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In Memoriam: Larry Eilers

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In Memoriam: Larry Eilers

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Photo by Bill Witt.

I first met Larry at Lakeside Lab in the summer of 1965. He was teaching for the first time at Lakeside and I was taking my first Lakeside course, plant tax, from him. In 1968, he joined the faculty at University of Northern Iowa (UNI) and kept returning to Lakeside for almost three decades. The cabin to the right of the entrance was the "Eilers' House."

Larry came to botany along an unusual route. His first college degree was in engineering. After a stint at secondary teaching Larry worked at Collins Radio in Cedar Rapids, then returned to UNI (SCI then) and took a master's degree in biology. He continued his study at the University of Iowa under Dr. Robert Thorne and took his Ph.D. in 1964. He did the flora of the Iowan Surface (the Iowan Drift in those days). He taught at Syracuse University and University of Indiana at Terra Haute before joining the faculty of the University of Northern Iowa. He was the logical person to do the flora of Iowa as the only one of Thorne's students remaining in the state. In the process of working on the flora his previous interests in engineering

lead him to take up computer programming. He wrote his own binary code for a database for the herbarium at UNI. This interest went even further in experimentation with computer generation of keys for various plant groups. Eventually, in 1994, he published the culmination of his professional career, *The Vascular Plants of Iowa*, with Dean Roosa. I was honored to have my copy of his book signed by him a month or two before his death. He wrote, "To my *very first* tax student at Lakeside."

Another aspect of Larry's professional life was his dedication to teaching. Over the years he tramped the prairies, forests and wetlands of Iowa leading unnumbered students to an understanding of plants, their biology and classification. Larry retired from the faculty at UNI in 1989 and died 26 March 2000.

Larry is missed by the botanists of Iowa; his robust greeting, his unforgettable laughter, and his dedication to the study of Iowa's flora. We are left to be comforted by our having known him and having been influenced by his spirit.