

A very thoughtful biographical sketch of Dan's life and career prepared by Dr. Larry Dorr, Chairman of the Department of Botany, which was distributed by Rob Soreng at the June 7, 2016 meeting.

Dan Henry Nicolson (1933-2016)

Dan Nicolson was born on 5 September 1933 in Kansas City, Missouri and grew up in Shenandoah, Iowa where his parents ran the Henry Field's Seed and Nursery Company, which was then one of the largest mail order seed companies in the country. After graduating from Shenandoah High School (1951) Dan enrolled in Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa. Four years later, not only did he graduate with a B.A. (1955) but he also published his first botanical paper: a revision of the genus *Asclepias* (milkweed) in Iowa. Evidently there was an expectation that he would take over the family business and he dutifully pursued a M.B.A. (1957) at Stanford. Botany, however, proved to be more alluring than business and rather than return to Shenandoah, he moved further east to pursue graduate study in Botany at Cornell University (M.S., 1959 and Ph.D., 1964).

While studying at Cornell, Dan met and married Alice (Allie) Black Crawford. The newly wedded couple attended the 1959 International Botanical Congress in Montreal for their honeymoon. This unorthodox destination must not have bothered his wife too much because they remained married for 57 years. While in graduate school Dan and Allie spent almost two years (1960-62) in Malaysia and Southeast Asia where Dan did the field work that led to a monograph of the genus *Aglaonema* (Araceae), the subject of his dissertation.

In 1964 Dan was hired by the Smithsonian Institution to fill a vacancy created when Richard (Dick) Cowan was promoted to Assistant Director of the U.S. National Museum (now National Museum of Natural History). During his first year on the job Dan attended the International Botanical Congress in Edinburgh and spent three months collecting on the island of Dominica in the Caribbean. The following year as the junior curator in the department he was tasked with organizing the move of the U.S. National Herbarium from the Castle to its current location in the West Wing of the Natural History Building. Several years later he organized the Herbarium Services Unit (now Core Collections Management) and was also instrumental in recruiting Ruth Schallert to serve as the first librarian for what is now the Botany and Horticulture Library.

Dan continued his focus on Asian botany and spent a year (1966-67) collecting plants in Nepal as a Senior Fulbright Fellow. This was followed by work in India (1968-74), where he spent three months of each year in Bangalore (now Bengaluru) collaborating with Father C.J. Saldanha on the flora of the Hassan District, which was published in 1975. He also spent a month in Sri Lanka in 1979 and later

contributed a treatment of the Araceae to the multi-volume *A revised handbook of the flora of Ceylon*, which was then being published for the Smithsonian Institution and the National Science Foundation. A three-month long trip to Yunnan, China in 1983 was Dan's last extensive foray into the field.

In the 1970s Dan became deeply involved in botanical nomenclature and in the International Association for Plant Taxonomy (IAPT) so much so that for close to a generation Dan Nicolson and Botanical nomenclature were almost synonymous. He served (1979-99) as nomenclature editor of the journal *Taxon* and was (1981-2006) also a member of the editorial committee for the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* helping to prepare five separate editions. He held numerous offices in the IAPT, including president (1993-99). In conjunction with his interest in nomenclature, Dan also delved deeply into Botanical bibliography and history. His most important contributions to these last fields were *An interpretation of Van Rheedee's Hortus Malabaricus* (1988), *The Forsters and the botany of the second Cook Voyage (1772-1775)* (2004), and the final two supplements to *Taxonomic Literature*, ed. 2 (2008, 2009). All four of these books were published with an IAPT imprint.

Dan liked to quip that his scientific work could be divided into three areas: 1, Monographic work in Araceae (knowing a lot about little); 2, Floristic work in India and the West Indies (knowing a little about a lot); and 3, Nomenclature (knowing a little about really nothing). He was perhaps a little too self-effacing. His contributions to Botany were important and he received recognition for them: a Science Achievement Award (2004) from NMNH, the Stafleu Medal (2005) from the IAPT, and the Secretary's Research Award (2009) from the Smithsonian Institution.

In 2005 Dan attended the International Botanical Congress in Vienna, his ninth and final congress. He retired in December of the same year and initially devoted his time to bringing the monumental IAPT-sponsored project *Taxonomic Literature* to a conclusion. Health issues, however, prevented him from taking on additional projects.

In addition to his wife Allie, Dan's immediate survivors are his three children, John, Sally, and David. David works in the Natural History Building as a Data Development Coordinator for the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS), which is part of the USGS.

The Department of Botany plans to hold a Memorial Service for Dan in the early Fall.