



Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation
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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.

American Association for the Advancement of Science



This is to certify that

Otto Degener

is a

FIFTY YEAR MEMBER

of the American Association for the Advancement of Science,

in testimony whereof

the President and the Executive Officer

have hereunto set their hands and the seal of the Association

this 9th *day of* July, 1976



W. M. C. C. C.
President

William D. Carey
Executive Officer

The New York Botanical Garden

presents the

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

to

Otto Degener, M.S., D.Sc.

for

an outstanding contribution to the advancement of
Horticulture and Botany

Bronx, New York
May 3, 1979

For the Board of Managers

Donald J. Bruckman
Chairman

Howard A. Senter
President

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Drs. Isa and Otto Degener

A few weeks ago the Hawaii State Senate passed a resolution commending Dr. Otto Degener for his many contributions and unceasing efforts to preserve Hawaii's nearly 900 species of threatened and endangered native plants. For 50 of his 80 years, Otto Degener's has been a voice of the wilderness of unrestrained development overspreading and engulfing Hawaii's unique island ecosystem, its uniqueness the result of the isolated evolution of a great diversity of plants over many thousands of years. He has fearlessly and energetically worked to educate and influence government officials, developers, journalists, conservationists, and the general public, not to a dreamy-eyed return to an imagined sylvan or pastoral ideal, but to their own little-realized self-interest in saving a portion of the Islands' various native habitats from the bulldozer, feral mammals, introduced game animals, and alien weeds. Long before the term "endangered species" entered the popular lexicon, Otto Degener was sounding the trumpet, calling attention to the high number of Hawaiian plant species destined to imminent extinction. Today the proportion of threatened and endangered native plants species on U. S. territory is nowhere higher than in Hawaii.

Working side by side with Otto has been Dr. Isa Irmgard Degener, his wife and a botanist in her own right. While Otto spent his early years just after World War I in the Bronx, a student of Nathaniel Lord Britton assigned to identify plants collected by ^{him} ~~Per Axel Rydberg~~ in the Rockies, and by ^{his own} ~~Dr. Britton's~~ associates in the West Indies, and later a student of Elmer Merrill, the Garden's third director, studying more than 50,000 specimens of Hawaiian plants sent for safekeeping, Isa grew up in her native Germany, graduating magna cum laude from Berlin University just after World War II. She served for a time as botanical assistant to Dr. Sleumer, presently our Krukoff curator. After Otto and Isa married in 1953, the Degeners took up their studies on site in Hawaii, supported by a long series of NSF grants. With the possible exception of Dr. B. A. Krukoff, who was presented the Garden's Distinguished Service Award in 1970, no one living has had a longer professional association with the Garden than Otto Degener. The Degeners' Flora Hawaiiensis is a monument to their dedication to the sagacity in the complex floristic botany of the Islands. The family Degeneraciae and genus Degeneria, named for their discoverers, are tributes to their energy as botanical explorers and their discerning eye in sampling the diversity of plants in the Pacific Islands.

Given the Degeners' unswerving messianic zeal for their work and the depth of their commitment, it seems appropriate to quote the biblical reference illuminating the fly sheet in one of the volumes of Flora Hawaiiensis:

And I brought you into a plentiful country,
To eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof;
But when ye entered, ye defiled my land,
And made mine heritage an abomination.

Hunt

Drs. Otto and Isa Degener

The following was published in the *Honolulu Advertiser*:
"Botanists ought to be considered the most important people in the world for they are specialists in plant life, without which no animal life, including man himself, could exist. Actually, you don't hear much about them. The atom smashers get the play . . ." That was written in March 1958. The occasion was publication of the fifth volume of *Flora Hawiianensis* or *New Illustrated Flora of the Hawaiian Islands*, co-authored by Drs. Otto and Isa Degener. The article went on to speak of botanists combining adventure with scholarship, and plant explorers writing about their adventures as well as their scientific findings. The Degeners have done this in exemplary fashion.

While *Flora Hawiianensis* focuses on the flora of the Hawaiian Islands, Dr. Otto Degener's roots run deep into the Botanical Garden. Born in East Orange, New Jersey, in 1899, this noted botanist, for whom the plant family Degeneriaceae is named, has made the Garden's Herbarium the main depository of his field collections. And since taking up residence in Hawaii in 1922, it has been to the Garden he has returned time and again these many years for study while enriching our Herbarium holdings.

Dr. Isa Irmgard Degener was born in Berlin, Germany, and in 1949 received her doctorate from the University of Berlin. The Degeners were married in 1953 and, as Otto Degener puts it, "have been teammates ever since."

While pressing onward with publication of additional volumes of *Flora Hawiianensis* and other works, the Drs. Degener, as our Collaborators in Hawaiian Botany, have directed many of their efforts toward documentation and preservation of Hawaii's magnificent wildlife resources. In a resolution of commendation adopted March 22, 1979, the Hawaii Senate paid tribute to their "lifetime perseverance in relating humankind to the natural environment upon which we ultimately depend for survival as a species."

It is in recognition of their continuing contributions, through botany, to botanical science in general and to The New York Botanical Garden in particular, that the Board of Managers presents to Drs. Otto and Isa Degener the Distinguished Service Award.



The Senate of the State of Hawaii
hereby presents to:

DR. OTTO DEGENER

Senate Resolution No. 294
entitled:

COMMENDING DR. OTTO DEGENER

adopted this 22nd day of MARCH 1979



Richard L. H. Noy
President of the Senate

Simi Vras
Clerk of the Senate

The TENTH Legislature

(To be made one and seven copies)

THE SENATE

TENTH LEGISLATURE, 1979.

STATE OF HAWAII

S.R. NO. 294

SENATE RESOLUTION

COMMENDING DR. OTTO DEGENER.

WHEREAS, the flora and fauna of Hawaii's unique island ecosystem are a most treasured natural resource; and

WHEREAS, the preservation of our wildlife resources, which have adapted and evolved in our isolated oceanic environment over many thousands of years, has become a paramount concern in the recent years of Hawaii's rapid urbanization; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Otto Degener, botanist, taxonomist, conservationist, author, and advocate, has devoted well over a half-century toward a better understanding of our invaluable yet highly sensitive natural environment; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Degener's many works, including Plants of Hawaii National Park and the seven-volume Flora Hawaiiensis, comprise an unparalleled collection of information on plant-life in Hawaii, and stand as a remarkable resource in itself to students, teachers, scientists, and laymen alike, both locally and worldwide; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Degener has been an inspiration to countless others in teaching the values of native ecosystems, in encouraging study of Hawaiian plants, and in recruiting new workers for protection of native wildlife and plants; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Degener stood alone for most of the past fifty years as a voice in the wilderness, steadily appealing year after year for recognition of Hawaii's botanical wonders and conservation of their habitats, having no peer in his unshakeable, deep commitment to Hawaii's natural environment; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Degener has been tireless in his forthright, fearless efforts to educate and influence government officials, developers, journalists, other conservationists, and the general public to seek protection of native habitats from the bulldozer, feral mammals, introduced game, and introduced weeds that naturalize in our native forests; and



Die Unterzeichneten geben hiermit geziemend Nachricht von dem Ableben des Herrn

k. u. k. Oberst d. R.,

Josef Kaempf von Baldenstein,

Besitzer der Militärverdienstmedaille am Bande des Militär-Verdienstkreuzes, der Kriegsmedaille etc.,
Kommandeur des ital. Kronenordens,

welcher Freitag, den 14. April 1905 um 4 Uhr Morgens, nach langem, schmerzvollen Leiden und Empfang der heil. Sterbesakramente im 73. Lebensjahre sanft verschieden ist.

Die irdische Hülle des teuren Verbliebenen wird Sonntag, den 16. d. M., präcise 1 Uhr Nachmittags vom Trauerhause: IV. Bez., Schaffergasse Nr. 21, in die Pfarrkirche zu den heil. Schutzhelfen (P. P. Paulaner) überführt, daselbst feierlich eingesegnet und sodann auf dem Central-Friedhofe im eigenen Grabe zur ewigen Ruhe beigesetzt.

Die heil. Seelenmesse wird Montag, den 17. d. M., um 1/2 8 Uhr Früh in obgenannter Pfarrkirche gelesen.

Wien, den 14. April 1905.

Carl Ritter v. Heldenwald, Carl Kaempf von Baldenstein, Henriette v. Heldenwald,
Wilhelm Degener,

als Sohn.

Dr. Hans Ahlemann,

Marie Degener,

Dr. Adolf Ritter v. Boeckmann,

Anna Kuchinka,

Iola Ahlemann,

Lulgi Conte Smerchia,

als Schwäger.

Irene Contessa Smerchia,

als Schwägerin.

als Tochter.

„Entreprise des pompes funèbres“, Aufnahme-Kofal im I. u. I. Garnisons-Spital Nr. 1.

Druck von Ed. Wollup, IX., Böhmengasse 68.

*grandfather of
stephen Austrian-
German
Otto Degener
b. 1899*



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