



IN MEMORIAM
LANDON E. MCKINNEY
(1949–2014)

Ronald L. Jones

*Eastern Kentucky University Herbarium
Richmond, Kentucky 40475, U.S.A.*

Ralph L. Thompson

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Landon E. McKinney, a talented field botanist and naturalist, passed away on Thursday, June 5th, 2014, at the Wade Park Veteran's Medical Center in Cleveland, Ohio, at the age of 65. Landon Earl McKinney was born May 17, 1949 in Nashville, Tennessee, to the late Lawrence Vern and Constance Joy McKinney. After graduating from Donelson High School in Nashville in 1967, Landon joined the Navy and served as a Marine Navy Corpsman from 1968–1970; he was a field combat corpsman in Vietnam during 1969. He earned a B.S. in Biology in 1973 from Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and subsequently his M.S. in Botany in 1977 from MTSU. His master's thesis was "*Preliminary Studies of the Acaulescent Blue Violets (Viola) with Special Reference to Middle Tennessee*," which began his life-long fascination with the stemless blue violets. He was a Research Associate in Plant Taxonomy at Vanderbilt University from 1985–1989, where he worked with Dr. Robert Kral.

After his family, Landon's true passion was botany, which he focused upon throughout his life. He served as a field botanist for the Tennessee Natural Heritage Program and the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, and worked as an environmental consultant for several different companies in the eastern U.S., mostly in Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee. He conducted numerous status surveys for state and federal rare plant species, worked on habitat analyses, assessed wetland communities, and made management recommendations on preserving natural habits and controlling invasive species. In recent years he established research affiliations with Northern Kentucky University, University of Cincinnati, and Ohio State University.

Landon was active in the Tennessee Academy of Science and the Kentucky Academy of Science, serving

terms as Chair and Secretary for both academies. In 2003–2005, he was a member of the Editorial Board of *Castanea*, *Journal of the Southern Appalachian Society*, and served as Chair in 2005–2006. Landon was heavily involved in the Kentucky Native Plant Society (KNPS) for many years; he regularly attended annual meetings and frequently led field trips. He served as the KNPS President from 1992–1996 and from 2002–2006, and his strong leadership was instrumental in maintaining and enhancing the activities of the society.

Landon was an avid plant collector throughout his career and collected thousands of specimens during all his botanical activities and deposited them at regional herbaria such as EKY, TENN, and VDB. Landon eagerly collected difficult grasses, rushes, and sedges, and possessed a special skill in identifying these problematic species. Landon was especially skillful in *Carex* and *Viola*, and provided the keys to these two genera for the 2005 book, *Plant Life of Kentucky: An Illustrated Guide to the Vascular Flora*. Landon's primary passion throughout his career was the genus *Viola*, particularly the stemless blue violets, where he was nationally known for his expertise. The seminal publication of his career occurred in 1992 with a book on the stemless blue violets—*A Taxonomic Revision of the Acaulescent Blue Violets (Viola) of North America*, published by the Botanical Research Institute of Texas. This work is highly regarded and had a great influence on subsequent studies of this group of violets, with other experts often citing Landon's work and comparing it to their interpretations. Landon authored or co-authored approximately 50 scientific publications and professional presentations on *Viola* and on a variety of other topics. He was a frequent presenter at the Annual Meetings of the Association of Southeastern Biologists, Kentucky Academy of Science, and Tennessee Academy of Science.

Landon continued his work and interest in *Viola* until the very end with the completion of his work with R. John Little on the Violaceae for the *Flora of North America* which is now "in press." This past April, Landon sent an email to local botanists concerning the recent discovery of a new Kentucky county record for *Viola egglestonii*, and noted, ... "after 40+ years of working with violets, violets still excite me ... this population is as classical cedar glade violet as you can get ..."

Landon is survived by his devoted wife of 31 years, Lela; children Adam McKinney, Amanda (Troy) Chitwood, and Eric (Amy) McKinney; grandchildren Landon, Lucas, Erica, Katelyn, and Whitney. Landon will be sadly missed by his many extended family members, special friends, and botanical colleagues.