

Memories of Robin Lodewick

Sadly we previously reported that long-time APS member and widely-published penstemon writer Robin Lodewick passed away in October of 2014 at the age of 91. In 1961 Robin met Ken Lodewick on an Obsidians (an Oregon mountaineering and hiking group) wildflower hike. They shared 50 years of marriage, great mountaineering and hiking energy, and a partnership of keen study and great love for penstemons. APS continues to offer the Lodewick penstemon publications for sale. Robin also willed her penstemon materials to APS, including notes, drawings, books, specimens, etc. Robin was a librarian at the University of Oregon. Not surprisingly, the Lodewick collection is organized.

Brilliant reds of winter-blooming *Cyclamen persicum* will always remind me of Robin and her diverse interests. One winter day in her advanced years she called me up and wanted to know how to keep a tender cyclamen alive through dormancy. Vividly she remembered that I had grown a nice lot from North American Rock Garden Society seed. Her call became a fine excuse to visit. We chatted at her kitchen table about an amazing array of subjects, including politics, cats, birds (owls and hummingbirds were favorites for us both) --and of course penstemons.

It was bright reds and hummingbirds that initially attracted me to penstemons. I first met the Lodewicks at a meeting of the Emerald Chapter of NARGS. On the occasion of either a hike or meeting, Robin especially reached out to beginners. It was lively hikes and conversations with Ken and Robin, and the Lodewick penstemon publications, that deepened a fascination for this challenging genus for many of us.

Ken had been active founder of two "Emeralds" in Eugene --chapters of both the Rock Garden and Native Plant Societies. They very seldom missed meetings or events with either group. Ken and Robin led an impressive number of hikes and annual meetings for the American Penstemon Society. In 1966 they organized a meeting centered in Bend, Oregon, with hikes in various surrounding mountains. 1973 their sleuthing brought APS to the Mt. Shasta and Castle Lakes area of Northern California. 1987 featured garden and arboretum tours, including their own Eugene, Oregon garden with about 150 species of penstemon. Ken built their home on a quiet Eugene street near the Masonic Cemetery. Incidentally they had even created a plant list for the cemetery.

1998 was another banner wildflower year, as Ken and Robin helped to plan a large annual meeting of NARGS that included hikes to numerous premier wildflower locales such as Bohemia and Iron Mountains. The APS annual meeting that year immediately followed NARGS with an Oregon penstemon loop of incredible species diversity. Robin also led 25 trips for the Obsidians, most of which featured wildflowers. She participated in over one hundred Obsidians hikes and climbs. On at least one occasion they climbed high Cascades volcanos such as the Three Sisters back to back. This esteemed hiking and mountaineering group honored the Lodewicks for their devoted participation. Robin gave generously to the Oregon Flora Project, Plant Societies, and Seed-saving groups among many wonderful causes.

When she found out that my husband I were surveying wilderness boundary on Gearhart Mountain in south-central Oregon, Robin provided me with near-photographic details of the location of endemic *Penstemon glaucinus*. It was a thrill to find the glittering blue blooms in a seemingly unlikely spot for penstemons. It grew in the rocky habitat so favored by the Genus, but in some shade amongst pines.

Although they were serious researchers and writers, the Lodewicks also both had a wonderful sense of fun. Once they hoisted a jolly roger flag over their deck railing uphill from neighbor Bruce Newhouse's

house. They called Bruce to look at it , which he described as “huge -- and hilarious!” This was long before “talk like a pirate” day became popular.

One of my favorite quotes from Robin accompanies a separate key for Oregon penstemons that was published in NPSO' 1994 yearly journal, “Kalmiopsis”: *And remember Murphy's Law for Botanists: any plant you choose to examine is probably abnormal — simply because the human eye notices the unusual.*

Robin's large collection of charming drawings display her amazing eye for penstemon details –both usual and unusual. --Louise Parsons