twin Walter (who ultimately became a florist). The twins entered Stanford University from high school, but volunteered for military service in World War I. They were trained as cooks in Georgia and stationed at an army hospital in Beaune, France. From this experience, Herbert attained proficiency as a cook, a life-long love of opera, and considerable respect for things French.

Returning to Stanford after the war, Herbert received an A.B. in 1921, crediting LeRoy Abrams with kindling his interest in plant taxonomy. He obtained an M.A. from the University of California at Berkeley in 1923, and then taught during 1923–1925 at Mills College, an institution for which he retained a life-long affection. During summers he worked for the Carnegie Institution of Washington, first assisting in F. E. Clements' altitudinal transplanting program in Colorado, and later hunting for plant fossils with R. W. Chaney in the John Day formation of central Oregon. Mason joined the Department of Botany at Berkeley in 1925 as an Associate in what W. L. Jepson referred to as the Phenogamic Laboratory. In 1931 he married fellow Stanford graduate and Berkeley graduate student Lucile Roush, a student of coralline algae working with W. A. Setchell. Immediately after the wedding, he departed for Alaska, where, for the Carnegie Institution, he collected taxodiaceous fossils on St. Lawrence Island in Bering Strait. Both Herbert and Lucile were awarded the Ph.D. in 1932. His thesis dealt with western American Tertiary paleobotany, and was administered by a committee comprising W. L. Jepson (chairman), R. W. Chaney, and C. L. Camp.

The 20's and 30's were an era of intensive efforts to incorporate into biological taxonomy and ecology not only the consequences of Darwinian evolution, but also the more recent findings of genetics and particularly cytogenetics. Mason was strongly influenced by and became a major participant in the group of Bay Area biologists and earth scientists who engaged in the interdisciplinary discussions and activities that led to the formation of a still-active group called The Biosystematists and to the rise of Biosystematics itself. He wrote in 1950: "I have grown up along-side of Biosystematics and have shared the enthusiasm of its workers, and am aware of its values, and know something of its limitations." Blessed with curiosity and an open,



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