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IN MEMORIAM: DELZIE DEMAREE, 1889-1987

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Delzie Demaree, American botanist and noted plant collector, was born at Benham, Indiana, on 15 September 1889. A longtime Arkansas resident, he had lived at Avery, Texas, since 1981. He died in Texas on 2 July 1987 at the age of 97. This paper presents a glimpse of Demaree as seen from the eyes of a friend and field companion. Delzie Demaree was a friend who was bigger than life to me. Some of this assessment of his life and work may appear to be less than objective, but Demaree was a person who touched the emotions of anyone who knew him. Often I've heard him say "if I had to *work* to make a living it would be as a forester," but field botany was the discipline that kept him busy for many years. One had the feeling in talking with him that teaching was a vehicle allowing for field work, but wasn't of great significance in itself. Learning for him was to be found in the field.

An important era in the history of Arkansas botany passed with Delzie Demaree. His death, combined with that of Dwight Moore just slightly more than two years earlier, leaves us with no one else from that generation. Their lives were intertwined, both professionally and personally, for many years, and it is difficult to discuss one without the other. They were very different personalities and yet their capabilities complimented each other well.

Demaree's life was remarkable in several respects, but particularly in that it spanned so many changes in science and education. He was perhaps a man who came too late. Had he worked two hundred years earlier he would have been recorded as one of the world's great botanical explorers. Of that I am certain. No explorer of the classical age of botany ever worked harder, longer, or more diligently in the field than he. Many summer days in the field with him in Arkansas convinced me of that.

A full account of Demaree's biographical data has been given elsewhere (Sida 9:269-286, 1982.). Academy members should know, though, that he taught at several Arkansas institutions. His first job was at Hendrix college, 1922-26; he loved to say he was the only person in the state teaching evolution legally at that time and in a church school at that. Later he taught at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 1926-30; Arkansas A. and M., Monticello, 1936-46; and Arkansas State, Jonesboro, 1946-53. Following retirement from Arkansas State University he moved to Hot Springs, where he lived until 1981. The last few years of his life were spent in east Texas, near the home of his daughter, Martha Davis.

During his lifetime Demaree devoted unceasing effort toward collecting, seemingly in search of at least one of everything he could find. That meant plants, but it also meant petrified wood, shark's teeth and other fossils, novaculite, and snakes. He started collecting plants in 1922, when at Hendrix, and by his death had amassed a total of over 75,000 collection numbers in his ledgers. He collected throughout the United States, but more extensively in Arkansas than anywhere else. He is said to have collected more Arkansas specimens than any other collector. Those numbers were important to him, and the field of botany owes him a debt of gratitude for them. Countless graduate students across the country were assisted by him in their dissertation and thesis work. Who can say how many thousands of specimens, both living and preserved, were mailed to students and others involved in research?

One of Demaree's peculiarities relating to plant specimen labels should be mentioned. He had an old multi-volume set of books that gave post offices and elevation readings for each. When he distributed specimens his label data listed the closest post office (within the county) to the collection site. Unfortunately, the label usually gives only the post office without specific mileage or directions to the site. That is a source of consternation to those trying to re-locate rare plant localities, but one must remember that Demaree came from an era when exact localities seldom were noted on labels. In early years of collecting he took elevation readings from his books but in later years always carried an altimeter with him and was forever checking altitudes to see if it agreed with the books. Labels included an elevation reading wherever possible.

I well remember meeting Demaree for the first time. When I was a botany graduate student at the University of North Carolina, Chapel

Hill, he visited there each spring. He knew Harry Ahles, Herbarium Curator, and regularly sent him plants for identification. It was a departmental joke that the arrival of Demaree's huge boxes would cause Ahles to laughingly say, "Here comes another bale of hay from Demaree." Demaree and I met at the herbarium in the spring of 1966 and spent much of that day together. Later that spring I accepted a position at Arkansas Tech, but thought little more about my new Arkansas acquaintance, Demaree. In September, with the task of settling in at Russellville far from complete, plant collecting was not a high priority on my list. But that first week on the job I received a postcard from Demaree, saying simply: "Meet me at Benton bus station, Saturday morning, 9:00. Bring lots of press material and I'll show you some plants." That was the first of many trips to the field with Demaree.

On his second trip to Russellville Demaree dug deep into his boxes and came up with what looked like something very special. Wrapped in numerous layers of newspaper and held together with layers of red plastic tape was a copy of his famous little publication: *Taxodium*, Vol. 1, No. 1. I was unaware of this 1943 checklist of Arkansas plant species, so he told me the story of its production and distribution. He had initiated the journal, named it after his favorite tree, had it privately printed, and tightly controlled its limited distribution. No one in Arkansas, he said, had personal copies but him and me! And it was to stay a secret! Later he showed me his cache of copies in a dresser drawer at his home. How many other people had copies I don't know.

The 1943 checklist apparently was many years in the making. In a letter to Carleton Ball, dated 15 July 1936, Demaree wrote: "I am working on a report of a checklist of Arkansas plants combining the Branner and Coville list, the Palmer and Buchholz supplement of 1926 to the above, plus my collections since 1926 and any others that I can find." (Letter in manuscript collections at Hunt Institute, Pittsburgh.)

The story of a supposed feud between Demaree and Dwight Moore has been told for years. Demaree himself said things to support the feeling they were less than close friends. Ultimately I came to know both well but basically heard only Demaree's side of the story. On a single occasion Moore made passing reference to Demaree's displeasure with him due to a misunderstanding over a teaching position. I knew what he referred to, because Demaree had told me the story many times. In his later years, Demaree had come to the conclusion that Moore was guilty of two things: (1) causing Demaree to lose his Fayetteville position and end up with only a temporary job in Oklahoma, and (2) taking Demaree's discoveries and publishing them under his own name. As evidence, Demaree said he published a woody checklist in 1933, only to have Dr. Moore publish another one in the 1941 Academy Proceedings. At that point Demaree would say the reason he published his *Taxodium* checklist privately and without state distribution was to keep Moore from seeing it and publishing it as his own.

One of my fond memories relates to Demaree's 85th birthday party. On 14 September 1974 a group of his friends held a birthday party at Hot Springs, a beautiful affair with many in attendance. After blowing out the candles on the cake he went to the microphone and presented each guest with a small remembrance. Under the head table Demaree had a box full of copies of his *Taxodium* checklist, each copy personally inscribed to each in attendance. Dwight Moore received his copy graciously and in the dim light of the setting had little chance of reading the title page to see how old it was. I heard him compliment Demaree on "finally getting this job done" and Demaree's reply was, "Hell, Doc, I did that back in 1943."

So — often I've wondered about Demaree's story that Moore had wrestled his Fayetteville teaching position away from him. Demaree had gone to Stanford to seek a doctorate and was to return to Fayetteville upon completion of the degree. On his return he found the job had been given to someone else, but Moore had arranged for an Oklahoma job. On his arrival at Oklahoma, however, he found the job was only temporary.

Recently, while assisting Mrs. Moore in sorting Dr. Moore's personal

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papers I had the chance to examine and copy correspondence from the period involved (all correspondence now part of the Dwight Moore collection, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Library). Moore's correspondence to and from Demaree was extensive and indicates that Demaree's whereabouts were unknown to Moore for many months following completion of his doctoral program. Moreover, the correspondence clearly indicated that Demaree did not personally notify Moore of completion of the doctoral requirements. Moore's contention that another person finally was appointed to Demaree's position when he couldn't be found is confirmed by the correspondence.

Demaree completed his doctoral work at Stanford in 1932, but in a letter dated 7 March 1934 Moore wrote: "You never let us know about the completion of your doctor's work, but I have heard of it in an indirect way and would like to congratulate you on it." Demaree replied on 11 March 1934: "Thanks for the degree congratulations. I never tell anyone unless I have to. So few are really interested in education."

The Oklahoma position was discussed in a letter from Demaree to Moore on 8 April 1936. Demaree wrote: "When I received your letter I wired them that I would accept the proposition on Friday morning. Saturday they wired me that due to changes the position would be for only three months. On the following Wednesday they wired me to decline or accept by six o'clock. I accepted. I arrived here on Sunday and Dr. Cross was making mention of two telegrams and finally asked him what he meant about two. Then he asked me if I had not received two. Well, I did not get the first one as it did not leave the Norman office. About this time the operator was fired and in Texas. Since the U. does not have a copy of the telegram the W. U. [presumably Western Union] is free. Dr. Cross is trying to fix it for me to stay but I think the chances are slim." There was absolutely no animosity expressed in the letter.

Correspondence between Demaree and Moore continued regularly over a period of many years and generally was lengthy, detailed, and warm and cordial in nature. In a letter of 19 November 1941, Demaree wrote to Moore: "My list of ligneous plants is no good because it was published before I had it ready . . . Even my name was spelled wrong . . . I never did distribute it."

Whatever the nature of any difference between the two men, it would appear that time may have altered if not exaggerated the original circumstances. That, to me, changes nothing, but only adds to the mystique of the man Demaree.

What a pity so few of today's graduate students get the chance to work with people of Demaree's genre. It is sad, but true, that too many botanists have been reared in a new age and with a new set of values. It hurts to see papers saying such things as, "In the history of Arkansas botany, the ultimate unworkable and untenable floristic list for the state is that by Demaree (1943), which includes every imaginable type of error in compilation and judgment." (*Phytologia* 64:82. 1987). Such a comment serves as proof that some of our botanists are sadly lacking

in courtesy and tact if not ethics. Moreover, such comments show little appreciation or depth of understanding of the nature of pioneering work. Any person who collects over 75,000 numbers of plant specimens in a lifetime (without owning or driving a car) has to be doing something right. Moreover, those 75,000 numbers were accumulated without an expense account or grant money. Anyone failing to recognize the value of the 1943 checklist reveals a lack of understanding of the basic workings of science.

The author of a 1973 paper (*Castanea* 38:79. 1973.) included a statement critical of Demaree's failure to distribute his 1943 checklist to libraries and the Arkansas scientific community. The article stated, ". . . this was an unfortunate choice . . . since it delayed the work on a Manual or Flora for the state of Arkansas . . ." That comment hurt Demaree deeply and he considered it an indictment of his character. And yet, probably there is a good deal of accuracy in the statement. It is interesting to contrast that author's assessment ("delayed work on a state Flora") against the more recent comments ("ultimate unworkable and untenable floristic list for the state").

Any pioneering work will have its deficiencies. Hindsight always is better than foresight, though, and it always is easier to have a strawman to knock down than to erect the strawman in the first place. Somewhere I recall hearing the phrase "walking on the shoulders of giants." It seems appropriate in this discussion.

In conclusion, Arkansas botany is richer for having experienced the life and work of Delzie Demaree. The tributes paid to him in the special section of *Sida* (*Sida* 9:269-289. 1982.) are ample indication that professionals across the country recognized his contributions. To his few detractors I would hope that age and maturity may mend the imperfections of intellect and ego. This state can be proud of its adopted son, Delzie Demaree. When and if a state flora is produced for Arkansas the totality of Demaree's work of a lifetime will stand for what it was — a monumental pioneering effort of permanent value.

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