

Obituary

It is with great sadness that I report the death of William Louis Culberson, distinguished lichenologist, prominent botanist, and treasured friend of us all. He fought cancer for several months and died in his sleep with his beloved wife, Chicita, at his side on February 8, in Duke University Hospital. He was 73.

Bill received his B.S. degree at the University of Cincinnati, and was influenced greatly by E. Lucy Braun and Margaret Fulford, who steered him into lichenology. He studied at the Université de Paris, where he received an M.S. (Diplômé d'études Supérieures) and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, where he worked with John Thompson. Before coming to the Department of Botany at Duke University in 1955, he was a post-doctoral fellow at Harvard University.

Bill had the good fortune to meet Chicita in a German class at the University of Cincinnati and they both were overwhelmed with each other. He persuaded her to come to Wisconsin and get an M.S. in chemistry while he pursued his Ph.D., which she did. This was the beginning of an incredible collaboration in lichen chemistry and taxonomy. It was more than a simple collaboration: it was a union of old-fashioned love and scientific talents. I don't think either could have had the success they produced without the other. They were a remarkable team in all respects.

I won't detail all of Bill's honors, there are many. He was president of the Botanical Society of America and the American Bryological and Lichenological Society and was editor of both journals of the two societies. He taught lichenology for many years at Duke and inspired students in many other fields. A note from Marshall Crosby is typical of the responses: "His lichen class was one of the best courses I took at Duke, and he helped tremendously with my developing interests in editing and bibliography." Bill was a linguist. Unlike most American scientists, he was fluent in French and German. He knew Latin and wrote all of our Latin diagnoses. I don't know what we will do without him.

What many of you might not know about Bill was his dedicated interest in all aspects of horticulture and gardens. He was director of the Sarah P. Duke Gardens for 20 years and greatly expanded and improved it, notably by the addition of a magnificent Asiatic garden, now named for him. He rescued it from an ordinary Kodachrome garden to a real Botanical Garden!

In addition to these outside activities, Bill produced more than 100 scientific papers in lichenology and among other things, wrote a beautifully written article for each issue of *Flora*, the Garden's publication. It is hoped that these articles will be put together in a book.

Bill is survived by his wife, Chicita, and a family of devoted friends in the Department of Biology at Duke University. A commemoration will be held at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens at a date to be announced. Donations can be made to the Gardens or to the American Cancer Society.

Please grieve with us.

Sincerely,

Lewis Anderson
Department of Biology
Duke University