
IN MEMORIAM

IN MEMORIAM: BOHDAN EWACHA, 1934–2011

Veronica Walsh

President, Conserve Native Plants Society, Inc. E-mail: <vw.reallifelessons@qkstream.com>

In February of 2011, Mother Earth lost a resolute protector of the flowers that she provides as part of her bountiful gifts to all of us. That is when Bohdan (Bud) Ewacha of Winnipeg, MB passed away. He was only 76 and still very committed to saving native plants, especially native orchids.

Many of you may not have heard of Bud, as he went about his business without fanfare and without much recognition except for an occasional picture or magazine article. He was a founding member of both Native Orchid Conservation, Inc. (www.nativeorchid.org) and Conserve Native Plants Society, Inc. (CNPS) in Manitoba. Only a few months before his death, he gave up the reins as president of the CNPS but remained active in the organization.

Bud, as we knew him, used many methods to fulfill his ambition to protect and increase the number of plants that were his passion. He re-established patches of native plants in areas where they had previously existed but had been destroyed. The endangered western prairie fringed orchid was the subject of his research project, which included hand pollination, seed collection, and distribution. He participated in research projects to gain knowledge of conditions or pathogens that were killing other orchids. He collected specimens for display and education purposes for the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. When inquiries came from many locations around the world for information about native plants, Bud

responded to those with information he had learned or compiled.

Educating and encouraging others to become involved in the protection of the natural environment was a priority for him. He did this via regular newsletters and distribution of pamphlets about plants and the work of the CNPS. He created a beautiful and informational visual display and set up shop at public events and in shopping malls to increase awareness and broaden the membership of CNPS. Field trips to Manitoba wetlands and forests were organized and conducted by him so that anyone interested could learn and enjoy the beauty of nature at the same time.

When CNPS members identified parcels of public land on which native orchids or endangered species were growing, it was Bud who took steps to ensure this area was designed as a protected area from logging or other destructive human activity.

For this work of behalf of the plants that he deeply appreciated, some of us considered Bud to be an everyday hero. In this and in all areas of his life, he demonstrated his determination to succeed, and whenever he encountered an obstacle, he moved over it, around it, or through it.

Not everyone who encountered Bud would consider him a hero and perhaps some would say he is not deserving of

this tribute. One reason for that could be his tendency to allow his passion and concerns to get in the way of tact and diplomacy. However, no one said that heroes have to be perfect. If it is true that

heroes need to have “the courage of their convictions” and to use that courage for the betterment of life, then Bohdan Ewacha deserves the title of hero.



The Witness

The young farmer jumped on his tractor
Its bulldozer aimed straight ahead.
He cut down all the trees on his newly acquired land.

The trees fell into a neat row of tangled branches, twigs etc.
Only a lonely windmill remained.
The farmland had once belonged to a pioneer.
He and his family had planted and watered the trees.

The trees had provided shelter for the pioneer home.
They were shelter for the wild animals and homes for the birds.
They were a beacon marking the location of a farmyard—
On the vast prairie.

Then the young farmer headed home.
Proud of the farmland he had attained.
He probably thought of all the wealth he would reap
By removing the trees and planting grain.

I saw the lonely windmill and the tangled trees but soon....

Red and orange flames shot upward into the sky.
Smoke made billows of dark gray towering skyward.
It could be seen for miles.
My back pushed rigidly against the car seat.
I was speechless. I was in shock.
My Grandfather’s trees were on fire.
My soul felt the cries of souls beneath the flames.
It was September 24, 2011, at approximately 5 PM.

The next morning the trees continued --to smolder.
Smoke gathered into a long, single plume sweeping westward
Then it formed an arc and returned eastward over the highway and beyond.
Saluting the world and me—the witness.

I could see it would be sometime before the smoldering stopped.
The trees did not go easily.
Sunlight sparkled from a truck near the smoldering trees.

Sometime later I was able to feel a calmness, for I knew
The soul cannot be destroyed.

- *Georgiaday Hall*