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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.

R. GORDON WASSON

22 September 1898–23 December 1986

Dr. R. Gordon Wasson, outstanding amateur scientist, explorer, and traveler, died 23 December 1986. Like many of his kind who in the Victorian era contributed so much, he was an amateur scientist in the original sense of the word amateur, being a lover of the relentless pursuit of knowledge in his chosen field of ethnomycology.

It was my privilege to have known Gordon Wasson, and to have worked closely with him during my association with the Botanical Museum of Harvard University, first as a student assistant and later as a staff member, from 1982 through 1985.

A man of august bearing, insatiable curiosity, and insistence on meticulous accuracy, Wasson was aptly described by a British colleague as "the perfect old-fashioned gentleman, with a twinkle in his eye." Although best known as an ethnomycologist, Wasson was at home in numerous apparently unrelated fields.

Wasson was born in Great Falls, Montana, where his father served as an Episcopalian clergyman, and spent his childhood in Newark, New Jersey, where he attended the public schools. He was sent by his parents at age 16 to France and Spain, where he spent more than a year learning the languages and vagabonding. In the First World War he served in the American Expeditionary Forces, enlisting in the spring of 1917 as a private, and saw 14 months of service in France as a radio operator. He was graduated from the Columbia School of Journalism in 1920, and was awarded the first Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship that was ever granted. He studied at the London School of Economics and spent the spring of 1921 walking through the Pelopennesus with Axel Boethius, who later became famous as a Roman and Etruscan archaeologist, founder and head of the Swedish Academy in Rome. On his return in the fall of 1921 he taught in the English Department of Columbia University for a year, where his students included the poet Langston Hughes.

In 1926 Wasson married Valentina Pavlovna Guercken, a White Russian and a physician, who died in 1958. They had two children, Peter and Mary Xenia, who survive.

Wasson worked as a journalist for several years, and later entered the banking profession with the Guaranty Company of New York in 1928, and was sent shortly afterwards to Argentina and then to London for long periods. In 1934 he joined the staff of J. P. Morgan & Company, where he remained until 1963, from 1943 on as a vice president. He even served a term as a member of Harvard University's Visiting Committee to the Slavic Department.

Wasson and his late wife were pioneers in ethnomycology, and promoted it as a distinct and promising branch of ethnobotany. They wove mycological information with data from many fields—history, linguistics, comparative religion, mythology, art, archaeology, and others—to analyze and explain the role of fungi in the cultural development of numerous peoples. They explored the philological aspects of the vernacular names of mushrooms, the uses to which mushrooms were put in early times, and the aura of mystery that surrounds them; they hypothesized that the peoples of the world could be separated into "mycophiles" and "mycophobes." In 1952 the poet Robert Graves sent the Wassons an article that mentioned

R. Gordon Wasson, A Mushroom Expert And Banker, Is Dead

R. Gordon Wasson, a former banker who wrote scholarly books about cults involving hallucinogenic mushrooms, died Tuesday at the home of his daughter in Binghamton, N.Y. He was 88 years old. A former resident of Manhattan, he lived in Danbury, Conn.

Mr. Wasson, who was a retired vice president of the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company, was awarded the Addison Emery Verrill Medal of the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University in 1983. The citation said that, together with his wife and co-author, Dr. Valentina P. Wasson, he had "illuminated the sanctity of psychotropic mushrooms, not only in Russia and Siberia, but also in the most ancient of Hindu scriptures, in the mystery cults of ancient Greece and among the native peoples of Mexico and Guatemala, both ancient and modern."

He and his wife, who died in 1958, also wrote, more broadly, about the role of mushrooms in many cultures.

At his death, Mr. Wasson was an associate in ethnopharmacology at the Botanical Museum of Harvard University. The museum maintains a collection of thousands of books about mushrooms and related subjects that he gathered and donated in his and his wife's names five years ago.

Born in Great Falls, Mont., the son of an Episcopalian clergyman, he grew up Newark, N.J., served in the United States Army in France in World War I, and studied at the Columbia University School of Journalism and the London School of Economics. He taught in the Columbia English department and was a reporter at The New York Herald Tribune before he went into banking.

Mr. Wasson was for many years with J.P. Morgan & Company, which merged with Guaranty Trust, becoming Morgan Guaranty Trust.

He was also a former trustee of Barnard College.

Mr. Wasson wrote or was co-author of scholarly papers and books, including "Mushrooms Russia and History" (1957), "The Wondrous Mushroom: Mycolatry in Mesoamerica" (1980) and "Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality" (1968).

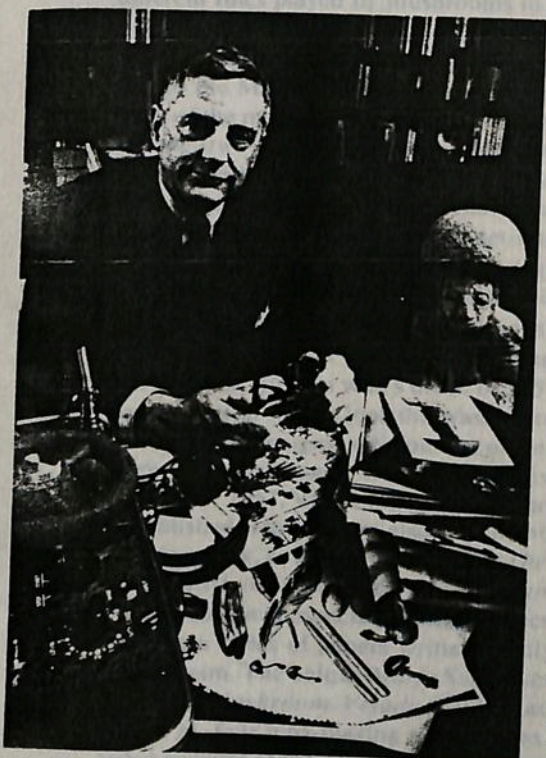
At his death, Mr. Wasson was also an honorary research associate and an honorary manager of the New York Botanical Garden.

Surviving are his daughter, Mary X. (Masha) Britten; a son, Peter, of Gatesville, Tex., and three grandchildren.

R. GORDON WASSON — 1898-1986

DONALD H. PFISTER

*Farlow Herbarium, Harvard University,
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138*



With the death of R. Gordon Wasson on December 23, 1986, several fields lost a valuable contributor who brought together, in a unique way, such diverse studies as social anthropology, archeology, linguistics, comparative religion, pharmacology and mycology.

Robert Gordon Wasson was born in 1898, in Great Falls, Montana, the son of an Episcopalian clergyman. His childhood was spent in Newark, New Jersey, where he attended public school. At the age of sixteen, he made an unaccompanied trip to Europe, where he spent more than a year in France and Spain, becoming fluent in both languages. In 1917, he enlisted as a private and served for fourteen months in the American Expeditionary Forces.

Upon his return to civilian life he enrolled in the Columbia School of Journalism, graduating in 1920, and receiving the first Pulitzer Traveling Scholarship. This award enabled him to study at the London School of Economics and, as Wasson tells it in an autobiographical note (which has been invaluable in preparing this notice), he "traveled on the Continent, spending the spring of 1921 in Greece, walking through the Peloponnese with Axel Boethius, who later became famous as a Roman and Etruscan archeologist, founder and head of the Swedish Academy in Rome."

He taught English at Columbia University for the academic year 1921-1922, and then joined the staff of the *New Haven Register* where he became editorial writer and state political correspondent, covering the legislature in Hartford. In 1925, he became associate editor of the now defunct monthly, *Current Opinion*. Subsequently, he moved to the *Herald Tribune* and wrote a daily, signed column in the financial news department.

In 1928, Wasson entered the banking world and joined the Guaranty Trust Company of New York. He spent extended periods of time in Argentina and London. In 1934, he joined the staff of J. P. Morgan and Co. (which merged with Guaranty Trust to become Morgan Guaranty Trust) and remained with the firm until 1963, from 1943 as a vice president. The Morgan connection is an interesting one upon which I will digress for a moment. J. P. Morgan, Jr. (Harvard, class of 1889) took courses with Farlow and wrote an undergraduate thesis under his direction. He was a student while Roland Thaxter was a graduate student. If Harvard tradition represents the situation correctly, Morgan was devoted to mycology. His generosity was important, particularly to Thaxter, during the period of the establishment of the Farlow Reference Library and Herbarium as a separately endowed unit. In a letter to Farlow upon that man's 70th birthday, Morgan thanked Farlow for allowing him to work

Original

REMARKS AT THE DEDICATION OF THE TINA AND R. GORDON WASSON
ETHNOMYCOLOGICAL COLLECTION. HARVARD UNIVERSITY.
FEBRUARY 12, 1983.

Dean Rosovsky, Dr. Erickson, Prof. Schultes, distinguished
guests, fellow bibliophiles and mycophiles, I am honored to
participate in the dedication of the Tina and R. Gordon Wasson
Ethnomycological Collection, which now becomes part of Harvard
University. Innovative research has been the landmark of the
Wassons' contributions to ethnomycology for decades past, and to
them belongs the distinction of having forged this new discipline in
the life sciences. The beginnings were humble, as is often the case
of potentially influential, even world-shaking phenomena. Here is
Gordon Wasson's revealing account of his conversion from mycophobia
to mycophilia, recorded in a statement made at the New York Academy
of Sciences in 1959. 'My wife and I began to gather our material
long ago, in 1927, on an August afternoon in the Catskills, as we
strolled along a mountain path on the edge of a forest. She was of
Russian birth and I of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. I knew nothing of
mushrooms and cared less. They were for me rather repellent, and
likely as not, deadly poisonous. In the years that we had known
each other, I had never discussed mushrooms with my wife. Suddenly
she darted away from my side: she had seen a forest floor carpeted
with mushrooms of many kinds. She knelt before them, called them by
endearing Russian names, and over my protests insisted on gathering
them in her dress and taking them back to the lodge, where she went
so far as to cook them and eat them - alone... This episode made so

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deep an impression on us that from then on, as circumstances permitted, we gathered all the information that we could about the attitude of various peoples toward mushrooms - what kinds they know, their names for them, the etymology of those names, the folklore and legends in which mushrooms figure, references to them in proverbs and literature and mythology." This incident eventually led Wasson to undertake extensive travels to distant parts of the earth in search of clues to explain certain perplexing magico-religious phenomena; to the consultation and collaboration with specialists in disciplines as diverse as linguistics, musicology, chemistry and mycology; to the collection and identification of numerous narcotic plants and fungi in their far-flung natural habitats; to the publication of books as splendid in their attire as they are significant and memorable in their content; and in general, to the shedding of light where previously there was darkness.

The pursuit of learning and the extension of the horizons of knowledge are among the primary functions and attributes of a university. Harvard, through the centuries, has been a bulwark of learning, and with her have been associated many formidable scholars whose studies have enriched some facet of human life. Gordon Wasson and his late wife are among them. His published works over the past 25 years are a monument to his careful research, the result of a disciplined, yet imaginative and creative mind. He and his collaborators have produced a corpus of works upon which future scholarly investigations in this field will rest for generations to come. Testimony to his influence upon our contemporaries may be clearly discerned from the fact that his MUSHROOMS, RUSSIA AND

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HISTORY, SOMA, MARIA SABINA AND HER MAZATEC MUSHROOMS VELADA, and THE WONDROUS MUSHROOM, have all become classics in our lifetime.

I first met Gordon Wasson on August 30, 1960, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where he gave an address on ethnomycology before the Mycological Society of America. It was the first time that the Society had invited a non-mycologist to present the annual address, and it was a memorable one. Until this evening we have not had the occasion to meet again. So I am highly gratified that I have that opportunity tonight. This is not to say that we have been incommunicado all that time. We have, in fact, been avid correspondents for many years, have frequently consulted one another about ethnomycological problems of mutual interest, and quite recently have collaborated on some aspects of mycological lore pertaining to the Guatemalan Highlands. Currently, the interpretation now generally accepted concerning the significance of mushroom stones has come under scrutiny, a normal, healthy procedure, since theories in science are born only to be further criticised and evaluated. With Gordon's indispensable collaboration I am presently reviewing some assumptions pertaining to this controversial subject.

Gordon Wasson's research has concentrated on the solution of major problems that have confronted and challenged students of the fungi, among others, for centuries. His endeavors have frequently resulted in novel discoveries that have offered penetrating insights. His work is a notable example of what can be done in interdisciplinary research, and he has somehow managed to integrate anthropological, linguistic, archeological and mycological studies

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into that complex organic fabric called ethnomycology. Often in brilliant and unexpected ways Wasson has utilized his deep fund of knowledge to make audacious proposals and present new interpretations. A fragmentary list of the surprising diversity of subject matter that he has at various times considered, dissected, interpreted, synthesized or incorporated into his works is illuminating. They include: mushroom stones, Soma, Aztec statuary, ancient frescoed walls, Florentine mosaics, terra cotta figurines, Colonial American, European and Asiatic paintings, pre-Columbian archeological sites, Cherrugeresque extravagances, Mesoamerican flora and fauna, beliefs of New Guinea tribesmen, Mazatec veladas and their accompanying music, clapping and thumping, unmentionable Siberian pastimes, mentionable but occult North American Indian rituals, toads, and toadstools, arcane amulets, withches, devils and assorted demons, fly killers, bedbugs, sacred figs, The Buddha, sorcerers cum apprentices, Mesoamerican codices, cabalistic glyphs, bark-paper maps, diving gods and floating cherubs. We also encounter choice references to Chinese and pre-Columbian textiles, Zoroastrianism, German Children's Songs, Curandero's chants, Shamanistic vigils, Marvellous herbs, divine inebriants and other entheogens (this term being one of several Wassonian neologisms that have already entered our language), the Rig Veda, Eleusian Mysteries, mycophagy, mycophilia and mycophobia, mycolatry (here again the fine hand of Wasson is seen), Ololihqui, Piciete, Teonanacatl, Psilocybe (these are considerable pre-Wassonian), Nahuatl poetry, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley But the list is very long. This must suffice as a kind of hors d'oeuvre (which,

incidentally, Gordon's late, and cherished mycological colleague and mentor, Roger Heim, would have savored), a kind of hors d'oeuvre, as I have mentioned, to the banquet of his interests, and to his ardent, unswerving pursuit of ethnomycological research.

Within the strictures of the time allotted for these brief remarks, I cannot adequately sum up the significance of Gordon Wasson's contributions to mycology in its broadest connotation, as well as to the arts and sciences. But I am reminded that the Japanese have honored a few of their compatriots by designating them as National Treasures. We might do well to emulate them. If we did, Gordon Wasson, I believe, would be among them.

I can think of no more fitting accolade that applies to a man of Gordon's talents than Chaucer's succinct evaluation of the Clerk of Oxford: "GLADLY WOULD HE LEARN AND GLADLY TEACH."

B. Lowy

MASHA WASSON BRITTEN
1 Weslar Court
Binghamton, New York 13903
607 722 3873

Dear Professor Lowy,

At long last I send your gift copy of my father's book, "Persephone's Quest". The saga of getting it printed in Verona, delivered here and sent to you has been a 'quest' in itself!

If you should need more copies, please write or call me and I will be happy to make the arrangements.

All best wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely,

Masha Britten

Masha Wasson Britten

PS: The shipping for this book was insured. If it arrives damaged please contact the shipper used as well as let me know.



Department of Botany
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
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4-I-1991

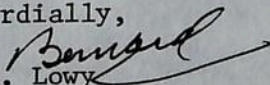
Dear Masha,

The handsome volume of "Persephone's Quest," lettered "P," "Hors Commerce," that you have selected for me, has just arrived. It is a book that has been worth waiting for, and, as a work of the bookmaker's art, is a further tribute to your father's uncompromising dedication to excellence.

As it happens, I am presently reviewing much of Gordon's work, and that of other authors on related subjects, in preparation for a book on psychoactive fungi that Dick Schultes has asked me to co-author.

I deeply appreciate your kind attention, and wish you all the best in the New Year.

Cordially,


B. Lowy

P.S. The striking lightning bolt (ekapad) and silhouette of a mycorrhizal (Amanita muscaria) conifer on the book's cover is an inspired image, and a brilliant metaphor for Gordon's life's work!



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4-I-1991

Dear Tom,

A copy of the limited edition of "P^vesephone's Quest" has just reached me. It is, as expected, a most handsome example of the book-maker's art, and certainly worth waiting for. With it was a kind note from Masha, to which I have responded. I am also greatly indebted to you for your generous interest in my behalf.

Wishing you all the best in the New Year,

Cordially,

P.S. Perhaps the receipt of the book augurs well for a writing project I am about to begin. Dick Schultes has invited me to co-author a book on psychoactive fungi.

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

23 October 1990

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803-1705

Dear Bernard:

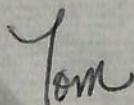
I was deeply chagrined to hear that you haven't yet received your copy of Persephone's Quest, which Masha (Wasson) Britten was supposed to have sent to you long ago. You certainly needn't apologize for bringing it up again. I'm glad you did. The original problem of having the books shipped from Italy was settled early this year. They're now at Masha's house in Binghamton, New York. Masha, as you probably know, is director of the graduate school for nurses at SUNY Binghamton. Her job entails frequent travel plus writing lots of grant proposals. To complicate things, she injured her neck in a car accident earlier this year and had to wear a cumbersome brace for most of the summer. These problems notwithstanding, I would have expected you to have your book by now, considering how long ago I relayed the request. There's certainly no doubt that you, of all people, should expect a free copy. I've been told you're currently the world's only "full time" ethnomycologist.

In any case, I phoned Masha at once upon getting your letter, made an inquiry more-or-less discretely and elicited her promise that she'd send you your copy this week. If you don't get it by the end of October I beg you to let me know without delay so I can follow up with Masha while the trail of my earlier call is still fresh. Our persistence is surely the key in this matter.

I've just applied for admission to Harvard Divinity School, where I hope to earn a Master of Theological Studies degree (specifically not for ministers). Lawrence Sullivan, late of the University of Chicago, was recently named director of the school's Center for the Study of World Religions. He looks forward to adding courses on primitive religions to the curriculum, and I look forward to taking them. If accepted, I'd start next September.

Hope you had a nice visit to the Soviet Union. And thank you most sincerely for your gracious approval of my latecomer's essay on Gordon.

With best regards,



Thomas J. Riedlinger

Department of Botany
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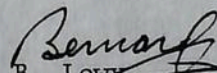
12-X-1990

Dear Tom,

With the publication of "The Sacred Mushroom Seeker," perhaps you have been able to relax a bit ... until your next project. You may have been a "latecomer" to Gordon's world, but you certainly made up for it in short order, as is evident from your sensitive, perceptive essay.

I hope you will not consider it indelicate of me to bring up a question we touched upon in our correspondence. As I value Gordon's work, I inquired of you whether a copy of the limited edition of "Persephone's Quest" might be forthcoming from Gordon's estate, since he wrote to me that one would be sent "to join the others" on my shelf. Would you be good enough to make a discrete inquiry into this matter for me? If nothing comes of it, I'll pursue it no further. Masha may not know that Gordon promised it to me.

With best regards, as ever,


B. Lowry

LSU

DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY

Date 12 - VI - 1990

To Dear Tom,

A few days before I leave for Kiro,
so just a note to congratulate you
on your excellent job of editing the
Festschrift for Gordon - which I've only
perused. Too bad it had to be posthumous,
but even an editor's powers has its limit-
ations.

Sam Johnson's oft-quoted definition
(in part) of a lexicographer (a "harmless
dudge") is also applicable to an editor,
and you may be among the few lucky
enough to "escape reproach," mentioned by
that eminence as the dudge's greatest hope
for approval.

Best regards,
Bernard

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

12 March 1990

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

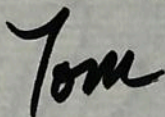
Dear Bernard:

Just a note to assure you that The Sacred Mushroom Seeker does not identify you with the non-existent Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at LSU. I had simply failed to purge the offending words from the mailing list in my computer file--an oversight now corrected.

Dioscorides has me believing the books will be mailed in April. I've already signed off on the bluelines and jacket proofs, so maybe they mean it. In any case, I've asked them to send your copy first class so it reaches you as soon as possible.

Your visit to Kiev sounds exciting, in light of the recent political changes over there. When we finally meet in person you must tell me all about it.

With best regards,



Thomas J. Riedlinger

Department of Botany
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March 7, 1990

Dioscorides Press
9999 S.W. Wilshire
Portland, Oregon 97225

Gentlemen:

As a contributor to the Festschrift for R. Gordon Wasson,
I would like to take advantage of the reduced price for the volume, which Mr. Riedlinger informs me is to be 40% off the retail cost of \$37.95.

In addition to the single gratis copy promised to authors,
kindly send me two additional copies @ \$22.80 each.

My check for \$45.60 is enclosed.

Sincerely,

B. Lowy

B. Lowy
Prof. Emeritus

PS. Is the volume by Schultes & Raffauf, "The
Healing Forest, now available?

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Samuel Lowy



DEPARTMENT OF BOTANY

Date June 6, 1990

To Gentlemen,

I have received the gratis copy of the volume, but not the 2 additional copies I requested.

Please expedite this small order, since I am leaving the country in 2 weeks, and hope to present these volumes to colleagues.

Sincerely,
B. Lowe



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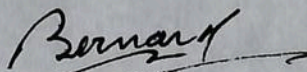
Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

Dear Tom,

I'm glad to have your announcement that the Festschrift for Gordon is now in press. As editor, and friend of RGW, it must surely be a great satisfaction to have successfully seen the volume through its vicissitudes.

Quite possibly (extrapolating from the expected time of distribution) I'll have to wait until mid-July (later?) before seeing the book. In June I expect to be in the Soviet Union (Kiev) where I've been invited to speak (on ethnomycology - surprise, surprise) to members of the Botanical Institute, and also to do a little mycological work, while I'm at it. I think I'll have a few pertinent things to say about Gordon's contributions.

With best wishes, as ever,


B. Lowy

P.S. It would be embarrassing to be identified as a member of a non-existent Department of Botany and Plant Pathology. I have not seen proof of my article, so may I leave it to you to verify that the Pathology part is omitted?

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

27 February 1990

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany and Plant Pathology
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

Dear Professor Lowy:

Here's the latest on The Sacred Mushroom Seeker: Essays for R. Gordon Wasson.

Publication is on schedule for the end of March or early April. If you've moved since I last wrote and this letter was forwarded, please notify me of your correct address and I'll pass it along to the publisher. He'll mail your free copy to you as soon as it's available.

By the way, I asked about ordering offprints of individual essays. This was possible if ordered before publication, but the cost was so high that I thought it prohibitive. You'll no doubt find the publisher agreeable to granting permission to mimeograph copies of your essay.

The finished book contains 281 pages of text, including the first complete Wasson bibliography and an extensive index, plus twenty color plates and a lovely endpaper map of Mexico with botanical decorations by Kathleen Harrison McKenna. Retail cost will be \$37.95 U.S. You are entitled to a 40 percent author's discount if you choose to purchase additional copies. Orders should be placed through the publisher, not through me, at this address: Mr. Richard Abel, Dioscorides Press, 9999 S.W. Wilshire, Portland, Oregon 97225 U.S.A.

This will be my last letter before you get the book. Again, I wish to thank you for your fine contribution to what I believe is a fitting and extraordinary tribute. A biographical Festschrift such as this is a rarity, but so was our friend Gordon. Thanks also for your patience. I confess to having badly underestimated how much time and effort was involved. Perhaps you'll agree it was worth the wait. I look forward to hearing your candid appraisal of the final product.

With best regards,

Tom

P.S. Good news! Masha has taken delivery of Persephone's Quest, the limited edition. She's currently making arrangements to have it distributed in U.S. You should have your copy shortly.

OK

PERMISSION TO PUBLISH

By my signature below, I authorize publication of my enclosed essay, titled

_____ ,

and all photographs, maps and other illustrations that may accompany this essay, in the "Festschrift" in tribute to R. Gordon Wasson that is being compiled and edited by Thomas J. Riedlinger. This authorization applies to the first and all subsequent editions of the Festschrift in all languages.

I understand that Dioscorides Press, the publisher of the first English language edition, agrees to send me one free copy of the book when it is published as payment in full for my essay, and will sell me additional copies, if desired, at a discount price. I also understand that this agreement is non-exclusive: I may arrange to have my essay published elsewhere after it is published in the first English language edition of the Wasson Festschrift.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

PRINTED NAME AND ADDRESS _____

Harvard Picks Rosovsky For Post of Acting Dean

Special to The New York Times

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., April 24 — Henry Rosovsky, one of the most respected figures in American higher education, has been named acting dean of Harvard University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, resuming a job he left six years ago.

He is replacing A. Michael Spence, who resigned unexpectedly last month to become dean of the Stanford University Graduate School of Business, while a permanent replacement is sought.

The appointment of Mr. Rosovsky, a 63-year-old economist, was greeted with enthusiasm by many professors and administrators at Harvard. As dean of the faculty from 1973 to 1984, Mr. Rosovsky guided the biggest reform of Harvard's curriculum in decades, and helped bring the university's budget under control.

In making the announcement today, Harvard's president, Derek Bok, said, "To my great relief, Henry Rosovsky has agreed to assume this responsibility."

Mr. Bok said Mr. Rosovsky would assume his new duties on July 1.

"It's what we need most in this very difficult situation created by Mike Spence's sudden departure," said Roderick MacFarquhar, a professor of government who is on a newly created committee to find a replacement for Mr. Spence.

Mr. Spence's resignation caught Harvard by surprise and touched off some resentment toward him, in part because the university is planning a huge fundraising campaign, with a reported goal of \$2 billion, and Mr. Spence would have been a key figure in the drive.

Mr. Rosovsky played down the significance of his return to the dean's office. "My son compared me to Dwight Evans," the aging right fielder of the Boston Red Sox, Mr. Rosovsky said. "He said I'm too old to play regularly, but I can step in as a designated hitter."

from Thomas J. Riedlinger
13-XII-1988. To be published 1989
by Dioscorides Press in "Festschrift"

1

A Festschrift in honor of the late Dr. Gordon Wasson, famous ethnomycologist and former President of the Society for Economic Botany, will be published by Dioscorides Press in the summer of 1989. It is edited by Thomas Riedlinger and contains contributions from more than 20 specialists and friends.

Remarks at the dedication of the Tina and R. Gordon Wasson
Ethnomycological Collection, Harvard University,
February 12, 1983

Dean Rosovsky, Dr. Erickson, Prof. Schultes, distinguished guests, fellow bibliophiles and mycophiles, I am honored to participate in the dedication of the Tina and R. Gordon Wasson Ethnomycological Collection, which now becomes part of Harvard University. Innovative research has been the hallmark of the Wassons' contributions to ethnomycology for decades past, and to them belongs the distinction of having forged this new discipline in the life sciences. The beginnings were humble, as is often the case with potentially influential, even world-shaking phenomena. Here is Gordon Wasson's revealing account of his conversion from mycophobia to mycophilia, recorded in a statement made at the New York Academy of Sciences in 1959:

My wife and I began to gather our material long ago, in 1927, on an August afternoon in the Catskills, as we strolled along a mountain path on the edge of a forest. She was of Russian birth and I of Anglo-Saxon ancestry. I knew nothing of mushrooms and cared less. They were for me rather repellent, and likely as not, deadly poisonous. In the years that we had known each other, I had never discussed mushrooms with my wife. Suddenly she darted away from my side: she had seen a forest floor carpeted with mushrooms of many kinds. She knelt before them, called them by endearing Russian names, and over my protests insisted on

gathering them in her dress and taking them back to the lodge, where she went so far as to cook them and eat them--alone...This episode made so deep an impression on us that from then on, as circumstances permitted, we gathered all the information that we could about the attitude of various peoples toward mushrooms--what kinds they know, their names for them, the etymology of those names, the folklore and legends in which mushrooms figure, references to them in proverbs and literature and mythology.

This incident eventually led Wasson to undertake extensive travels to distant parts of the earth in search of clues to explain certain perplexing magico-religious phenomena; to the consultation and collaboration with specialists in disciplines as diverse as linguistics, musicology, chemistry and mycology; to the collection and identification of numerous narcotic plants and fungi in their far-flung natural habitats; to the publication of books as splendid in their attire as they are significant and memorable in their content; and in general, to the shedding of light where previously there was darkness.

The pursuit of learning and the extension of the horizons of knowledge are among the primary functions and attributes of a university. Harvard, through the centuries, has been a bulwark of learning, and with her have been associated many formidable scholars whose studies have enriched some facet of human life. Gordon Wasson and his late wife are among them. His published works over the past 25 years are a monument to his careful research, the result of a disciplined yet imaginative and creative mind. He and his collaborators have produced a corpus of works upon which future scholarly investigations in this field

will rest for generations to come. Testimony to his influence upon our contemporaries may be clearly discerned from the fact that his books Mushrooms, Russia and History, Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality, María Sabina and her Mazatec Mushroom Velada and The Wondrous Mushroom: Mycolatry in Mesoamerica have all become classics in our lifetime.

I first met Gordon Wasson on August 30, 1960, in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where he gave an address on ethnomycology before the Mycological Society of America.² It was the first time that the Society had invited a non-mycologist to present the annual address, and it was a memorable one. Until this evening we have not had the occasion to meet again. So I am highly gratified that I have that opportunity tonight. This is not to say that we have been incommunicado all that time. We have, in fact, been avid correspondents for many years, have frequently consulted one another about ethnomycological problems of mutual interest, and quite recently have collaborated on some aspects of mycological lore pertaining to the Guatemalan Highlands. Currently, the interpretation now generally accepted concerning the significance of mushroom stones has come under scrutiny, a normal healthy procedure, since theories in science are born only to be further criticized and evaluated. With Gordon's indispensable collaboration I am presently reviewing some assumptions pertaining to this controversial subject.

Gordon Wasson's research has concentrated on the solution of major problems that have confronted and challenged students of

the fungi, among others, for centuries. His endeavors have frequently resulted in novel discoveries that have offered penetrating insights. His work is a notable example of what can be done in interdisciplinary research, and he has somehow managed to integrate anthropological, linguistic, archeological and mycological studies into that complex organic fabric called ethnomycology. Often in brilliant and unexpected ways Wasson has utilized his deep fund of knowledge to make audacious proposals and present new interpretations. A fragmentary list of the surprising diversity of subject matter that he has at various times considered, dissected, interpreted, synthesized or incorporated into his works is illuminating. Included are: Mushroom stones; Soma; Aztec statuary; ancient frescoed walls; Florentine mosaics; terra cotta figurines; Colonial American, European and Asiatic paintings; pre-Columbian archeological sites; Cherrugeresque extravagances; Mesoamerican flora and fauna; beliefs of New Guinea tribesmen; Mazatec veladas and their accompanying music, clapping and thumping; unmentionable Siberian shamanistic pastimes; mentionable but occult North American Indian rituals; toads and toadstools; arcane amulets; devils and assorted demons; fly killers; bedbugs; sacred figs; the Buddha; sorcerers cum apprentices; Mesoamerican codices; cabalistic glyphs; bark-paper maps; diving gods and floating cherubs. We also encounter choice references to Chinese and pre-Columbian textiles; Zoroastrianism; German children's songs; curandero's chants; shamanistic vigils; marvelous herbs, divine inebriants

and other entheogens (this term being one of several Wasssonian neologisms that have already entered our language); the Rig Veda; Eleusinian Mysteries; mycophagy, mycophilia and mycophobia, and mycolatry (here again the fine hand of Wasson is seen); ololiuqui, piciete, teonanácatl and Psilocybe (these are considerably pre-Wasssonian); Nahuatl poetry, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley... The list is very long. This must suffice as a kind of hors d'oeuvre (which, incidentally, Gordon's late and cherished mycological colleague and mentor, Roger Heim, would have savored), a kind of hors d'oeuvre, as I have mentioned, to the banquet of his interests, and to his ardent, unswerving pursuit of ethnomycological research.

I can think of no more fitting accolade that applies to a man of Gordon's talents than Chaucer's succinct evaluation of the Clerk of Oxford: "Gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."

ENDNOTES

1. Editor's note: In a letter to the editor dated 1 February 1988, Prof. Lowy adds the following anecdote.

At Stillwater, I asked Gordon whether he was acquainted with a bit of Hungarian folklore that referred to mushrooms, and since I have a command of Hungarian, I thought I would test his knowledge. I told him that, as a child, I had heard my Hungarian mother use the expression "bolond gomba," and he immediately seized upon this with enthusiasm, correctly translating it as "crazy mushroom." I was astonished that he was able to do this, since to most of the world Hungarian

is a totally obscure language. I should add that the expression is still in current use, as I found years later when I made inquiry in Hungary. It is generally used by a vexed parent indignantly addressing a child who has said something outlandish. The sentence in which the words occur is: "Mi a baj, ettél talán bolond gombát?," or some variation thereof, meaning, "What's the matter, have you, *by chance,* eaten crazy mushrooms?"



Department of Botany
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
BATON ROUGE · LOUISIANA · 70803-1705

504/388-8485

19-VII-1989

Mr. Thomas Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

Dear Mr. Riedlinger:

I have just returned from Mexico, and have your letter requesting a "credentials statement" for the RGW "Festschrift."

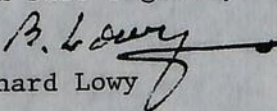
I do not know the format you may prefer, but in lieu of a c.v., and being studious of brevity (of necessity), the following items may be suitable for your editorial use.

Ph.D. (botany) University of Iowa; Prof. emeritus Louisiana State University; founder and curator of LSU mycological herbarium; chairman ethnomycological section, II International Mycological Congress, Tampa, Fla; Fulbright Scholar to Peru, Brazil; over 30 yrs. of mycological expeditions to Mexico, Central and South America; participant (mycologist) in Proyecto Flora Amazonica, Brazil; author of numerous papers in mycology and ethnomycology; member of editorial board of "Mycologia" (15 yrs. ending 1987); presently member of editorial board of "Micología Neotropical Aplicada" (Mexico), also member of editorial board of "Revista/Review Interamericana" (Puerto Rico).

Perhaps more significant than any of the above is the fact that I have collaborated closely with Gordon for over 20 years, was often consulted by him on ethnomycological and mycological questions, and that some of my findings are incorporated into one or more of RGW's books, including the posthumous "Persephone's Quest."

In my experience, RGW was meticulous in selecting his informants and collaborators, but he was extremely sensitive to adverse criticism (hence his "Rejoinders"). At the same time, he was also capable of expressing gratitude for help given him, as shown in the enclosed note I received from him in 1981.

With best regards,


Bernard Lowy

P.S. My affiliation is with the Botany Department. LSU does not have a Dep't. of Botany and Plant Pathology.

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513
U.S.A.

1 July 1989

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany and ~~Plant Pathology~~
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

Dear Prof. Lowy:

The following has been sent to all who contributed essays for the Wasson book.

This letter is to bring you up to date on the Gordon Wasson tribute. I apologize for not having written sooner, but preparing the book for production took much longer than I had anticipated. A major delay was occasioned when the publisher, Richard Abel, suffered a non-fatal heart attack several months ago. He had taken a personal interest in the project; therefore, his associates were reluctant to take up the reins in his absence. I am happy to report his full recovery.

The manuscript, now in the publisher's hands, comprises: my preface; Richard Evans Schultes' foreword; an introductory "brief biography" of Gordon, by Christopher Brown; 24 essays, by Michael R. Aldrich, Masha Wasson Britten, Michael D. Coe, Robert Demarest, Wendy Doniger, William A. Emboden, Peter T. Furst, Gastón Guzmán, Joan Halifax, Albert Hofmann, Michael Horowitz, Irmgard Weitlaner Johnson, Keewaydinoquay et al., Weston La Barre, Frank J. Lipp, Bernard Lowy, Terence McKenna, Claudio Naranjo, Jonathan Ott, Allan B. Richardson, myself, Carl A.P. Ruck, Alexander T. Shulgin and Guy Stresser-Péan; "Gordon Wasson's Account of his Childhood," an autobiographical essay Gordon previously published as a "memoir postscriptum" in his father's book, That Gettysburg Address; a comprehensive bibliography of Gordon's and Valentina Wasson's published works, compiled by Christopher Brown with Gordon's assistance; and a list of all 11 titles in Gordon's Ethnomycological Studies series.

Illustrations include 35 to 40 color transparencies and 55 to 60 black-and-white photos, maps and line drawings. Some of these, such as the photo of Gordon as a young man that you see in the accompanying photostat, have never before been published.

The book's title is The Sacred Mushroom Seeker: Essays for R. Gordon Wasson. I expect it to be published early in 1990 by

Dioscorides Press, Portland, Oregon; as soon as I am told which month, I'll let you know. On the recommendation of Dick Schultes and by mutual consent of Gordon's children, Masha and Peter, representing his estate, it has been designated No. 11 in Gordon's Ethnomycological Studies series. The three of them concur that it should be the final item in this numbered series.

I feel confident that when you see the final product, you will all be pleased and proud of it. It manages to circumvent the dryness often found in conventional Festschriften, which one critic aptly referred to as "the graveyard of scholarship." Here is how I put it in my preface:

Written with candor by Gordon's close friends, valued colleagues and family members, [these essays] cast light on his personal life and ambitions while also contributing new information on his scientific field work and academic research. Even those who knew him well will find at least a few surprises.

The format is convivial. Imagine that the authors have gathered for an afternoon party on the grounds of Gordon's lovely home in Danbury, Connecticut. There, in the context of his famous hospitality, they mingle freely in an atmosphere of pleasant relaxation. Conversations include recollections of working with Gordon and traveling with him. Amusing anecdotes bring smiles and even occasional laughter. Photographs are passed around. Some of the guests are discussing Gordon's scientific work, and others their own in the same or a related field. One or two are engaged in polite disputation with Gordon himself: arguing, perhaps, that Soma was not Amanita muscaria, or that those images in ancient Maya codices were water lilies rather than mushrooms; and Gordon, unperturbed and unpersuaded, explains patiently why he believes the disputant is wrong.

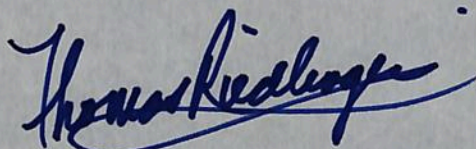
In short, this is a tribute to Gordon that readers should find as engaging and as painlessly informative as just such a gathering.

At this stage, with all of the essays approved by the authors in their final edited versions, I require only one thing more: a paragraph from each of you listing, succinctly, credentials such as academic degrees, affiliations and/or major published works. When I made this request in an earlier letter only three or four authors responded. Please, even if you prefer not to emphasize formal credentials, send me a short statement of what you consider your main interests or accomplishments to include on the credentials page. Do not send a resume or a curriculum vitae; I would not presume to decide what to spotlight and what to ignore. I also ask that those who did respond earlier do so again, to ensure that what is published will be up-to-date and acceptable to you.

Finally, I have been asked by Dick Schultes to notify all the participants in this project of a rare opportunity. Two of Gordon's finest books can be purchased at very low prices from the Harvard Botanical Museum by special arrangement with Gordon. These are: María Sabina and her Mazatec Mushroom Velada, the numbered edition with LP vinyl records (not the mass-market trade edition with cassette tapes), priced at \$85.00; and The Wondrous Mushroom: Mycolatry in Mesoamerica, the numbered edition, of which Gordon signed every copy, for only \$60.00. As you probably know, both of these books have been sold in the past by antiquarian book dealers for as much as \$500.00. If you already own a copy, you might think about buying another to donate to a favorite institution or to give to a colleague or friend. For María Sabina, UPS shipping costs from Harvard are \$6.40 to U.S. destinations and \$15.00 to Mexico; for The Wondrous Mushroom, \$5.54 to the U.S. and \$11.65 to Mexico. Orders should be placed with Susan Rossi, Harvard Botanical Museum, Oxford Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02045.

Please send your credentials statement as soon as possible.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas Riedlinger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Thomas Riedlinger

Gordon Wasson as a young man (photo
courtesy of Masha Wasson Britten)



Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

16 June 1989

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803-1705

My Dear Prof. Lowy:

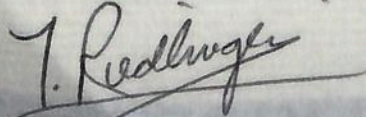
This responds to your letter of 6 June 1989. I apologize for the long silence and I sympathize with your impatience to see the Wasson tribute published. A delay was caused when the publisher, Richard Abel of Dioscorides Press, had a heart attack in February. Mr. Abel, well-known and highly regarded by Dick Schultes (who recommended him to me), had taken a strong personal interest in the project; no one else could "take the reins" while he was recovering. Fortunately, he survived the ordeal and is now back on the job. I have sent him the manuscript in its final form and all illustrations. A publication date will be set in the next few weeks. I expect that we'll have bound copies of the book in hand sometime early next year.

I hope you'll not be disappointed to learn that page proofs won't be forthcoming. The number of authors and the fact that many are difficult to reach at varying times of the year made it necessary for us to eliminate this step. That is why I emphasized that what you last saw was final approval copy. Let me assure you, however, that any changes or corrections you requested will be implemented. I will also bring a professional editor's care to the proofing of the book.

By the way, you will no doubt be pleased to learn that this volume, titled The Sacred Mushroom Seeker: Essays for R. Gordon Wasson, has been designated No. 11 in Gordon's Ethnomycological Studies series, by mutual consent of Dick Schultes (in whose care Gordon put his collection at Harvard) and Gordon's two children, representing his estate. This will be the last item in the series.

I've heard no further word on whether or when Masha plans to distribute limited edition copies of Persephone's Quest in the U.S., or indeed if she's yet made arrangements to have the books shipped from Verona. I ask her about it almost every time I speak with her, which hasn't been for several months. But I am confident that everyone on Gordon's list eventually will get the copy coming to him.

With best regards,


Thomas Riedlinger



Department of Botany
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
BATON ROUGE · LOUISIANA · 70803-1705

504/388-8485

6-VI-1989

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

Dear Mr. Riedlinger:

Since returning the "Permission to Publish" form to you last December, I have received no further word regarding the status of the book.

My concern is that proof of my article may be sent during my absence from the university, causing a possible delay in the book's publication. I expect to be in Mexico for about 3 weeks beginning July 1, consequently my last operational day before leaving will be Friday, June 30. If proof is received by that date I shall be able to return it, otherwise a delay will be unavoidable. Should this contingency be likely to develop, kindly let me know before my departure date.

With best wishes,

B. Lowy
Bernard Lowy

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

8 May 1988

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany and Plant Pathology
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

Dear Prof. Lowy:

This letter is to bring you up to date on the Gordon Wasson "Festschrift."

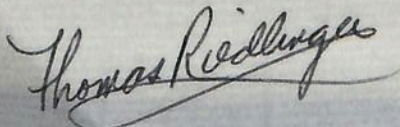
Dioscorides Press in Portland, Oregon, has committed to publish and distribute the book as part of its Historical, Ethno- and Economic Botany Series. (The first book in this series, William Emboden's Leonardo da Vinci on Plants and Gardens, was published last year.) Dioscorides specializes in ethnobotany and other plant sciences. It was recommended to me by Dick Schultes, who agreed enthusiastically to write a preface for the Festschrift.

A minority of the approximately 40 invited participants had to decline for various reasons. Those who agreed to contribute, including yourself, are Michael Aldrich, Philip Black, Mary (Masha) Britten, Christopher Brown, Michael Coe, Robert Demarest, William Emboden, Peter Furst, Gaston Guzman, Joan Halifax, Albert Hofmann, Michael Horowitz, Irmgard Weitlaner Johnson, Keewaydinoquay, Weston La Barre, Frank Lipp, Bernard Lowy, Terence McKenna, Martino Mardersteig, Claudio Naranjo, Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Jonathan Ott, Allan Richardson, Carl Ruck, Richard Evans Schultes, Alexander Shulgin and Guy Stresser-Pean. Final word is pending from two or three others.

The original deadline for receipt of contributions was no later than 1 May 1988, which some invited participants found too pressing in light of their spring teaching schedules. The deadline has therefore been extended to 15 July 1988. It is hoped that most contributors will get their essays in before that date--the sooner the better, obviously. Essays have already been received from several participants.

I have reviewed and really like your contribution. It's not only informative but also very appropriate to this biographically-oriented Festschrift. I'll make only a few editorial changes before sending it to the publisher, who then may suggest some additional changes. After that, it will be sent back to you for your final approval.

With best regards,



Thomas Riedlinger

Department of Microbiology
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
BATON ROUGE · LOUISIANA · 70803-1715 504.388-2601

28-VII-1988

Mr. Thomas Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

Dear Mr. Riedlinger:

I am not quite sure that I should be addressing this inquiry to you, but know of no one else who may be closer to the matter about which I inquire, so I ask your indulgence in responding to it, if possible.

As you know, Gordon and I had a correspondence that extended over a 20-year period, and he often consulted me about some arcane ethnomycological point or other. In a note to me dated 14 October 1986 (copy enclosed), Gordon refers to his book which was about to be published by Yale Univ. Press, and generously offered to send me a copy of the "small first edition" printed by Mardersteig.

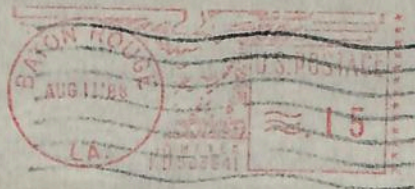
No doubt because of a multitude of problems that Gordon faced in his last years, this was not done, and I would like to solicit your help in having a copy sent to me in accordance with Gordon's wishes. I would greatly appreciate your efforts in my behalf.

With kind regards,

B. Lowy

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DUGE



tion?

B. Lowy
Botany Dept.
LSU
Baton Rouge, LA
70803

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

8 May 1988

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany and Plant Pathology
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

Dear Prof. Lowy:

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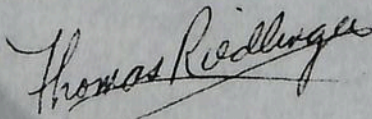
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With best regards,



Thomas Riedlinger

Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

25 January 1988

Prof. Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany and Plant Pathology
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

Dear Prof. Lowy:

The death of R. Gordon Wasson on 23 December 1986 was sad news for those who knew him. It was also a loss for the field of ethnomycology, to which he devoted the highly productive last years of his life.

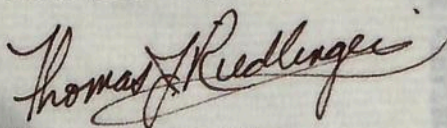
The public record of his many published works is a fitting and distinguished legacy. But also worth preserving are the memories of his family, colleagues and friends. These illuminate not only his professional accomplishments, but also his extraordinary personal qualities.

It therefore seems appropriate to undertake a Festschrift-style tribute that will bring together anecdotes, appreciations, photographs and other biographical material concerning Gordon. I have discussed this with his daughter Masha and his friend and colleague Richard Evans Schultes, both of whom endorse the project. They suggested several people whose participation seemed to them appropriate and even, in some cases, indispensable. These were added to a carefully compiled list that now numbers about 40 names. Yours, of course, is one of them.

If you are willing to participate as a contributor to the Gordon Wasson "Festschrift," please let me know within the next few days. Your completed submission would be due no later than 1 May 1988. Any length for the written material is acceptable, though it is hoped that most contributors will not exceed 5,000 words. If editing seems warranted, the edited version of your material will be returned for your final approval before it is published. Photographs should be clearly identified--names, date, location and situation. These can be returned, if so requested, after the book has been published. A curriculum vitae, resume or less formal statement of your background and current professional position should accompany your submission.

Contributors each will receive at least one complimentary copy of the book when it is published. As is usual with Festschriften, no other payment can be offered; such books are not expected to return large profits. It is mainly a "labor of love" undertaken in tribute to Gordon.

With best regards,



Thomas J. Riedlinger



Department of Botany
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AND AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL COLLEGE
BATON ROUGE · LOUISIANA · 70803-1705

504/388-8485

II
1-~~f~~-1988

Mr. Thomas J. Riedlinger
8514 Parkview Avenue
Brookfield, Illinois 60513

Dear Mr. Riedlinger:

A "Festschrift" for Gordon Wasson would certainly be appropriate and timely, and I would gladly contribute to such a volume. Of Festschriften that I have seen, however, many have virtually ignored the honoree, and have offered merely a collection of papers with little or no reference to the person commemorated. Obviously, this is not the kind of tribute that you envisage.

While considering a contribution that would be meaningful, it occurred to me that in a certain sense, I am at a disadvantage. By this I mean that my personal acquaintance with Gordon has been minimal. I was with him but twice, both times only briefly. It was for this reason that I turned down the invitation by the editor of Economic Botany to write Gordon's obituary. I first met him in 1960 at the annual meeting of the Mycological Society of America held in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where he was the invited speaker. At that time we had a spirited exchange following his memorable presentation concerning his experiences in Huautla de Jiménez, México, with the curandera María Sabina (whom I was not to meet until 1969). By 1960 I had of course seen Gordon's "MRH," and I was deeply impressed with his scholarly, convincing thesis. At Stillwater, I asked Gordon whether he was acquainted with a bit of Hungarian folklore that referred to mushrooms, and since I have a command of Hungarian, I thought I would test his knowledge. I told him, that as a child, I had heard my Hungarian mother use the expression "bolond gomba," and he immediately seized upon this with enthusiasm, correctly translating it as "crazy mushroom." I was astonished that he was able to do this, since to most of the world, Hungarian is a totally obscure language. I should add, that the expression is still in current use, as I found years later, when I made inquiry in Hungary. It is generally used by a vexed parent indignantly addressing a child who has said something outlandish. The sentence in which the words occur is: "Mi a baj, ettél talán bolond gombát?" or some variation thereof, meaning, "What's the matter, have you eaten crazy mushrooms?" Twenty three years passed before I saw Gordon again. In February, 1983, I was invited together with others, to speak at the dedication of the Wasson Ethnomycological Library at Harvard.

In that long interim, however, Gordon and I had a considerable correspondence, with an exchange of some two hundred letters or notes which began in 1965, and continued until 1986. Gordon's last letter to me is dated 14 October, 1986. He often asked penetrating questions or revealed his thoughts and interpretations about specific matters which later appeared in his published works.

He was always extremely careful about the verification of the smallest detail, and he was meticulous in giving credit to his colleagues, when credit was due. In the first chapter of his newest book, unfortunately posthumous, which I have not yet seen, but which he promised to send me when it was published, he cites at length some of my Guatemalan findings.

It is through our correspondence, therefore, that all our discussions, questions, evaluations, disclosures of new discoveries, and animadversions, took place. In later years, Gordon also phoned me to verify or to discuss some point or other about which he had a question. Although he invited me to meet with him at his home in Danbury, I was never able to avail myself of the opportunity to do so.

I have enclosed for your consideration my remarks made on the occasion of the dedication of Gordon's library at Harvard. Although it is brief, perhaps it may serve as my contribution to the Festschrift. Please let me know whether you consider this to be suitable for the volume you plan to publish.

Cordially,

B. Lowy

Bernard Lowy
Professor Emeritus

P.S. This is written in haste, so as not to delay your editorial work. In answer to a call that I have just received from my brother who is seriously ill, I am leaving on a morning flight (Tues.) to join him in Short Hills, New Jersey. I expect to be away for about a week or 10 days. Perhaps by the time I return, I may expect your reply to my enclosure.



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R. GORDON WASSON
42, Long Ridge Road · DANBURY, Conn., 06810
TEL.: (203) 748:0123

14 October 1986

Professor Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803-1705

Dear Bernard:

Thank you for your recent letter with information about your visit to Harvard. I think if your library has not yet ordered the book, it would be a good idea to send the order direct to the Editor in Chief of the Yale University Press. His name is Edward Tripp, Editor-at-Large. There will be a very small first edition printed by Martino Mardersteig, of which I will send a personal copy for you to join its fellows on your shelves.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

R. Gordon Wasson

Wasson, R. G. et al. Persephone's-
Quest, Entheogens and the Origin of
Religion, Yale Univ. Press. 1986.?

*This is Gordon's
last letter to me.
He died on 23 Dec.
1986.*

R. GORDON WASSON
42, Long Ridge Road · DANBURY, Conn., 06810
TEL.: (203) 748:0123
14 Sept. 1986

Dear Bernard:

Thanks for your letter. I have been intending to write you for some time but have been putting it off.

Ledwith's failure to answer you is characteristic. He has never answered me at any time. I go to the library at Harvard, but seldom. I still send papers and books there. The new book has not been published yet. The Yale University Press is committed to bring it out. The title is:

Persephone's Quest: Entheogens and the Origins of Religion.

The book carries the names of four authors: I wrote 3 chapters, Carl A.P. Ruck 3, and Stella Kramrisch, the Indologist, one chapter and Jonathan Ott one. It will be out in the fall.

Ruck and I are well pleased that Yale University Press took the book, especially as the Harvard University Press turned it down when Dick Schaller recommended it to them. Yale was enthusiastic over it and accepted it almost as soon as they looked at it.

I am convinced that you are feeling well and following your own feeling about how you should do.

You will get a copy of the edition being published by Mandelstam in Venice. Well, this is about all I have to say.

As ever yours,

R. Gordon Wasson

30-IX-1986

Dear Gordon,

Last week, I returned from Boston where I attended my daughter's wedding on the campus of Brandeis Univ. of which she is an alumna. I also visited Dick Schultes who gave me a brief account of the great celebration marking Harvard's 350th year. He has received special honors from the Colombian Government for his many botanical contributions there over the years. He looks robust, and tells me that he is recovering satisfactorily from his recent severe illness. Dick also showed me around the new room housing your library, which is quite attractive, and the books eminently accessible.

It was good to have your letter with confirmation of the imminent publication of your new

book by the Yale Univ. Press. I shall notify
the Rare Book Room of our library (where your
volumes are housed) and request its purchase
when it becomes available. Many thanks for
your kindness in including me among those
who will receive a copy from Verona.

Presently, I am at work on some of my
fungi collected in June on the Ilha de Maracá,
Roraima, Brazil. Late in November I expect to
be in Oaxtepec, Mexico, to give a talk at The
2^o Congreso Nacional de la Sociedad Mexicana
de Micología.

Wishing you continued good health,

yours,

Bernard



27-XII-1985

Dr. Dennis Tedlock
Boston University
Department of Anthropology

Dear Dr. Tedlock,

I have just read your stunning translation of the Popol Vuh. Among the multitude of data that you present in your notes, you refer to my finding the double meaning of "Cakulha", both Thunderbolt god and Amanita muscaria, which you have independently confirmed. It is gratifying to have this confirmation from an unimpeachable source.

Regarding the significance of mushroom stones and their possible association with an ancient mesoamerican mushroom cult, the evidence may not yet be conclusive, but there are strong indications that the role played by naturally occurring hallucinogens, including mushroomic ones, was not inconsequential in precolumbian mesoamerica. I have touched on this and related matters in a few papers that may not have come to your attention, and which I enclose. I would value your comments.

Sincerely,

B. Lowy
Prof. Emeritus

9-XII-1985

Dear Gordon,

With the death of Robert Craves, a literary giant of the century is gone. I know that (in his whimsical way) he honored you when you were his guest in Degré. Are you planning to include some statement about him in your new book?

Yours,

Bernard

14-XII-1985

8:25-8:40 AM (home)

Wason phoned, and we had a pleasant talk. He asked me to confirm the identification of Ananias muscaria I had collected ^(my) in Chichicastenango, Guate. and repeated the double meaning of Kokulpa, the Quiché word for their god of the Thunderbolt and for A. muscaria. Gordon called my attention to a new translation of the Popol Vuh by Dennis Tedlow in which he cites my discovery (Kokulpa = cokulha).

5-XII-1985

Dear Gordon,

Thanks for calling my attention to a new translation of the Codex Vuh. The first translation I acquired, some years ago, was by Villacorta & Rodes (1927), a Spanish prose version without notes. I also have the Coetz-Morley (1950) and Edmonson's 1971 tour de force. It should be interesting to compare some passages.

Yes, I have recovered completely (without "benefit" of surgical intervention), and had no problems in the field this past summer in Hungary. I am tentatively planning to return to Brazil for more field work in the fall of '86 with the Projeto Flora Neotropica. Guatemala is off limits while ruffians roam the countryside in search of live targets to shoot at.

If you send me pertinent pre-publication data on your forthcoming book, I'll inform the LSU library and recommend its purchase, as I have done with your previous tomes. Is Mardonsteig in charge again?

Stay well! Best regards,

Bernard

P.S. - My new home phone number: (504) 769-6241. Insurance salesman and other underinsurables were pestering me now that I'm nearly three score and two.

R. GORDON WASSON
42, Long Ridge Road · DANBURY, Conn., 06810
TEL.: (203) 748:0123
26 Nov. 1985

Dear Bernard:

I tried to reach you by phone today but they told me you had an unlisted number that was not to be released.

You will be interested in the new publication of Dennis Zedler's Popol Vuh, a new edition including a lengthy introduction, a ^{complete} translation, lengthy notes, a glossary, bibliography, with ^{only} one article by you, the one in Mycologia. They mention your discovery of the secondary meaning of kakulja and cite you by name. They confirmed your discovery by ^{their} personal inquiry. See pp 249-251, also p. 343 in glossary for a discussion of hanekam and p. 352 for a discussion of 'dwarf' and 'green'.

How are you? How is your back? All cured?

I hope so.

This is all for now. My book will be out shortly.

Cordially
Gordon

The cost of Zedler's book is \$19.95. Did they get in touch with you?

October 11, 1983
949 North Alfred Street #9
Los Angeles, California 90069

Professor Bernard Lowy
Department of Botany
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803

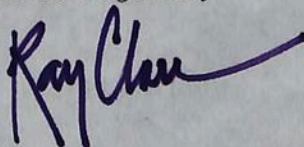
Dear Professor Lowy:

I am seeking to obtain a copy of your 1971 paper "Some Observations on Ethnomycology in Mexico and Guatemala" published in Revista Inter-Americana Review, 1:1, pp. 39-49. If you have any reprints of this article, could you please send me a copy?

Since you sent me a copy of your papers on "Mushroom Symbolism in the Maya Codices" and Amanita muscaria in March 1979 I have identified the provenance where the Postclassic Mayan Codex Madrid (Tro-Cortesiano) was obtained by Hernan Cortes (1519) as the sanctuary of Ix Chel on the northeast coast of the lowland Yucatan Peninsula... where Amanita muscaria is not found.

I have also come to the conclusion that the Quiche Maya term "itzel ocox" which you first reported in Mycologia (Jan.-Feb. 1974:189) is not a descriptive expression of the mushroom's dangerous and fearful potentials. I believe the translation which you obtained from Quiche Mayan Indians (?) and submitted in your 1974 article on Amanita muscaria is actually an ascribed secondary meaning. I would like to send you a copy of my understanding of the primary meaning of "itzel ocox" when I have written a paper covering the word's etymology.

Best regards,



Ray Clare,
Ecab Maya ethnohistorian

I checked it out with James Mondloch in Guatemala City. He is the author of "Basic Quiche Grammar", published by the Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State Univ. of NY at Albany. (copy in my library)