



Symbiosis[©]

The newsletter of the Prairie States Mushroom Club

Volume 26:4

Winter 2009

<http://www.iowamushroom.org>

Lois Tiffany Remembered


Compiled By Linda Scarth

Not long ago while reviewing a set of reference books for a library publication, I, Linda Scarth, learned a new word – ‘postself’. It means “who one is in the minds of others after you are dead.” Lois Tiffany is remembered not as a person who has passed from people’s acquaintance, but one who continues in the lives of the many whom she taught and befriended. Don Huffman said it best: “I’ve never been a student of Lois Tiffany: I’ll always be a student of Lois Tiffany!”



Lois discussing crop fungi with biologists.

Photo by Don Huffman

What follows are anecdotes and remembrances of some of the many whose lives were touched by the ‘Mushroom Lady.’ 



Morels from a foray Dr. Tiffany attended.

Photo Linda and Bob Scarth

Reminiscences of Lois Tiffany by Don Huffman

My association with, and memories of Lois Tiffany reach back to 1952 at Iowa State University, Ames. Lois was in her early years of service in the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, where she had completed her PhD under Dr. Joseph Gilman, the well known mycologist and her major professor. Lois was housed in an office/laboratory with four graduate students, of which I was the most recent arrival.

At that time Lois was engaged with research on fungi associated with forage crops and grasses, taught general botany courses, cared for the fungal material in the herbarium and was heir-apparent to mycological duties at ISU. Lois was a friend and a reliable source of assistance to everyone who knew her. She befriended graduate students willingly and effectively, helping with problems related to mycology, or nearly any other area.

(cont. on pg. 2)

In this issue:

Lois Tiffany Remembered	Cover
Reminiscences...	Cover
From a Student’s...	Pg. 3
Laura McCormick’s...	Pg. 4
Foxfire Funnies	Pg. 6
Recipe Corner	Pg. 6
Pot Hunters Corner	Pg. 7
PSMC Annual Meeting	Pg. 7

Reminiscences of Lois Tiffany

(cont. from cover)

We all were amazed at the level of energy and enthusiasm which Lois brought to her work. She characteristically took the stairs at a half-trot between the 3rd floor where our office/lab was located to the 1st floor where botany classes were taught. If my memory is correct, she bore her children primarily in holidays, missing only a total of four days of work in all; and during that time she seldom slowed her pace up and down the stairs, back and forth in the hallways, and around the campus as needed.

Lois replaced Joseph Gilman as mycologist at I.S.U when he retired in 1956. She began a mycological career which brought her to prominence at both the state and national levels. She was an active participant, a frequent section and committee chairman in the Iowa Academy of Science, where she served as president in 1977-78. She presented research efforts at national meetings of the Mycological Society of America, and was the first recipient of the MSA Weston Award for Outstanding Teaching in Mycology. Her many graduate students at both the M.S. and PhD levels attest to this recognition.

Lois and her long time botanical colleague, George Knaphus, organized and led the Botany Club at I.S.U. for many years of extended trips throughout the southwest and western parts of the U.S. George was an excellent photographer, and ultimately took most of the photos which Lois used in her many publications on fungi.

When I decided to write a book on regional mushrooms, I realized that I

could not complete the task as needed without assistance, and I invited Lois to join in the effort to publish a book, finally entitled *Mushrooms and Other Fungi of the Midcontinental U.S.* She suggested that George Knaphus join us in the effort because of his excellent photographic skills, and his interest in the topic. We completed the 1st edition of the book which was published by the I.S.U. Press in 1989. We continued to work together on several other mycological projects including formation of the Prairie States Mushroom Club. The last graduate student of Lois was Rosanne

Healy, and after the death of George Knaphus, Rosanne joined our group, adding exceptional photographic skills and dedicated field studies leading to the 2nd edition of our book which was published by the University of Iowa Press (2008).

In truth, Lois has been a constant friend and valued colleague to many of us, and the many honors she has received at every level could not have been more deserved.

I've never been a student of Lois Tiffany: I'll always be a student of Lois Tiffany! 🍄



Photo courtesy of Don Huffman

Editors Note: I first met Dr. Tiffany in the early 1980s when she spoke on morels at our arboretum in Clinton. For the next two decades, I regularly sent her samples and spore prints of interesting mushrooms that I was uncertain of. She always examined the mushrooms and replied, confirming several species new to me such as *Stropharia rugoso-annulata*. I began looking up mushrooms on the internet in the 21st Century. That's when I learned of PSMC and that Lois was an advising member. The prospect of joining her on forays was why I became a PSMC member. I soon enjoyed meeting other knowledgeable people on forays, but forays that Dr. Tiffany attended were always the best. It still amazes me that she had found time, with such a full life, to help an amateur pot hunter. After reading her friends' memories, I now understand how her replies were simply more examples of the selfless way she shared her knowledge with anyone who wanted to learn more about wonders of life all around us.

Dave

From a student's perspective

by Rosanne Healy

I had the great good fortune to be one of Dr. Tiffany's students, a life-changing experience for me. In sharing some of my memories, I hope that the examples I choose will highlight aspects of her personality and the teaching style that made her so exceptional.

Dr. Tiffany's mentoring style was to treat students as full adults with all the responsibility that entails. The effect was to foster independence, a trait we all admired in her. She was always ready to answer questions and give advice. I was struck early on by her respectful approach manifested by the use of sticky notes rather than writing directly over somebody's work, and her use of phrases such as "This is just a suggestion" when critiquing a paper.

The best aspects of her teaching came through in labs. She used beautiful color slides of the organisms we would be looking at, slides that brought you into the woods to see the marvels of fungi or slime mold fruiting. Her labs often required you to do some collecting and observation on your own. This was a wise way to invest the students in their own learning. She told me about an exercise that was particularly effective for a botany class that she taught some years ago. She had the students choose a shrub to observe over the course of the semester, keeping a diary of any changes that took place. The students were amazed at how much they learned through this simple observational exercise.

Some of her best advice regarded self-discipline, which she referred to as "clean living and self-denial".

Throughout her long career, she wrote numerous research, review, and extension papers; kept up with the mycological literature for her classes, served on many student committees and provided literature peer review. I once asked her how she was able to keep up with all of it. I never saw her rushing around to get something done at the last minute. She replied that she sometimes had to take herself by the nape of the neck and make herself sit down to do the work. The image was humorous, but it comes back to me when I am faced with multiple imminent deadlines. Another example of self-discipline came in the form of her phrase "old friend" for a fungus that she was familiar with. It was only after a considerable amount of time reading and looking through the microscope at fungi that I finally understood what she meant: the time you invest in learning about an organism through the literature and through personal observation is rewarded by the ability to recognize it just as you would an old friend!

Dr. Tiffany was remarkable for the extent to which she separated her private and academic life. This legendary compartmentalization sometimes resulted in some interesting situations. She required surgery while I was earning my MS with her. In order to not disrupt the mycology class she was teaching at the time, she asked me to fill in for her, but not tell anyone that she was in the hospital. That was not too difficult until the day that a fellow professor, whose custom was to have coffee with her a couple days a week, finally asked me "Where's Dr. Tiffany? What have you



Dr. Tiffany examining a morel.
Photo by Don Huffman

done with her?" I found out later that she had been making coffee every day – something I had failed to do while she was gone!

My fondest memories of Dr. T. are of our time spent together while traveling to foray sites where we looked for truffles or other fungi. It was on the truffle trips that I heard about some of her Botany Club trips to the southwest or fungus collection trips to Big Bend National Park in west Texas. I also learned that one of her favorite books was "Desert Solitaire" by Edward Abbey. Abbey shared her passion for nature, sometimes expressed with a wry sense of humor.

She was fairly patient with my tendency to get lost in the woods, even though she thought we really should stick to the paths. One time in Shimek State Forest in southeast Iowa, on a hot, thirsty afternoon, she patiently worked us back to the path. I was delighted to see the car off in the distance, but less happy to see that I'd left the headlights on. We

(cont. on pg. 4)

From a student's perspective

(cont. from pg. 3)

stopped someone driving by who helped get my car started. During the long drive to recharge the battery, I asked Dr. Tiffany if her family ever worried about her being out in remote places with me. She said "No". This memory came back to me after her final trip to Big Bend. When asked how the trip was, she replied "Fine". Then I asked Dr. Knaphus about the trip. He proceeded to tell me a hair-raising tale about how the van got a flat tire during a side venture into a remote place on the last day, and that they sat waiting for hours for someone to happen by! I realized at that point that her family didn't worry because Dr. Tiffany never told them any of the worrisome things that happened!

I am once again a student, this time with the opportunity to teach and mentor while working on my dissertation. Dr. Tiffany was the inspiration for my chosen vocation. I find myself modeling my teaching philosophy on hers, and passing on her advice to my students. I can imagine the same occurs in classes taught by all of her former students. I am very sad that she is gone, but it is gratifying to think that one of her legacies: respect and love of nature taught with thoughtfulness and elegance, lives on.



Dr. Tiffany and Michelle McClendon - a student at Lakeside Lab. Photo scanned courtesy of ISU

Laura McCormick's remembrance at Dr. Tiffany's Memorial on September 19, 2009

I met Dr. Tiffany on the first day of classes at Iowa State in August, 1970. I was a 19-year-old New Jersey girl who had come to Iowa State as a pre-vet student the year before. Realizing that wasn't quite right for me and following consideration over that summer, I had been directed that day to the office of a Dr. Knaphus in Bessey Hall to see about changing my major to botany. I met Dr. T. and Dr. K. when I walked through that door, and that day changed my life!

We are all here because we know – we have experienced and benefited from, each in our own way, the wonderfulness of Dr. Lois Hattery Tiffany. I know that whatever words I

find to try to express it will not be good enough, whatever superlatives I might use will not even begin to approximate it.

I had many opportunities to benefit from Dr. T.'s wisdom and nurturing over the years. While an undergraduate, Dr. T. was my advisor and I also did some hourly work for her in her lab. I participated in a number of the invaluable Botany Club 10-day camping trips to Big Bend or Utah. There were a few occasions when I stayed at her house for several days at a time; she kept boxes of my stuff for me for years while I was out and about in the world. She was on my committee when I was a plant

pathology graduate student, and for about 10 years starting in 1994, I was her Saturday employee, driving up to Ames from Fairfield on most Saturdays during the school year – weather permitting – to help her prep for class, transfer cultures, prepare media, defrost refrigerators, bring her whatever fungi I had collected for use in class, and do whatever she wanted me to do that day. This would seem not a practical or economically reasonable thing to do...but it kept me well-connected to Dr. T., and that made it a bargain for me. She would always have purchased some sweet rolls from Fareway, and we would sit and drink coffee and talk about whatever we felt like talking about

(cont. on pg. 5)

Laura McCormick's Remembrance

(cont. from pg. 4)

until the conversation came to a natural end. Then she would orient me to the day's work, she'd head home, and I'd work in the lab the rest of the day and then drive home.

When she was on the Preserves Board in 1999 it was Dr. T. who suggested to me that I apply to do the botanical inventories of the two state preserves in my county. Did she think I could do that? Yes! Then she supported me totally during that project. When I was doing the herbarium work, I would work in the herbarium all day Saturday, and then stay over at her house, often showing up at 10PM, whereupon she would feed me, and then or in the morning over coffee we'd talk about whatever botanical details were on my mind at the time. Then I'd work more in the herbarium on Sunday before driving back to Fairfield. At one point when I was getting a little overwhelmed with the variability of oak leaves and making sure I was identifying all my specimens correctly, after I told her what oaks I had listed already, Dr. T. had said, "That's enough oaks".

She never called any attention to my mistakes, being so sensitive not to cause any embarrassment or loss of confidence - like the time (in the early 70's) she needed more hemp seeds to grow the aquatic fungus *Saprolegnia* on, and I volunteered that I would go collect her some. I found wild hemp with seeds out on the edge of the woods somewhere and brought it back to Dr. T.'s lab after everyone was gone, and since it was getting late I left the seed-laden plant tops on a cart there to deal with later. You know that cart in the corner by the

sink and the coffee pot? But that was a Friday afternoon! When I came into Dr. T.'s lab sometime on Monday there was no hemp to be seen. After asking a few questions I finally heard about - in a very low key way that put absolutely no blame on me - how Dr. Pohl had come into Bessey on Monday morning and flown into a rampage because the whole third floor reeked of marijuana!

Dr. T. - Such a positive, giving person, always supporting what would further education or achievement or advancement or growth, always supporting and giving you space to follow your own heart no matter how unreasonable your decision might seem to others at the moment.


I've seen her get teary-eyed while talking about Pearl Harbor or the assassination of Lincoln. And what a great sense of humor - how else could I have turned in as part of my fungal collection for mycology class a golf ball labeled *Scleroderma elastica*?

Can't you just see that little bundle of energy quickly and purposefully heading down the hall in Bessey? Or how, in the midst of a conversation, she would elfin-like put up her finger, look at you from corner of her eye, smile, disappear for a minute, and then come back with the absolutely appropriate page in a book or paper?


I know I stayed a child too long. I hope that at some point in the future all of her patient gracious nurturing that's been smoldering in me all these years will burst forth into glorious

flame that will warm her heart. But I know she's not worried about it. As she said to me in her usual positive, supportive fashion in the last conversation we had earlier this year, "You still have time."

Time to do even more
To make even more of a difference in the world
To support more strongly the education of younger people
To invest more generously in the minds of the future
To stand more seriously in the service of preserving our beautiful natural world
Ray, Jean, Dave - thank you for sharing your Mom with me.

Dr. T. - Thank you for everything, I love you, and I *will* catch up with you later! 

There are no forays or events planned yet for 2010 but stay tuned to the PSMC website: <http://www.iowamushroom.org/> for the most up-to-date information on upcoming events as well as pictures and information from past forays and events. Thank you all for helping to make 2009 a great year for mushrooming! We hope to make 2010 even better! We'll see you in the woods.

If you are receiving this issue by mail the label below will tell you the year your membership is through. If you receive this by email the email message will tell you. 

Foxfire Funnies

PSMC member Nora Brenny sent this photo of Grifola saying, “I didn’t notice the face until I looked at the print.”

After much careful study I’ve determined the authenticity of the photo. It has not been adulterated in any way. Therefore, I’ve reached the only possible conclusion. It is indeed a face and not just any face but a very familiar one. I’ve determined that it is actually a celestial (or in this case terrestrial) sign. Yes Nora – There is indeed a Santa Claus. - Dave Layton



Recipe Corner

Fried Oyster Mushrooms

- ¾ to 1 lb. fresh Oyster Mushrooms
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup milk
- ½ cup dried bread crumbs
- ¼ cup vegetable or corn oil (Canola is good but not olive oil)
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- dash of pepper

Brush clean oyster mushrooms using as little water as possible.

Trim tough base off of older mushrooms, slice into fan-shaped wedges.

Beat egg and mix with salt, pepper and milk in a large bowl.

Add mushrooms, stirring till they are covered with the mixture.

Cover wax paper or plate with half the breadcrumbs.

Lay mushrooms on breadcrumbs gills down. Sprinkle remaining breadcrumbs over mushrooms.

Heat oil in a large frying pan on medium heat til a drop of water sizzles.

Add mushrooms to pan. Pour any remaining crumbs and egg mixture on top.

Fry mushrooms for 5 – 7 minutes then turn over and fry for 3 – 5 more minutes till golden brown.

Place on plate covered with a paper towel, dab the tops with the free corners of the towel, and serve.



Oyster mushrooms and vegetables for spaghetti sauce

Pot Hunter's Corner

Oyster Mushroom Land

by Dave Layton

Imagine a woods with tree after tree stacked with Oyster Mushrooms (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) from their bases to more than 30 feet high! Imagine standing in one spot and seeing oyster mushrooms on trees and logs in every direction you look! There are such woods and they're easy to find. Just go to any place called Willow Island, Willow Bottoms, Willow Slough or any wetland where old river willows are abundant. Oyster mushrooms love old willow trees, especially those that look like dead trunks with the crowns long gone. Often these dead-looking trunks are really live treasures with young branches still emerging up and down them. In the right wetland habitat, thousands of fruiting bodies can be found in the fall. They are also common on many other types of dead or dying hardwoods all season long. Though they may really be a few different closely related species, they're all equally edible.

The commonness of oyster mushrooms belies their amazing characteristics. They are truly omnivorous. They eat wood, causing white rot, but they also eat nematodes and bacteria. This process is fascinatingly detailed on George Barron's website at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~gbarron/ZBiodiversity/pleutoxd.htm>. These abilities may someday have practical applications. Other practical applications may be bio-remediation too. In [Mycelium Running, How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World](#), Paul Stamets describes an experiment where a mat infused with

oyster mushroom mycelium was laid over toxic oil sludge. The mushrooms consumed the sludge and broke down the toxic molecules into harmless basic compounds. He said that the fruiting bodies even appeared to be edible, though he didn't try them.

Our particular "Oyster Mushroom Land" is on the Mississippi at Clinton in a place called Willow Island, though it's no longer an island due to a dike with a recreation trail crossing over a slough onto it. We foraged on Willow Island too late this year in early November. Thousands of caps were already too far gone to harvest. Still, many dozens of others were fresh and young. In the past, I've found them growing here fresh even after a thaw in December. This fall we ended up eating several meals with them and sharing them breaded and fried with guests. I especially love them in



spaghetti sauce, but they can be used in an infinite number of recipes, particularly Chinese ones.

People who have no Willow Island, Slough, Bottoms nor any trees whatsoever can still find oyster mushrooms now at almost any large supermarket in the produce section, but when they see the price on a dinky package of them, a bunch of old rotten trees may start to look like a gold mine. 🍄

PSMC Annual Meeting Report

Submitted by PSMC Secretary, Dean Abel

Pete Eyheralde, naturalist with the Mahaska County Conservation Board, told us that the Cedar Bluffs area is the only State Preserve to be designated as a preserve in all five categories: biological, scenic, historical, archaeological and geological. The area has been a site of continual human habitation for 10,500 years.

It was a cold wet afternoon when the mushroomers gathered for lunch. Dave Layton, PSMC president, greeted the hardy crowd with general remarks

recognizing that PSMC had a good year. In particular he mentioned several outreach presentations that he and Marty Augustine facilitated. He called the cooking classes "Julia Child meets the Beverly Hillbillies" and thanked New Pioneer Co-op for their cooperation.

Treasurer Roger Heidt reported that the club will have about \$1200 in the bank at the end of the year. The members voted to keep dues at \$15/year. Vice-President Glen Schwartz reported for the Web Committee that the old Geocities site had shut down

(cont. on back cover)

Dave Layton, President
Prairie States Mushroom Club
542 9th Ave. S.
Clinton, IA 52732

PSMC Web Site:
www.iowamushroom.org



The name “*Symbiosis*” and contents of the newsletter “*Symbiosis*, The Newsletter of the Prairie States Mushroom Club (PSMC)” are the sole property of the PSMC and can not be reproduced without written permission of the PSMC Board of Directors.

PSMC Annual Meeting October 3, 2009 Cedar Bluffs Natural Area near Oskaloosa in Mahaska County

(cont. from pg. 7)

and he had moved the website to [http://www.iowamushroom.org/](http://www.iowamushroom.org) and he has also set up an album of mushroom photos at <http://iowamushroom.smugmug.com/>. Glen said that he hoped to institute other features like identifying mushroom locations and making available the club foray lists online. Dean Abel apologized for neglecting his secretarial duties and will send Glen the lists soon.

Dave Layton has overseen the publication of *Symbiosis* the PSMC newsletter which is now distributed electronically to most of our members.

With money in the bank, ideas were discussed as to how to spend it. Dean said he would investigate the possibility of inviting a guest mycologist to visit the club (some ideas: Michael Kuo, Steve Trudell, Taylor Lockwood, Walt Sundberg). It was later decided to purchase a quantity of the Spring morel

issue of *Fungi* magazine to distribute to members. The club has also renewed its affiliation with the North American Mycological Association.

Nominations for PSMC board positions were approved unanimously: President Dave Layton, V-P Glen Schwartz, Treasurer Roger Heidt, Secretary Dean Abel, and Member-at-large Marty Augustine.

Attending the Cedar Bluffs foray were:
Don Huffman, founding member and past president of PSMC
Tom and Erma Keho Marty Augustine
Bob and Linda Scarth Sally Myers
Pam White and Smurf Jo Keck
Dave Layton Dave McDowell
Glen Schwartz Mike Ash
Roger Heidt Brett Johnson
Dean Abel Mike Krebill
Jackie and Seth
April and Cody and Zach
and Tony and Carol and Cathy



One of PSMC’s strengths has been the continuing involvement of original members such as Erma Keho, Don Huffman and Tom Keho pictured here at Cedar Bluffs – DL