

In Honor of Hannah Croasdale

Marine Biological Laboratory, April 28, 1985

This weekend we pay tribute to Hannah Croasdale, and recognize her as the honorary chairperson of the 24th meeting of this Society. Let me tell you a bit about what Hannah means to me personally, and what she means to phycologists and biologists professionally.

There is ample reason for recognizing Hannah Croasdale on this occasion. For many of us, Hannah has been one of the senior phycologists for the entirety of our professional lives. She was a part of Woods Hole phycology long before all of us became involved with M.B.L., perhaps since 1928 or 1929. She remains a part of M.B.L. today. During the early periods of marine botany at M.B.L., along with Randolph Taylor and others, Hannah Croasdale was much involved in phycology instruction. She and W.R.T. were instrumental in keeping marine botany alive during the troubled years of W.W. II. During that time, how many collections of marine and freshwater plants were made with the aid of her old rickety bicycle? She was largely responsible for the gathering and accumulation of much of the wonderful wet stack material I used, not only as a student, but also later as a T.A., and eventually as an instructor in the marine botany course. Many of my colleagues, as well as generations of graduate and undergraduate students have gained professionally through the "Hannah" experience.

Hannah has been important to all of us in this room. She was one of the founders of our parent society, the Phycological

Society of America. She has also been a past chairperson of this society, P.S.A. She has been and continues to be important in this aspect of our professional lives.

Hannah is a special source for information. That diminutive frame houses both an exciting intellect and a veritable arsenal of phycological expertise. I am impressed when I read the list of Hannah's publications. Imagine, just for the flavor, five papers on Alaskan desmids, three or four from the Canadian eastern arctic, including a long account of the freshwater algae of Ellesmere Island, the largest of the arctic islands. There are also in depth studies of desmids from Africa, South America, Australia and, almost as a gift to us, a general treatise of the North American Desmidaceae. Know well, these papers are not "pot boilers", sketchy and published in haste. These papers represent a life time of thought and effort, submitted for publication only when Hannah said, "complete." These papers represent the essence of scholarly pursuit that we all strive for. There's no hint of provincialism here, for she clearly has a broad knowledge of her beloved desmids. Her publications begin in 1935 with a study of the freshwater algae of the Woods Hole region. Don't know when they will end but surely her research efforts have been cosmopolitan, if not, indeed, eclectic. As one of several experts on the identification and taxonomy of desmids she has collaborated with Prescott, Flint, Bicudo and others to greatly further our knowledge of the desmids of the world. Through writing and word of mouth she has helped us elucidate the details of algal morphology and to broaden our understanding

of algal taxonomy. There is more, much more. What would we have done without Hannah's expertise in Latin and her willingness to help us with descriptions of new taxa, and, for many of us, even with the English language.

There are a number of positive words that might be used to characterize this special person. I'll mention just one, friendliness. She is a friend to many. Her friendship encompasses the gift of assistance whenever requested. You who do not know Hannah may at first think of her as self effacing. Don't be fooled. She has indomitable energy and fortitude. Phil Cook tells me that after a long hard field trip, with Hannah leading, she told the students, "I'll cook dinner, but only after WE HAVE taken care of the collections." There are lots of stories like this one where the students were ready to quit or at least take a break, but the little task master would be there to dictate otherwise.

I have another tale which I've got to chalk up to the Skinny Dead Mouse man, Frank Trainor. He is one of the lucky ones who has known and worked with Hannah. I called Frank and said: "Got anything interesting to tell me about Hannah?" There ensued a long discussion, with Frank doing most of the talking, full of fun and reminiscence. His bottom line, the take home lesson that I would like to share with you was, "One is comfortable with Hannah and in Hannah's presence...almost like a pair of old beloved slippers."

Lastly, I would like to tell you about something that really evoked fond memories. In casting about for resource material I took down from the files a National Science Foundation proposal

written by Hannah. My review was added to the proposal. I discovered that I had begun the review with a short declarative sentence that I had completely forgotten, but which summed up my feelings concerning the proposed research. The same sentence, I feel, sums up our feelings about the P.I. and what she means to us all. What I had written to the review panel was, "Such a deal we need." Let me add the corollary, "Such a deal we got." Hannah Croasdale, we love ya'. Your friendship and the fruits of your labor are greatly appreciated by all of us.

R. T. Wilce
Amherst, Mass.
April 1985