

VOLUME 46 NUMBER 1 - FEBRUARY 2020

NEVADA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY



Epilobium obcordatum near the Mount
Rose Highway summit.

SOCIETY NEWS

SOUTHERN NEVADA EVENTS

February 3 – Dr. Dominic Gentilcore, recent graduate of School of Life Sciences at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, will present “Blackbrush (*Coleogyne ramosissima*) natural regeneration in the Great Basin-Mojave Desert Transition Zone on two fires.”

NORTHERN NEVADA EVENTS

February 6 – Kris Kuyper, biology program manager for EM Strategies, will present her recent work on *Eriogonum tiehmii*.

March 5 – Aramee Diethelm, a UNR PhD candidate, will discuss her research on monarch butterflies and the propagataion and culture of *Asclepias cordifolia* and *A. cryptoceras*.

April 2 – Devon Picklum, another UNR PhD candidate, will describe her research into plant and pollinator interactions in the Carson Range meadows.

Meetings are held in room 300G of the Fleischmann Agriculture Building on the UNR campus, north of 9th Street and Evans Avenue. Enter the building under the breezeway on the west side near the street. There's an elevator at the east end of the building. Meet on the third floor and down the hall from the **UNR herbarium**.

Social time at 7:00 PM; program at 7:30. The outside doors are locked at 7:30.

Events subject to change.

Visit nvnp.org for updates.

The Galena Creek Visitor Center will feature two events in February of interest to Society members:

February 1 – Israel Borokini presents “The Role of Seeds and the Seed Bank in the Management of Great Basin Exosystems.” Israel will discuss the significance of seed behavior and regeneration of wiremouse tail from the soil seedbank and the implication for the management of desert perennials.

February 8 – Shannon Swim presents “Tough Sagebrush Comes from Prison.” Shannon, the Sagebrush in Prisons Project Coordinator for Nevada, will tell us about her work with Institute for Applied Ecology’s Sagebrush in Prisons Project. The project teaches inmates the importance of sagebrush to our local ecosystem, including the Greater Sage Grouse.

Both events start at 10AM in the visitor center building. The park is located at 18250 Mt. Rose Highway. Go to galenacreekvisitorcenter.org for more information.

Of further interest is Patrick Donnelly’s *In Defense of Plants* podcast episode 241, *A Tiny Buckwheat & the Endangered Species Act*. Its description reads, “Tiehm’s buckwheat (*Eriogonum tiehmii*) is a rare

wildflower endemic to only 21 acres of public land in the remote Silver Peak Range of Nevada. Out of sight and largely out of mind, this species has suddenly been brought to the forefront of a legal battle to ensure it is not driven to extinction.”

The podcast is 52 minutes long and can be found at <http://www.indefenseofplants.com/podcast/tag/Eriogonum+tiehmii>

Below: Bill Harnach (far right) at the 2015 Eriogonum Society meeting field trip to the Sierra Valley.



WILLIAM HENRY HARNACH JR. 1944-2019

by Arnold Tiehm & Duncan Kennedy

In our lives we have met a fair number of people, have a handful of true friends, lots of acquaintances, and hopefully not too many enemies. We have also known a select group of people that are best termed as Characters! A person near the head of this list is Bill Harnach.

Bill was born on 11 February 1944 in Whittier, California to Ellen C. (Nichols) Harnach and William H. Harnach. His mother was a nurse from Whittier and his father was a carpenter from New York. Other than a short stint in Fort Bragg, California in the early 1950s his formative years were spent in southern California. Although on track to graduate high school at the age of 17 in 1962, Bill dropped out of high school to work in the food service industry until he became legally an adult. Thankfully he was talked into returning to high school where he finished his degree. Once he turned 18, he eagerly moved out of the Los Angeles Basin, even stopping atop the Grapevine on his way out to "flip the bird" to the entire basin.

He then moved to the tiny town of Bassett, on Highway 49 west of Sierra Valley, and began working at a resort called the Pioneer Lodge. After the lodge burned down (hopefully this had nothing to do with Bill), Bill began working for the U.S. Forest Service on a trail crew.

In 1966, Bill decided to turn his focus elsewhere and began studying at Sierra College in Rocklin, California. He completed a full year before returning to the workforce and working for the Cal-Ida lumber company in 1967 and 1968 on the green chain crew.



After that he returned to Sierra College and, in the spring of 1969, he earned an Associates of Arts degree in General Studies with an emphasis in Minerology. He was then hired by U.S. Steel as a professional prospector and sent to Darby, Montana, to prospect for fluorite deposits as a source of flux for the company's

plant in Orem, Utah. He spent the summer and fall of 1969 in Montana, before being sent to New Mexico for the winter to work on another fluorite deposit. He returned to Montana in the spring and summer of 1970, after which he was sent to survey for iron deposits in Yerington, Nevada at a site called Pumpkin Hollow. The following summer, 1971, he was let go by U.S. Steel and returned to the Sierra Valley area where he went to work at the Gold Lake Lodge. That winter was a big snow year and in June Bill was shoveling snow away from the cabin doors when he met his future life partner Nancy Ann Bradley (born 31 August 1949). She and her friend Carolyn Church had gone to the lodge to apply for employment. Happily, both were successful, so they and Bill worked at the same lodge for the summer. Bill and Nancy soon found that they had lots in common from interests in reading and music to a love of the plants of the Sierra Valley area.

That winter, Bill took a job in Jessup, Georgia, working for Fairbanks-Morse Company building the world's first fully electronic railroad scales. After that job was completed Bill returned to Sierra City where he worked as a residential contractor

This page: Bill and Nancy.

Next page, left to right: Janel Johnson, John Anderson, and Bill at the 2015 Eriogonum Society meeting field trip to Sierra Valley.



and reintroduced himself to Nancy. On 17 January 1973, Bill and Nancy were married in Reno, Nevada. They later welcomed a daughter, Jennifer – born 10 September 1975 [grandchildren Duncan, Jade, and Cailean], a son, Charlie – born 15 Mar 1977 [grandchild Finley], and became full time residents in Sierra Valley.

In 1984 Bill discovered a new passion, education. Initially he worked for the Rural Occupational Program at Portola High School. Then, in 1986, he began full time work for Loyalton High School as a shop teacher. Because of his caring attitude and

his fair aptitude, he was well liked by his students. He received a lot of academically dead-end students who just needed some life skills training and someone to believe in them. After all, Bill had been there and done that. Bill was never a pushover, but he was fair and interested in his students. Many of his students fondly referred to him as Mr. Bill and many of these same students, enriched with Bill's schooling and caring, were able to find decent employment right out of high school. Bill retired from Loyalton High School in 2004.



Nancy came from a long-time Sierra Valley ranching family. From her family Bill learned much about ranching work from branding to haying and was just as capable plowing the road in winter.

Bill and Nancy had long been interested in the flora of their much beloved Sierra Valley. Nancy was more interested in the forage quality and medicinal uses of plants while Bill was the “what is it” guy. In 1989 they began to systematically collect the flora and started the Sierra Valley Herbarium. Collection number one was gathered on 19 March 1989, and it was an early flowering buttercup, *Ranunculus glaberrimus* var. *ellipticus*. The last collection was number 1548 made on 11 July 2018. It was the northern California endemic, *Clarkia stellata*. After retirement Bill earnestly tackled the Sierra Valley flora. He searched the literature for Sierra Valley references and the ever-growing online herbarium databases for Sierra Valley specimens. The result of this was a 121 page article on the flora (Harnach, 2016).

Over the years, 26 to be exact, Bill and Nancy generously led NNPS (previously NNNPS) field trips to Sierra Valley and environs. The first mention we can find of them leading a trip is from the April 1991 newsletter. On page one is, “Saturday, May 11 – NNNPS Field Trip to Sierra Valley.

Nancy and William Harnach are developing a herbarium of Sierra Valley flora, and will lead us to the best early wildflower displays. Some walking, not strenuous. All day: bring lunch and water, and maybe old shoes suitable for a possible wetland visit...”

In those days the NNNPS wrote notes for the newsletter about field trip adventures. The June 1991 newsletter contained the following:

“NNNPS field trip to Sierra Valley – by Jean Gollick. Despite cold, blustery weather, the trip was a tremendous success, due in part to the skillful and dedicated energy of our two nature guides, Nancy and Bill Harnach. Bill told us that the flora from three areas meet at the meadow of the Ramelli Ranch, which is also the drainage for the Middle Fork of the Feather River.

*Melanie Scott, the trip organizer, pointed out the diamond dew still on the lupine as we tramped over the montane meadow and identified many plants. We saw the Sierra Valley evening primrose, *Oenothera tanacetifolia* ssp. *quadriperforata*, which is unique to this area. We also saw *Ivesia aperta* which is rare in this area. Largely due to the efforts of Bill and Nancy, this *Ivesia* has been protected from cattle grazing. Bill pointed out the similar appearance of the young leaves of this *Ivesia* and those of Yarrow. Bill and Nancy’s daughter discovered a perfect basalt arrowhead in the meadow. We also saw*

Ranunculus occidentalis (western buttercup), *Iris missouriensis* (western iris), *Balsamorhiza hookeri* (Hooker's balsamroot), *Zigadenus paniculatus* (sand-corn), water lilies, *Rumex venosus* (desert rhubarb), *Antennaria* sp., *Collomia tinctoria*, and *Descurainia sophia* (tansy mustard).

Two special plants which we saw were *Trifolium beckwithii* and *Viola beckwithii*. These were named for Major Edward Griffin Beckwith who was second-in-command (under Capt. Gunnison) of a party in 1853 for the exploration of the 38th parallel as a feasible route for the proposed transcontinental railroad. Gunnison and 6 others of his party were killed. Beckwith received permission to complete the survey from the Great Salt Lake to the Sierra Nevada between the 40th and 41st parallels. (Michael J. Brodhead wrote a brief history of Beckwith, whom he called "The Great Basin's Forgotten Pathfinder." This is in *Mentzelia*, number 2, 1976. Beckwith should not be confused with Beckwourth, a black man who settled in Sierra Valley in the early days. Beckwourth Pass and the small community of Beckwourth were named after this settler.) *Trifolium beckwithii* is known from Nevada Co. to Modoc Co. in California, and also in Oregon, Idaho, and Nevada. It was first collected "on the Sierra Nevada" in 1854. *Viola beckwithii* is even more widely distributed than the *Trifolium* and is in the same states as above as well as in Utah. The violet was collected on July 1, 1854 during the survey of the railroad route across the Nevada desert. In the description of the plant, Torrey wrote that it was collected "on the slope of a mountain between the Great Salt Lake and the Sierra Nevada."

Bill and Nancy then took us to some vernal pools out in the middle of Sierra Valley, where we saw patches of white *Hesperochiron californicus*. The highlight of the afternoon was seeing a grey female sandhill crane lying over her nest with her mate sitting behind her. The weather turned icy cold and the Sierra was swallowed by a dark snow cloud – we were prompted to return to our cars and to head home. Many thanks to Nancy and Bill for an unforgettable day!"

And thus began a yearly tradition of the Harnach's leading a NNPS field trip. Over

the years they lead field trips to Antelope Valley, Beckwourth, Butterfly Valley, Carmen Creek, Chapman Saddle, Crocker Meadow, Diamond Range, Ferris Swamp, Frazier Falls, Frenchman Creek, Frenchman Lake, Genesee Road, Lacey Valley, Lemmon Canyon Ranch, Long Valley, Loyalton, Marble Hot Springs Road, Ramelli Ranch, Red Clover Valley, Red Rock, Sage Hen Creek, Sierra Valley, Sierraville, Turtle Mountain, and Webber Lake. The last field trip they led was on 29 May 2017 to the Feather River and Sierra Valley Preserve. In one of the trip write-ups Tina Nappe referred to them as the "Pied Pipers of flower trips". In the July & August 1999 NNPS newsletter, an article by Valerie Burkig says, "... Many thanks to Bill and Nancy for another lovely trip and we hope they never tire of leading us on our annual Sierra Valley and vicinity field trips."

I [Arnold Tiehm] first met Bill and Nancy at a NNPS meeting in the spring of 1995. I mentioned to John Dyer that I had not met Bill and Nancy and he promptly provided an introduction. As with a lot of human nature, first impressions can be deceiving. Seeing Bill with an unkempt beard, ponytail, and nonchalant attire did little to reflect his intellect, inquisitiveness, witticism, quest for knowledge, and his far-reaching sardonic personality. This can be seen in the quips that were attached to his emails. These are:

"The earth is the source, not the resource."
- Chief Arvil Looking Horse

"There is science, logic, reason; there is thought verified by experience. And then there is California."
- Edward Abbey

"In Nature there are neither rewards nor punishments, there are consequences".
- R.G. Ingersoll

"The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' (I have found it!) but 'That's funny ...'"
- Isaac Asimov



Bill and Nancy leading a field trip in Sierra Valley.

"The greatest obstacle to knowledge is not ignorance; it is the illusion of knowledge."

–Daniel Boorstin

"Civilization exists by geological consent, subject to change without notice."

– Will Durant

Over the years Bill brought his problem collections to the RENO herbarium for help with identification. Between me telling botany stories and Bill pontificating, we were able to solve the vast majority of his questions but there were always a few Californian things with which I was not familiar. He also generously gave duplicates of his specimens to the RENO herbarium. In early April of 2019 I got an email from Bill saying he wanted to donate his Sierra Valley herbarium to the RENO herbarium. So, on 6 April 2019, a cloudy day with a little mist, Mike Hagebusch, Charlie Duncan, and I went to Calpine and loaded a lifetime of his botanical work into my truck and brought it to its new home. In the

RENO herbarium entry in Index Herbariorum, under collectors, it says Bill Harnach – original herbarium.

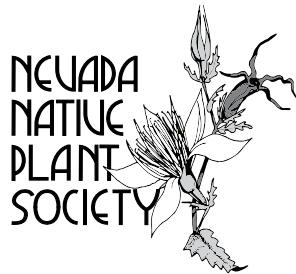
I will end this note with two thoughts. One is that the world needs more Bill Harnachs. The other is my last words with Bill. When we were loading his herbarium, he was up and around, quite talkative, and directing our work. After a while this simply wore him out. When we were ready to go, I shook hands with him and with misty eyes and a choked-up voice I said, "Bill it was a privilege to have known you."

LITERATURE CITED

Harnach, W. 2016. Annotated checklist of the flora of the Sierra Valley Region of Sierra and Plumas counties, California. *Phytoneuron* 2016-13: 1-121.

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