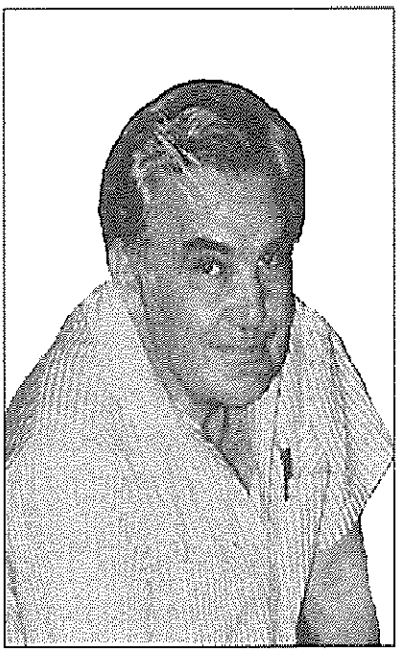
BENJAMIN CLEMENS STONE
1933-1994



Photograph taken at Philippine National Herbarium, Oct. 1992 by Ali Ibrahim.

Dr Stone arrived in Peninsular Malaysia in 1965 to take up a teaching position in Botany, at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. It was from there that he began his long association with the Singapore Herbarium and the Botanic Gardens. In the pursuit of his many botanical interests, including what he termed "the big game of the plant world," members of the Pandanaceae, he made repeated visits to the Herbarium and the Gardens. Periodically over the years he would send seeds to the Gardens from his field trips around the region. More frequently than seeds came manuscripts. Twenty of his papers, including those posthumously published in this issue, have been accepted by this Bulletin. These reflect his wide interests in botany and covered topics from the families, Pandanaceae, Rutaceae, Araliaceae, Joinvilleaceae, Nymphaeaceae and Myrsinaceae.

The staff of the National Parks Board who knew Dr Stone, some since his first visit in 1967, were shocked and grieved when news of his fatal heart attack arrived. His enthusiasm and intellect have been inspirational to many who knew him; to some of us he was a teacher and friend as well. We will all miss the sharing of his ideas and this Bulletin will miss his contributions.

NATIONAL PARKS BOARD
SINGAPORE

In Memoriam B. C. Stone (1933-1994)

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As was almost simultaneously announced by Drs. Domingo Madulid in Manila and Sy Sohmer in Fort Worth, Texas, Dr. Benjamin Clemens Stone died about three months before his 61st birthday, on 19 March 1994. His sudden death took everybody who knew him by suprise. His first publication about Malesian botany and plants was in 1960. He has thus devoted some 29 years of his life to the study of the Malesian flora. His first interest, however, was in the Hawaiian Flora with a first publication in 1957. He has also worked on other flora, notably that of the Pacific Basin.

Ben was born as the only child to an English father and American mother, in Shanghai, China on 26 May 1933. Before the war, his mother took Ben to live in the San Diego area in California, sensing the coming of troubles in the Far East. The Stone family was united after the war, after his father was interned in a camp in Japan. Ben married Michiko and they had a son, David and a daughter, Sylvia.

Ben received his primary and secondary education in the San Diego area, and his B.A. in Botany from Pomona College, in Claremont, California in 1954. He was so sentimentally attached to that college that he supported David studying there with great pride. He wrote a thesis on the pandans and earned his Ph.D from the University of Hawaii in 1960. His major professor in Hawaii was Dr. Harold St. John, a fixture in Hawaiian botany from 1926 to 1991, when he passed away at the age of 99. Ben's career path then took him to Washington, where he was a research assistant in the Department of Botany at the U.S. National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institution, from 1960-61. From there he went to Guam where he was made Professor of Biology at the College (now University) of Guam from 1961 to 1965. It was during this period that he wrote the Flora of Guam single-handedly and established *Micronesica*, the journal of the University of Guam.

While in Guam he showed his initial interest in Flora Malesiana (1960) when he confessed that he wished to master the flora of the adjacent Malesian region after mastering the flora of Polynesia and Micronesia. He grabbed the opportunity to work on the Malesian flora by taking a lecturer position in the Department of Botany, University of Malaya at Kuala Lumpur in 1965.

From 1965 to 1983 he taught botany and in particular plant taxonomy, supervised numerous under- and post-graduate students, researched on plants and

vegetation, looked after the herbarium (KLU) and contributed intellectual and scientific integrity, in the Department of Botany at the University of Malaya. His inspired scholarship and untiring dedication contributed towards putting Malaysian taxonomy in particular, and botany in general, at its height to-day. Scores of students were attracted to botany as a result of his mentoring and he developed an understanding about the culture, custom and tradition of the region, especially of Polynesia, Micronesia, Malaysia and later the Philippines.

I entered the University of Malaya in 1969 and only in my final year, came to know him closely. I remembered him as a lecturer, plant taxonomist, botanist extraordinaire, story teller, jazz flautist, devoted model airplane builder and plant collector. As a botanist he saw the necessity for herbaria to facilitate taxonomic works (1965), strategies for conservation of ecosystems and plants (1968), national parks as reservoirs of biodiversity (1969, 1968), understanding plant genetic resources (1974, 1979), taxonomic man-power to conduct research (1974), scholarly publications as an extension of mental exercise (1975), botanical gardens to complement the herbarium (1978), natural history museums for general education (1981), and excellent plant collecting techniques to ensure collections useful to future botanists (1983, 1987). As a plant taxonomist he was not as conservative as the late Dr. M. Jacobs and Dr. P.W. Leenhouts of Rijksherbarium, Leiden, for instance, in his recognition of *Glycosmis calcicola* (1972), and some myrsinaceous taxa in Malesia (1982). He was a Malesian taxonomist extraordinaire who mastered four difficult plant families, viz. initially the Pandanaceae, then the Rutaceae, the Araliaceae and lately the Myrsinaceae. He also worked on the Theophrastaceae, Alangiaceae, Orchidaceae, and many others including some ferns.

Apart from taxonomy, his research and publications covered evolutionary biology, ecology, plant geography, cytology, phytochemistry and vegetation study. Although he gave far greater importance to gross morphological characters as the basis for classification, he had a great interest in the contributions given by comparative anatomical, palynological and cytological studies. I noticed he had not used the work 'cladistic' at all in his publications which prompts me to believe that he had no interest in that subject.

As a man I found him very honest and liberal in his thoughts. He always smiled and never once had I observed him to lose his cool though there were many occasions when others would have shouted or split hairs. He had wanted to call me "Lat" a shorter form of my second name which I disliked because that was the name of a cartoonist! He was very helpful in the field teaching me many Latin names and diagnostic features of various plant families that we encountered. I remembered very well in 1982 that he was overjoyed when he could at last buy himself a fancy electric typewriter. The man loved to type his correspondence though he had excellent hand-writing.

In 1983 after 18 years in humid Kuala Lumpur, he pondered seriously about the college education of his children, David and Sylvia. He talked about his aged mother and a flat he had bought in California. In 1984 he decided to move back to the U.S. by taking an optional retirement as a Reader in Botany from the University of Malaya and took the position of Chairman, Department of Botany of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Science, a position he held until 1990 when he joined the Flora of the Philippines Project as the Principal Investigator for the Philippine Plant Inventory at the urging of Dr. Sy Sohmer at Hawaii. When the latter moved to BRIT at Fort Worth, Texas, he gladly joined the staff as Senior Research Botanist.

In Philadelphia he felt wasted, the department was too spacious but under-staffed and under-equipped. The place had no IBM PC system to store type collections or word processing. He was very ambitious indeed to start working on Malesian plants, but the department had no interest in Malesia. Thus he tried to build the Asiatic collection in order to initiate research development. He had wanted to arrange exchange programmes for plant specimens and also develop a joint proposal between his department and Malesian or Asian institutions and herbaria, especially the Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak Project. The programme should have an adequate opportunity for post-graduate training and post-doctoral exchange. He had wanted his friends in the universities (Prof. Ruth Kiew, Prof. E. Soepadmo and myself) to look after the former aspects.

From 1990 to the day when he passed away he lived at intervals in the U.S. and Manila. On that fateful Saturday, 19th March 1994 he routinely went to the herbarium to take some plant presses off the driers. He collapsed and the security guard on duty failed to revive him. So ended a life that began in Shanghai, China and ended in Manila, where he had began his second intimate affair with the Malesian plants through the Philippine Flora Project.

Ben was the author or editor of more than 300 articles and books. He was a specialist in four difficult tropical families, the Pandanaceae, Rutaceae, Araliaceae and Myrsinaceae. He wrote or co-authored numerous monumental papers in these families and his reputation as a *Pandanus* worker was unsurpassed. Unfortunately, he died before he could finish his monograph of *Freycinetia* and contribute the family Myrsinaceae for the Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak as well.

Ben has had some influence on the development of Malaysian botany, of a magnitude large enough for his name to be forever linked to it. He has also been quite diverse in all fields in which he has been active. A great botanist has passed away after 61 long, well-spent and useful years, of which almost 34 years was devoted to botany alone. He was a friend to many all over the world, and he was always prepared to help people with his vast knowledge.

He will be missed very much.

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