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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123, U.S.A.

June 14, 1990

Dear Bill, -

We are getting a bit worried that we have not heard from you for so long! Is everything alright? In April (I think) you wrote and said you were going to send us your new book for reviewing, but so far nothing of that kind has reached us. Has there been a delay?

From here there is not much news to talk of. One day is almost the same as the other. Askell's condition is not improving, neither is it getting much worse, it is just a slow but steady decline. We take our daily walk around the block still, some 1000 steps only but it is a major effort for him. I sometimes wonder what it looks like to others: here I come a couple of steps ahead of him to pace him, and then he comes dragging his feet behind me. But we get a bit of fresh (?) air (some days the pollution is heavy) and we enjoy seeing what flowers in the gardens we pass. Just now the magnolias with their gigantic flowers are at their best. But the drought is awful and lawns and even trees are beginning to suffer badly. We got very little apricots this year and not many plums either. It seems we will get some apples, though, and the pears look promising although small. We have of course water rationing so it is impossible to water them as much as they needed. The last couple of days with 96-97°F were very hot and more humid than we are used to. Today it is drier and more pleasant.

Did I ever tell you that Askell and I celebrated our golden anniversary this spring? The daughters gave us a marvellous party and all our friends came to do homage. What a pity that Askell cannot enjoy his otium as he deserves.

I am very busy with a large Russian translation, very interesting, about the origin of cultivated plants (by N.I. Vavilov, rehabilitated thanks to glasnost. He died in Siberia but was a great scientist who deserves to be remembered.)

Let us hear from you soon again and give the best regards to Sammie as well, yours always

Askell and

Yours

*P.S. Any news about
Shuster and Bourde?*

5780 Chandler ct., SAN JOSE, CA 95123

Aug. 18, 1990

Dear Bill, -

I have deliberately waited to answer your letter until we got the flora and yesterday it arrived in the mail. Thank you very much! The printer had called us some time ago about where we would review it (Taxon) so I was expecting it.

I have, as you can understand, not really had time to study it yet, but it looks very attractive. Askell is, of course, sitting with it now and leafing back and forth in it, so soon I will hear his impression, but so far it is only good. I have just quickly leafed through it, and, - of course - I spotted what I think is one (the only?) embarrassing mistake. Fig. 31 of the color pictures seems to be put in upside down! Askell did not notice it, so it may escape most and is hardly cause for any remarks publicly, but I think you should know yourself. As soon as we have come to some consensus we will write up the review of the thing and send you a copy, of course.

It is really nice to see Askell take an interest in something again. Most of the days are just spent doing nothing. We are still able to walk around our small block, but now he needs a cane to steady himself, sometimes even indoors. This is a dreadful disease, slowly draining its victims of all energy and action. Although they know what goes wrong, there is still no effective cure, only ways to retard its relentless progress.

I myself keep extremely busy with the translation of Vavilov's book. This is not just one paper, it is a jubilee-volume given out for the 100 year anniversary of his birth and comprises all the papers he wrote on the origin of the cultivated plants. Now when I have gotten into his mode of expressing himself the translation as such goes a bit faster but what holds me up is the bad habit of the Russian of using common names for plants, which forces me to try to identify what he intends. Dictionaries are not very exact in their translations of plant names, but I have Mansfeld's list of Cult. Plants, and that helps a lot. It is time-consuming, however, although also a rather interesting work because I learn a lot about all kinds of cultivated plants, the existence of which I had no idea about. On the whole, I find the work fascinating but also very tiring with everything else I have to think of at home.

We were a bit dismayed at the prospect of you being replaced by a "molecular" person. It seems they nestle themselves in everywhere to the detriment of taxonomic botany which seems to be slowly dying out in this country (something I will comment on in the review!) Will he really be able to take good and proper care of the collection you have built up so well? You say he is a nice person and that is good, but is he a taxonomist??? At least it is good to know that you will be able to continue to work there and have some place to sit in, so you can help him get a feel for the whole thing right from the start. Let us hope that the herbarium will continue to prosper.

As you know Åskell and I built up the herbarium in Manitoba from a small, badly mounted and treated collection to a good and fairly large one. But after we left, it has gone completely to pots, lots of the material has been sent to Ottawa (at least it will be safer there) and the rest is back to the shambles it was before we arrived. Let us sincerely hope that you will not have to live such a disappointment.

The family is doing well here, all tending to their diverse interests. Lóa and Ingela concentrate on horses, although Ingela and her boy-friend have also branched out to birds now. We have no less than 14 birds in the house and the garden (in an aviary) now, some of them breeding, with chicks having to be handled when their you and inexperienced parents do not know how. Goy is "into" computers and completely adsorbed in all what that means. So we see little of them most of the time.

Your own family seems also to be spreading out. I hope Erica, if she gets to Stockholm, will not be too disappointed (she can always come back, though) because I do not think Sweden is what you and I remember anymore. It seems to have changed very much.

We are worried about the Middle East and what that will mean. Why must violence always take precedent over reasoning and talks to solve tense situations? Has there not been enough blood-shed in unnecessary wars yet?

Well, as soon as we have studied the flora more, we will let you know. Say hello to Sammie from us both and best regards and congratulations on another fine publication, yours always

Åris & Åskell.

5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123

Aug. 29, 1990

Dear Bill, -

Enclosed is a copy of the review of your flora that we will send to Taxon. Hope they accept it. We like the flora, as you can see, but Áskell is not able to help me much with the critical points, but liked what I wrote. It would perhaps have been better if he had been more active. Any how, I think this is a fair review without going into details and I simply had to give a slight kick to "old-fashioned botanists" in general. Your flora is a big step forward in American taxonomy.

Otherwise not much new. Áskell's decline continues relentlessly. We can still walk our daily tour around our small block, but he needs a cane for support and on "bad days" he needs one indoors as well. He needs also help when going to bed, undressing, etc., but at least he is still up all day, although he just sits around and half dozes most of the time. Looks a bit at TV now and then, but tires for almost no reason. We are expecting some Icelandic visitors for a week or so starting tomorrow and I am really a bit worried whether he will be able to take all the extra noise and goings on. I hope he can, but have engaged all the family to help me out with entertaining the younger generation (two boys 10 yrs of age!), so he can speak to their father in peace. Speaking tires him very much. His brother was here the other day and they chatted for a couple of hours. After he left Áskell almost collapsed and it took several hours before he was back to "normal" again. It is a real tragedy.

I am continuing my translation of Vavilov's papers. It is very interesting but not easy. My right arm is almost worn out and my shoulder hurts of all this writing. Typing is not so bad, but handwriting is getting painful. That will pass over I hope by time or at least when the job is finished. I calculate with a couple of months before I can start on the final revision. Goy helps me putting it on her computer, so the corrections will be easier to do, but Áskell refuses to let me have one myself. We will see about that by time! I could really use one.

It is late now so I will not continue but want you to say hello to Sammie and best regards to yourself. Let me know if you like the review or want any changes in it. I will hold it till I have heard from you.

Hej så länge, always

Göran

A NEW, MODERN COLORADO FLORA

William A. Weber: Colorado Flora, Eastern Slope. University Press of Colorado, Niwot, CO 80544, U.S.A. - 110 black-and white illustrations, 64 color plates, 500 pages. Price, clothbound U.S. \$32.50, paper back \$19.95.

All botanists are concerned about the present destruction of the tropical forests and all the species of plants lost even before they have been described. It is a tragedy that many plants, which might have been of use economically, as food or for the horticulture, will never be known. The value of a good inventory of the plant resources cannot be underestimated.

However, it is not only the tropical plant world which is endangered. We need only look around our own neighborhood in order to realize the destruction of the plant world even there. It is therefore no less of a botanical tragedy that we do not really know all that grows in North America or how many species there are or where they are. Botanists are often looked down upon as half comical figures on par with collectors of buttons and other nicknack. It is actually more respectable to go and collect and describe plants in foreign countries, preferably as exotic as possible. It is a sad fact that the floras of many American states are badly known and that the books describing them were printed half a century or more since. To publish lists of plants is frowned upon by many editors as "unnecessary" or "taking too much space".

There are many countries already well explored botanically where new, modern and updated floras of both regional and local areas are published with short intervals. The FLORA USSR is presently being updated, partly on the basis of a wealth of new local floras and the FLORA EUROPAEA has not prevented further exploration of the European flora, including the mapping of distribution areas.

It has to be admitted that a half-hearted attempt was made some decades ago to produce a Flora of North America but it petered out for lack of interest. Only a kind of checklist resulted from the effort. The flora of North America is still more or less a "terra incognita".

However, one area is a shining exception mostly thanks to a single, very dedicated and modern botanist. In Colorado both the western and the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains have now up-to-date floras due to the efforts of Dr. W.A. Weber at the University of Colorado in Boulder. His latest contribution has just appeared (August 1990), i.e., the "Colorado Flora, Eastern Slope".

Like its companion, "Colorado Flora, Western Slope", the present one is an excellent guide to one of the most interesting and botanically richest areas in North America. It is intended for both laymen and scientists. It is a very useful field-guide - can fit into a fairly large pocket! - not least because of the many useful fine illustrations but also the easy-to-use keys and the introductory remarks to beginning botanists on how to use the book. Dr. Weber's ability as a teacher does not deny itself. The book is also very readable with all its information about the landscapes of the area concerned but especially for the references about the plants themselves, the persons who described them and even here and there historical and other remarks of both informative and entertaining value.

It is also a very modern flora with a thoroughly made analysis of the genera and species and a modern nomenclature which no doubt will raise the hackles of many old-fashioned botanists who cannot bear to have their circles disturbed. But why should old-fashioned names and concepts be perpetuated in favor of a logical and well reasoned treatment, based on modern research? How can botanical taxonomy

advance otherwise? Dr. Weber should only be congratulated and praised for daring to be different and up-to-date.

The only point where Dr. Weber and the reviewers have long since decided to disagree is his arrangement of the families in alphabetical order rather than following a particular botanical system. His argument is that all systems are artificial and his makes it easier to look up a plant when you know its name; ours is that it does not illustrate the close relationship or association between certain plants. However, for those already familiar with the Latin names the index to the genera lists all old synonyms, allowing one to find the plants under the new generic names.

Aside from a few slip-ups in the keys - fortunately corrected in a list of errata on a loose sheet added, - there are few remarks to be made. Perhaps it could be stated that except for a few of the pictures, most do not have any indication of scale. The presence of plants of very different sizes on the same page can be misleading to a beginner. Some of the illustrations have also been so much reduced in size that it is hard to make out the details. Many of the color plates are - at least in the reviewer's copy - too dark and especially the blue colors have been badly reproduced (cf. e.g., no. 19, Aquilegia caerulea or no. 38, Eritrichum aretioides).

On the whole we can only recommend this flora as a model not only for other local floras but as a useful and modern guide to the plants of a botanical area of exceptional interest. If more such floras were prepared we could soon have a proper basis for an exhaustive flora of North America.

Åskell and Doris Löve
San José, California, U.S.A.

5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123

Sept. 15, 1990

Dear Bill, -

I actually owe you two letters! But I was waiting for your approval of the review, and since you did not have any direct remarks to do against it, I will now send it off to Taxon and see what they say. I hope they accept it.

I really hope that the new man proves to be a good herbarium acquisition and that his interest in molecular matter is kept to a minimum. You have built up a fine collection and it deserves to be kept up and continued. I hope you will watch over him until he gets into the proper routine, but not so that he feels imposed upon. Some people are so sensitive, but you seem to have made friends with him already and that is good.

We did not know Dick Beidleman very well but tragedy can hit anyone of us at any time. I hope he still can go on living a comfortable life out here.

Things here are quiet these days. Ingela moved up to Davis with her boy-friend in order to continue her work toward a teacher's certificate, but she has to work at the same time, so it will probably take some time. The boyfriend studies to be a veterinarian (his car license: I CASTR8!) and is a nice fellow. They have stuck together for a couple of years already. He is a little younger than her, but apparently intelligent and has "drive".

Askill is about the same as when I wrote last. We take our daily walk around the block, but he has to use the support of a cane now. I am also trying to arrange our things economically so all goes as smoothly as possible for the girls when we are no longer. Things like that usually get pushed off too long, but now we have decided to tackle them when we can still agree on what to do. It will be good when that is settled. We will even join a cremation service, so they can dispose of us cleanly.

It is a bit fall-like outside now, a bit of wind, and then we have a clear smog-free sky and a marvellous view toward the mountains around us. It is nice, and the temperature still permits summer clothing but is not nearly as hot as the papers indicate for Denver the last couple of days.

Say hello to Sammie from us, and to yourself the very best wishes, always

Doris & Abell

Oct. 7, 1989

Dear Bill, -

It is most likely a long time since you heard from us because Áskell has not been able to concentrate enough to write letters. His condition declined a bit this summer and I have had to take over even his correspondence.

So his doctor decided to try out a new medicine that should help him be a bit more active. Unfortunately, medicines seem to work well for only a limited time in the case of Parkinsonism. However, this proved to be far from beneficial. It opened up his ulcers.

On Sunday he felt uncomfortable after dinner and shortly thereafter he started vomiting blood profusely. Lóa and I got him quickly up to emergency care (the hospital is only 2 miles from here). This was at 7 pm and at 1 am they had still not succeeded in stopping the bleeding so he was put into intensive care and transfused 6 pints of whole blood and 2 pints of plasma. The bleeding did not stop entirely until late Tuesday and on Wednesday he was improving to the extent that they gave him a small portion of jello. But it started the bleeding all over again and in spite of more transfusions (he lost 70% of his blood) they could not stop it and on Thursday it became necessary to operate. They had postponed it because of his age but now it was either or and no question that it had to be done. It turned out to be a major thing: they took out all the old scar tissue, a good deal of the duodenal bulb, widened the pylorus a bit (what was left of it) and found that he also had a gallstone as big as a pigeons egg, so removed the gall bladder as well. It took almost 4 hours to fix him up. Fortunately he came through it all in fair condition so the surgeon was pleased and thinks he will now recover properly. He is still very weak, but today when I visited him (and was allowed to stay for a whole 15 minutes) he was at last lucid and aware of where he was and what had happened. But I felt that it was a great improvement. If all continues they may move him out of intensive care tonight or tomorrow. Let us hope so.

It has been a tough week on the rest of us. I was called several times a night when he was agitated so I could help calm him down. But now I have been able to sleep two night and feel better again. Goy is in Korea, invited by her firm for a course and trip around the country there, but was informed and she will be back tomorrow as originally scheduled. She had a wonderful time.

Lóla has helped as she could so I have not been all alone. Now we hope things will be back to normal soon, but we may have him at the hospital for a couple of weeks although hopefully less. Fortunately we have insurance to cover it. I have got it through my work and, for once, we have been able not to worry about the cost of it all. The intensive care here is between \$1200 and \$1400 in this modern and efficient hospital, one of the best in this area.

I will let you know if there is any change or when he is back again so he can hear from you.

Best regards in haste, yours always

Joan

Best regards to Sammie!

5780 Chandler ct, SAN JOSE, CA 95123

Nov. 27, 1990

Dear Bill, -

I am complaining a lot about Askell's loss of memory but now I can suddenly not remember if I ever wrote to tell you that the review of your flora will be published in Taxon early next year. If I did, please forgive an elderly lady, but if I did not, here is the news. It was reviewed by somebody in Berkeley, who shortened it a bit, but left all of essence there, so I was pleased with it. Have you had other reviews yet? They ought to be good, because the book is really excellent.

Otherwise nothing much happens here. I am working terribly hard, trying to both translate the big book by Vavilov from Russian and doing housework and taking care of Askell. I can honestly say that I work no less than 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Sometimes I am tired and discouraged but then I bite my teeth together and decide to go on whatever... What else can you do.

It seems that Boulder and Denver have been a lot in the press and TV lately. We worried a lot about the forest fire in Boulder, since we could not see or judge from TV and newspaper pictures where it was. Hopefully it has not affected any of those we know. It was not in the area where Pennack lived? Hopefully not.

The Denver fire seems to have been and continue to be a big problem, but little to be done except let things take its own pace there. I suppose it could have added to some of the smog in Boulder?

We have unusually cold weather here today, a light frost on the roofs this morning and not above 60 today and a cold north wind when we took our daily walk around the block. But no rain to talk of. All the fall we have not yet come up in 1 inch of precipitation! Trees are beginning to really suffer.

How is Sammie doing? Please give her our best regards! And keep an eye open for the first or second no. of Taxon in 1990.

Best regards, always yours

Askell and

5780 Chandler ct., SAN JOSÉ, CA 95123

Dec. 17, 1990

Dear Bill,

Thank you for two recent letters! The news about Bettie Willard was absolutely amazing. Either she is trying to get away with things or she is less intelligent than I thought. Anyhow, we wish her luck, but it is a nasty business to be involved in.

I am glad you got some hours with Takhtajan at least. I know he is a little older than we are, but I doubt he is over 80 yet, perhaps very near it. It is indeed nice to hear that he, too, accepts a narrow family concept. Those gigantic families that come out of pure inertia and mental laziness prefer to operate with are ridiculous. So we have perhaps won one more adherent to common sense in taxonomy?

What just now concerns me most is our library. We have got an offer for the books only, no reprints and no series or journals. The offer is ridiculously low, but we are beginning to be desperate to get rid of it before we die and leave all the trouble to our daughters. Do you think it is possible to sell the reprint collection plus or minus the series for a decent price to U. of C. or some other institution? Would you like me to send you the list of the series I have? Some, listed as books, may be rejected by the prospective book buyer and would then be added to this list. I have a "review of the reprints" which now number a little more than 39000. Would you like that, too? It is as you know arranged in number order and there are two file cabinets (steel) with a card index in alphabetical order to authors, which would be included in a sale. I do not really know what to ask for, but perhaps you can give some advice. I know that libraries do not always like to get such collections because it takes a lot of work and expenses to file and folder them, but with an index it may be less cumbersome. So I await your response before trying elsewhere. After all you know this collection and how useful it can be. And it contains several paperbound books that we found best protected there.

We had a lovely rain the other day. How wonderful it was to listen to the raindrops pitter-petter on the patio roof. We have now got all together 1.5 inch(es) of rain since in the spring. It does not help much but every drop counts by now. We already have water rationing but it will be much worse

if this continues next year, too. We saw on TV that you have trouble with snow. Actually, it was so cold during the rain that when it stopped we saw mount Hamilton covered with snow down to the 1,500 ft level! It is very beautiful and I like it when the snow stays at that level. Shovelling and driving in snow never agreed with me.

Áskell is about the same. However, his last blood test was a bit high in sugar, so he is going to have another in a week or two. Hope it was just a coincidence, but he had just had breakfast with oatmeal and sirup. Hope this was the reason. His present condition is cause enough for worry, although it has not worsened much.

Lóa brought home a large Christmas tree from the mountains yesterday and it fills the house with a lovely scent. It is nice to know it was freshly cut and will not shed a lot before the holidays are over.

To you and Sammie all the best wishes for a Happy Holiday and a very good and Happy New Year 1991!

Always yours

Áskell and