

BOOK REVIEWS

Welcome to Heights High. Diana Tittle. 1996. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, OH. 345 p. \$18.95 paper.

As an eighteen year veteran school administrator, I found *Welcome to Heights High: The Crippling Politics of Restructuring America's Public Schools* to be more realistic than I would like to admit. Diana Tittle has done a masterful job portraying the various personalities and viewpoints of the cast of characters involved in decision making in a complex, large high school.

Tittle spent much of her time between 1988 and 1992 observing and documenting the progress of Cleveland Heights-University Heights High School (Heights High) administrators and faculty members as they attempted to reform and transform their school. Making and sustaining meaningful change is a difficult task in any setting but it seemed to be nearly impossible at Heights High.

Tittle captured the many and varied perspectives of key players in American high schools. To the reader, the caricature-like portraits of the union president who had built a fiefdom and won the dedication of his subjects, the principal who was so confined to his point of view that he appeared to have on blinders, and the community activist who loved to create controversy, may seem unlikely but they probably accurately reflect the environment at Heights High.

There is a culture of inertia at the school that is not unlike the cultures at any institution. Although changes can be mandated or demanded, they are not likely to occur unless teachers buy in and support the proposed changes. Innovation cannot be imposed, teachers simply shut their doors and do as they always have done. This proved largely to be the case at Heights High. Administrative turn-over, the passive ultra-conservative sociology of the teaching profession, the high degree of centralization of school district management, the political nature of school boards, and the militant stance of many teacher unions all combine to make systemic change unlikely, if not impossible.

This case study follows the implementation of the Model Schools Project, an attempt to give teachers responsibility and accountability for redesigning their school. Among the many issues prompting the need for change was the racial transformation that occurred in the 1980s at Heights High and the resulting changes in student learning and behavior that staff and community members witnessed.

There was a stated philosophy that all students could learn but mounting evidence that many (mostly African-Americans) chose not to apply themselves to that task. The principal was determined to correct this situation and he charged ahead at full speed to accomplish his goal. In his haste, he failed to infuse his goal into the hearts and minds of the vast majority of the faculty. Having missed this critical step, his plan was doomed from the outset to fail.

Having spent several years as Superintendent of Schools in a nearby Cleveland suburb, I knew some of the

characters in the book on a personal basis. I think that the portrayals of those people with whom I am acquainted are one-dimensional and not completely accurate. Perhaps the context of the book prevented the author from viewing the main characters through the different lenses necessary to get a well-rounded, full portrait of these people.

Board elections, superintendent searches, and the antics of several community groups only served to stir the pot and add intrigue and flavor to the stew. The resulting book is entertaining and enlightening. For those engaged in the business of change in our nation's public schools, *Welcome to Heights High* would be interesting reading. Each reader should be able to see a little of themselves in the book's characters and each will be thankful that Diana Tittle selected Heights High instead of our respective schools for her case study.

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Michigan Flora: A Guide to the Identification and Occurrence of the Native and Naturalized Seed-Plants of the State. Part III: Dicots (Pyrolaceae-Compositae). Edward G. Voss. 1996. Cranbrook Institute of Science, Bloomfield Hills, and University of Michigan Herbarium, Ann Arbor. xxi + 622 p. \$16.50 (in USA).

"The Michigan Flora Project," it was announced in *Taxon* 6:156-7, "officially got under way October 1, 1956, and is expected to be completed by the summer of 1961." Forty years after the inception of the project, the third and final volume of *Michigan Flora* has come off the press. Part III covers the "sympetalous dicots," that is, the families Pyrolaceae through Compositae (Asteraceae).

The prolongation of this project has been of immense benefit to systematic botanists, especially those in the Great Lakes region, and to others with related interests. One obvious aspect is the thoroughness with which Dr. Voss investigated the flora of Michigan. His field research extended to every part of the state, and included the collection and identification of tens of thousands of specimens. He also studied the specimens in all of the major and nearly all of the smaller herbaria in Michigan, including some private collections, as well as those in significant repositories of Michigan specimens outside the state, and investigated the basis and documentation, if any, for questionable reports of species occurring in Michigan. Like his exploration of the state, his search of the literature was thorough.

Dr. Voss's field work added many species to the known flora of Michigan, some of which were native species at the limits of their ranges, whereas others were newly arrived species adapted to disturbed habitats. Consequently, this manual provides an abundance of baseline information for studies of the changing flora. It indicates, for example, when certain prairie species, which require habitats that are disappearing with agricultural or urban expansion, or boreal species, which

may be vulnerable to climatic warming, were last seen in the wild, and which other rare species have declined in recent years. Other baseline information includes data on the earliest reports and subsequent spread of now-common weedy species in Michigan, and on the extent to which potentially invasive species have already become established.

This flora has also benefited from Dr. Voss's other activities as a member of the University of Michigan faculty. He has been an enthusiastic and popular teacher of field-oriented courses, including courses on aquatic vascular plants and boreal flora. His keys have been amply field-tested as functional guides to plant identification by students in these classes. Dr. Voss has also established a reputation as an authority on botanical nomenclature, and has been responsible for much of the editing and other refinements of recent editions of the *International Code*. His expertise on this subject in combination with the carefulness and thoroughness of his work makes this flora an authoritative reference on scientific names.

The classification represented in this flora would generally be considered "mainstream." Widely accepted divisions of the broadly circumscribed genera of the flora of a half-century earlier, that is, the separation of *Gentianella* from *Gentiana* and *Aureolaria* from *Agalinis*, have generally been adopted, whereas less widely accepted splitting, such as that of *Oxycoccus* and *Vitis-idaea* from *Vaccinium* and *Symphyotrichum* and *Virgulus* from *Aster*, has not. Where disparate opinions continue to prevail with none having approached general acceptance, as in the circumscriptions of *Chrysanthemum*, *Tanacetum*, and related genera, Dr. Voss's treatments are usually conservative. In the Asteraceae (Compositae), this flora adheres largely to the generic concepts represented in Gleason and Cronquist's *Manual of Vascular Plants*, ed. 2, recognizing the late Dr. Cronquist's status as an authority on the systematics of that family. The pros and cons of differing points of view on classification are frequently discussed, and the names are provided that would be correct were one to adopt different generic concepts.

The description of species in *Michigan Flora* is limited

to the keys and the many supplementary notes on distinguishing among easily confused species; there are no formal descriptive paragraphs. One large and 52 small but clear and aesthetically pleasing color photographs of plants represent most of the families covered. The many line drawings, selected from other publications, illustrate at least one representative of nearly every genus (except for some represented in the color plates) and several species in each of some of the larger genera, supplemented by further illustrations that contrast similar species. Habitats are indicated in the text, and distribution in Michigan is indicated by one dot for each county and major island group from which the respective species are known.

Being the concluding volume of *Michigan Flora*, Part III includes the general key to all of the families covered in the three volumes. Maintaining the orientation toward practicality as an identification guide, the key to families makes many provisions for individual genera that are more easily recognized by their own distinctive attributes than by those shared with other members of a family.

Those who are familiar with Dr. Voss's entertaining style as a lecturer will be pleased to find that his sense of humor is likewise manifest in the written word. One reviewer quoted his comments on oregano, *Origanum vulgare* L.; I suggest that readers also look up his comments on lopseed, *Phyrma leptostachya* L., and for more subtle humor, those on a bedstraw species, *Galium tinctorium* L.

The two preceding volumes have become much appreciated standard references not only in Michigan but here in Ontario and elsewhere, because of their workable keys and authoritative nomenclature. In the short time that I have had my own copy, I have already consulted it many times on many topics. Part III publication has long and eagerly been awaited, and will be all the more widely welcomed at the extraordinarily low price of \$16.50. Parts I and II remain available at a slightly lower price each.

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