THE HSPR NEWSLETTER

Published by the Heliconia Society of Puerto Rico, Inc.
2001 No. 1

We wish to thank Ray and Migdalia Jerome for hosting the HSPR Christmas meeting (party) on December 9 at their wonderful home in Canóvanas. Their extensive collection of heliconias was truly impressive!

Our next meeting will begin at 9:30 AM on Sunday, March 11, 2001 at our (Cricket and Paul Yoshioka) home in Rosario (Carretera 348, km 8.7; phone: 833-4652) near Mayaguez and San German. A map is provided at the end of this newsletter. Please remember to bring your own chairs and refreshments. More importantly, bring your available plants for the raffle, sale, or exchange. Also, remember to bring any new or interesting plants for the "Show and Tell", as well as any information and observations you have acquired about heliconias and other Zingerberales.

This meeting should be most informative because Bryan Brunner has 'volunteered' to give a presentation about ornamental bananas.
(Along these lines, we need other people to give talks or host meetings in the future. Please think about it.)

Finally, please remember to pay your 2001 dues to our Secretary/ Treasurer Jannette Crespo at the meeting ($20 for couples, $15 for singles and $10 for students). Alternatively, send your remittance to Jannette at Box 23359 UPR Station, San Juan, PR 00931.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I presented some flowers of *H. standleyi* seedlings which were evidently crosses between *H. standleyi* and *H. rostrata* . At a glance these seedlings would probably be regarded as 'giant rostrata' based on the size and characteristics of the plants and flowers. As far as I know, no natural *H. standleyi/rostrata* hybrids are known. The lack of reported hybrids may be due to separate distributions in nature, which is evidently the case in Colombia (Kress, et al. 1999. Heliconias: Llamaradas de la selva colombiana). However, Bob Lankford found *H. standleyi* and *H. rostrata* growing together in Ecuador; so the lack of natural hybrids is still problematic. One possible explanation is that pollination barriers prevent hybridization in Ecuador. These barriers may be absent in Puerto Rico.

More importantly, I am relating the above *H. standleyi* and *H. rostrata* example to emphasize the need to document new heliconia hybrids and forms. Such information is invaluable and irretrievable. A common perception is that such phylogenetic relationships can be determined by molecular genetics (e.g., DNA techniques), but this is not necessarily the case. Phylogenetic analyses involve techniques of "maximum likelihood" or "parsimony" to arrive at the most 'reasonable' and 'simplest' phylogenetic relationships. For example, a commonly used approach is called PAUP, or "Phylogenetic Analysis Using Parsimony". Of course, the simplest and most reasonable relationship is not necessarily the correct one! More direct and better evidence often involves observations by growers or collectors. Heliconia enthusiasts can play an invaluable role in this respect.

FRED BERRY
1927 - 2001

It was a twisting, hurtful shock when Patty Berry called to tell me that Fred passed away peacefully with his family, his dogs, and in his own home. This happened in Charleston, SC on the 24th of January. Yes, Fred's death came as a shock, but it was not

unexpected since he had been waging a long and often painful battle against cancer and the complications of diabetes over the last few years. When I asked Patty if I could write something for the HSPR Newsletter, she said, "Sure do it," but she added that Fred had absolutely no use for funerals, eulogies, testimonials or whatever. Since I have known Fred since the time he couldn't tell the difference between a heliconia and a hickory tree, I will keep this as a bit of light biography of Mr. Heliconia and my recollections of a great guy.

Fred was born on July 15, 1927 near Pensacola, FL and was raised and brought up there. This gave him the unrevocable pedigree of a genuine Florida cracker, a pedigree he wore proudly and sometimes even boastfully. And despite his travels, he never lost his soft and measured north Florida accent. Somehow in his early years, he thought he'd become a dentist. Why, I really don't know - but this glimmer fortunately never materialized. Instead, he began to focus on fisheries biology at the University of Florida in Gainesville, where he got his bachelor's and master's degrees. Along these academic lines, I well recall Fred's views on degrees in an exchange at a MEXUS GULF fisheries conference in Cancún where Fred was to give a technical paper on king mackerel. When the session chairman introduced him as "Dr. Fred Berry", Fred smiled warmly, thanking the chairman not only for his kind words but also for having conferred on him a doctor's degree - something no university he had attended in the past had ever been willing or able to do.

After getting his master's degree at Gainesville, Fred became a fisheries biologist with the old Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, later to become NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service from which he retired after more than 30 years of federal service. Sometime during his fisheries career, Fred began developing an interest in plants. His first venture was to Columbus Landing in Mayagüez, walk up to the giant ceiba there and give it a hug!! But like many plant folks, Fred's interests and enthusiasms soon embraced other horizons, not the least being the beauty and fascination of heliconias. And he wanted to share them with the world. So he and Gil Daniels, plus a few others, established the nuclear body of what was to become Heliconia Society International. New members? No problem! I vividly recall the unrelenting arm twisting I got from Fred - let's call it an invitation I couldn't refuse - to become a charter member of HSI, at the not insignificant quota in those days of $100.00.

Soon HSI began publishing its quarterly Bulletin with Fred and Gil Daniels as compilers, authors and editors. One of their innovations was to prepare loose-leaf color plates of selected heliconia species and varieties - the idea being to provide members with identification material. These color plates, however, turned out to be both costly and inefficient - a good idea that was not too practical. So Fred decided to team up with John Kress of the Smithsonian to systematize and make widely available the existing information on heliconias in a concise form. The result was the now classic handbook, "Heliconia: An Identification Guide" which can safely be described as having both stimulated and guided the near explosive growth of heliconia interest that we see today. Despite the handbook's favorable reception and far-reaching impact, Fred told me that this was really only a first step and not the last word on heliconias. He soon began active planning to update and expand the original volume taking into account the burgeoning exploration and collecting results and new technical information. It is our unfortunate loss that Fred's failing health and eventual death came between him and his goal. Perhaps someone, or others, will pick up where he left off.

So how do I conclude these few lines about Fred Berry? He had tremendous impact on the horticultural community and especially on those who knew him and were touched by his friendship and his warm and genuine concern for others. For me, he was my buddy who always kept in touch. So now it's simply, "So long, Fred. I'll see you later further up the creek."

Bob Lankford

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From Carr 348, shortest route from Mayagüez

Follow Carr 348 from lower Calle Post to Rosario, Cross the Rosario River bridge. After passing the first house on the right, turn hard right onto the smaller road and follow that road past a house and a well to arrive at the Yoshioka residence.

Easiest route from Carr 2

Follow 345 at Lavadero for 2 miles to the intersection in El Hoyo. Turn right at the intersection in El Hoyo, and continue to 348 (about 1.5 miles). Turn right onto 348, and cross the bridge, turn right after the first house on the right and followthe small road furthest to the right to the house. Total distance from Carr 2 to the house is about 3.6 miles.