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his Contributions to the Study of Laboulbeniales and
Zygomycetes*

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Preface to Special Issue

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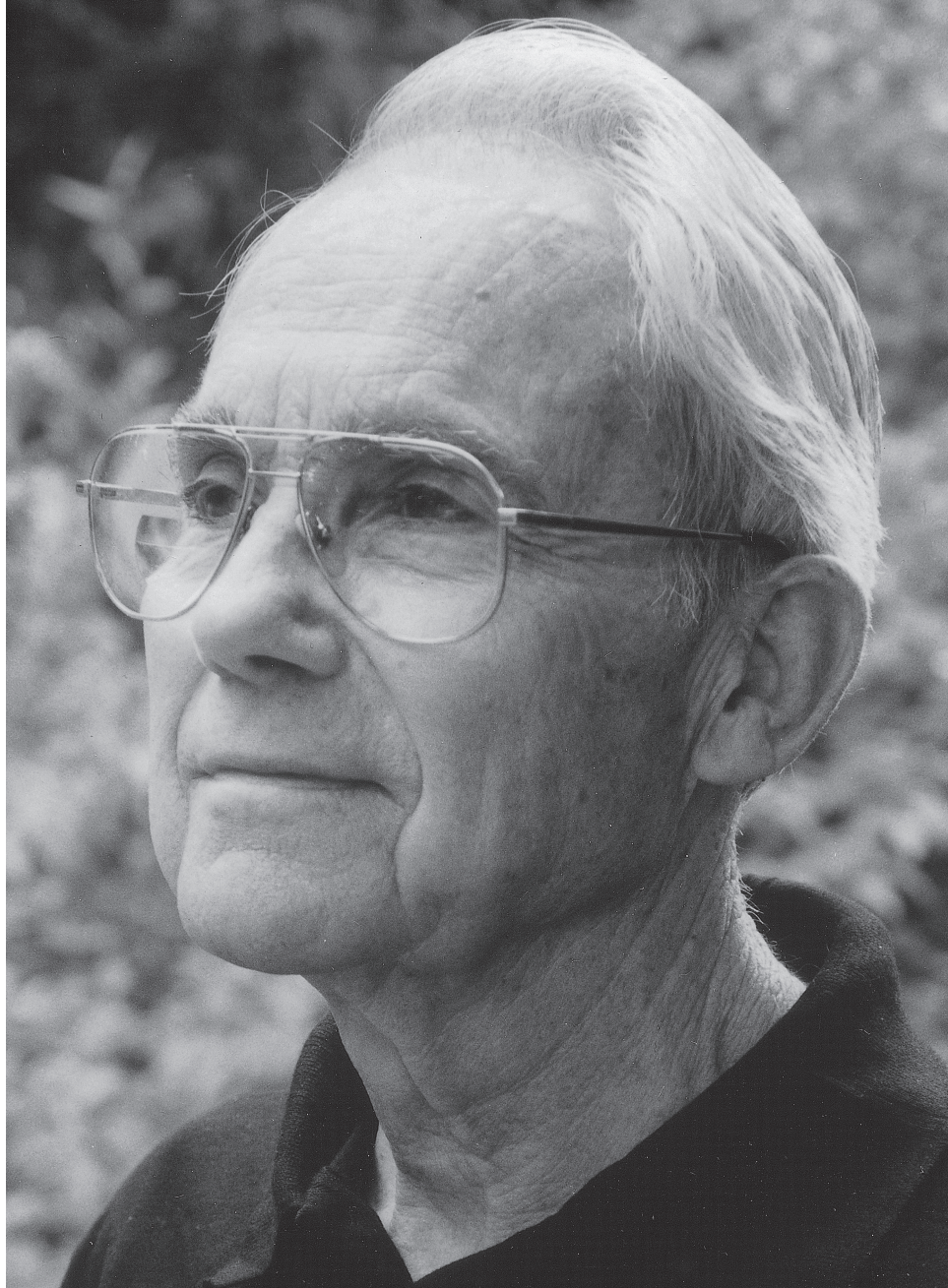
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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In honor of Richard K. Benjamin, Editor-in-Chief of *Aliso* from 1958 to 2002, this volume is devoted exclusively to the topic of his scholarly endeavors—the fungal order Laboulbeniales Engler and Zygomycetes G.Winter. Previous issues of this journal have often included articles on Laboulbeniales and their allies, but the special mycological focus of Volume 26 warrants a brief introduction.

Laboulbeniales are a specialized group of Ascomycetes that form obligate associations with insects and some other arthropods. They live parasitically on these hosts but do not appear to impose a major nutritional strain. Structural simplification and modification of fungal mycelium has led to the formation of a haustorium, a peglike structure that enables the parasite to absorb nutriment from the host.

Five of the six contributions in this volume are primarily concerned with the description of taxonomic novelties and the demarcation of taxonomic boundaries, reflecting the active role that alpha-taxonomy plays in this group. Challenges are imposed by morphological differences arising from the phenomenon of dioecy (Santamaria), positional effects in relation to the host insect's body (Rossi and Bergonzo), the intimacy of the association with the host (Terada et al.), and the discovery of new species that call for the adjustment of existing taxonomic boundaries (Rossi and Weir; Weir). The article by Benny surveys the intricate methods for the culture and isolation of Zygomycetes, bringing together information from a large body of literature sources. It is the only contribution that focuses on Zygomycetes, a group of fungi that also benefited from Dr. Benjamin's pioneering research.



REMEMBERING DR. RICHARD K. BENJAMIN

It is an honor to be able to write about Dick Benjamin (Ben to all his many friends and admirers). He was my best friend and we made many field trips and other adventures together. Our wives were also close friends. We first met in Iowa City, Iowa, when our botany department at the University of Iowa tried to add him to our staff. He turned us down in order to finish his PhD in mycology at the University of Illinois. After completing his PhD, he spent a year as a post-doc at Harvard before accepting his position as Mycologist at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (RSABG) in Claremont, California, in 1952. I told him that since he would not join us in Iowa City I had to come to Claremont to join him in 1962.

After his year at Harvard, Dick spent his entire academic career at the Rancho as Mycologist and as Professor of Botany at Claremont Graduate School (now Claremont Graduate University). He turned down Harvard and many other institutions that tried to lure him away from the Rancho. He taught mycology to many of our graduate students and trained four mycologists, Clifford J. Anastasiou, Gerald L. Benny, Donald H. Ford, and Bruce Tucker. As one of the world's most distinguished mycologists, he rose through all the official ranks to become, in 1965, president of the Mycological Society of America and, from 1970 through 1975, editor-in-chief of *Mycologia*. He belonged to many national and international societies as fellow or member and received many prestigious awards, including (in 1993) the Distinguished Mycologist Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Mycological Society of America. More important to us, he had been for many years editor of our journal *Aliso*.

He published more than 60 important papers in mycology, including monographs and revisions of Mucorales and Laboulbeniales. He illustrated them with his own superb drawings. He described and named numerous taxa from orders and families down to genera and species. At least three genera and seven species have been named for R. K. Benjamin.

We all enjoyed Ben for his good nature and friendliness. He and I instituted the Thursday luncheons at local restaurants, now joined by many staff, graduate students, and botanical visitors. Ben loved our field trips, especially to the deserts and mountains. In his avid hunt for mycological specimens he sometimes fell into vernal pools or ponds to our general amusement. For years his principal non-mycological hobby was panning for gold especially

in the San Bernardino Mountains. I called him our old sourdough. Surely the small amount of gold dust he kept in a vial did not begin to match the expense of his equipment and gas for his car, but the good mountain air and exercise was good for him. He panned while I collected vascular plants. Ben was also an enthusiastic exerciser whereas I avoided unnecessary exertion. It bugged him when his prostate cancer stopped his exercise routine and my broken right hip forced me into daily gym participation. We both ended up at our local Mt. San Antonio Gardens retirement community. It was a sad day when I was present at his death in April of 2002 at our Health Center.

Robert F. Thorne, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden
May 2008

Ben's memory lives on at the Botanic Gardens in many ways. His boojum tree (*Idria columnaria* Kellogg) was moved here from his back yard on the east side of Claremont to the Communities section at RSABG. It is named "Benji" for its late owner and by analogy with the Garden's other boojum tree known as "Booji". Benjamin Pond on the south side of the Garden continues to delight many visitors and is home to a plethora of wildlife and quite possibly mycological specimens. To the best of our knowledge, Ben never fell into this pond! During the course of various Thursday luncheons and other social botanical gatherings, Bob Thorne and Ben used to grace us with many World War II anecdotes. Ben donned his military uniform on at least one such occasion. He also used to talk about his early memories of Claremont and the Garden in the early 1950s, having still seen the original Botanic Garden in Orange County's Santa Ana Canyon (the Garden was moved to its current location in 1951) and recalling Foothill Boulevard—the famous Route 66 that straddles Claremont—before it was paved. The easygoing nature of our mycologist colleague was manifested in his endorsement of two equivalent nicknames, Ben and Dick, which left some of us in a constant dilemma as to which to use. If Ben were to read this, I am convinced Dick would derive much mirth from learning of this perpetual indecision!