

Principes, 42(4), 1998, pp. 190–192

Marion Ruff Sheehan

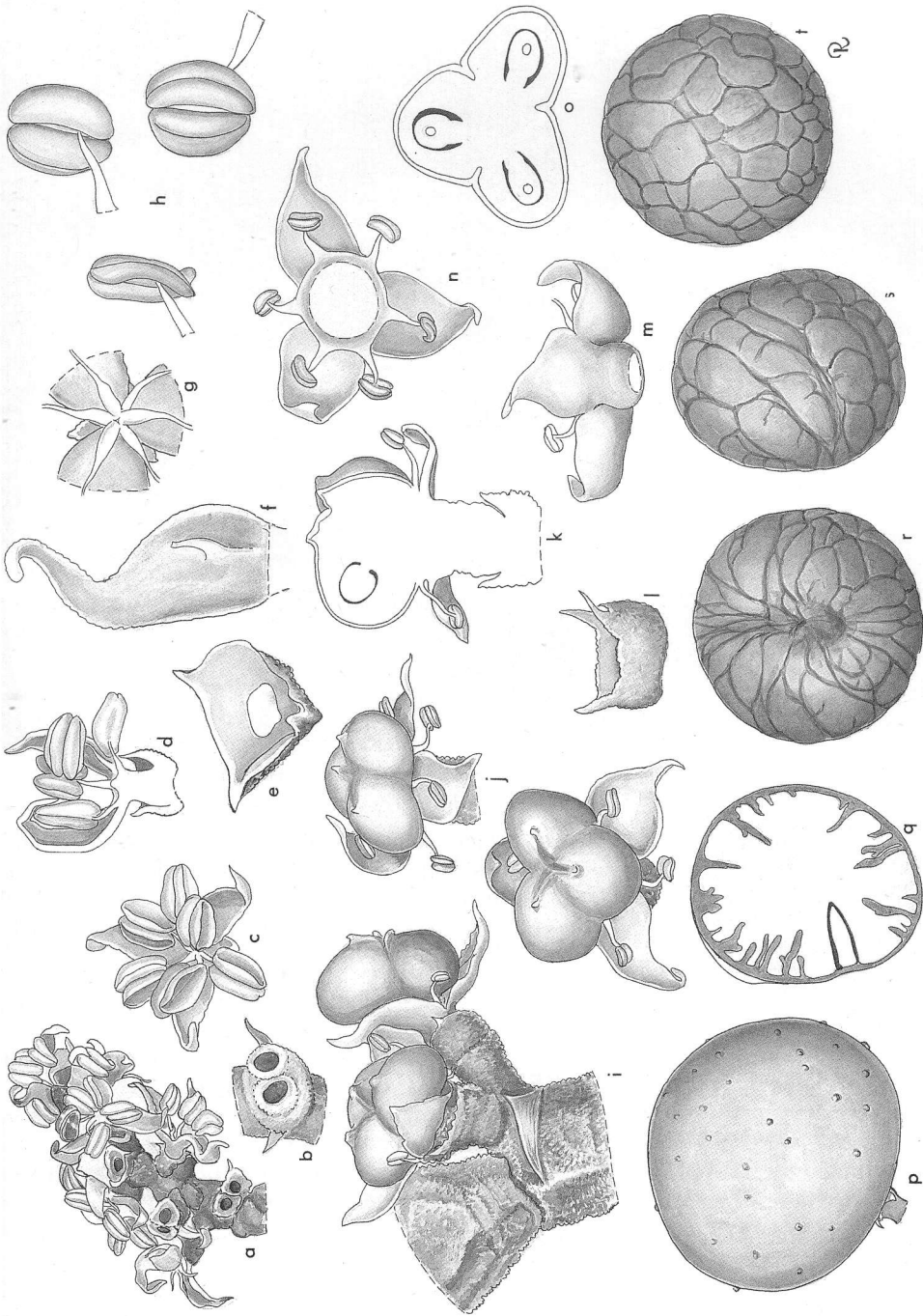
It is with great sadness that the editors report the loss of Marion Ruff Sheehan, who died suddenly and unexpectedly on July 20, 1998, due to complications following open heart surgery. Her distinguished career included a professorship at the University of Florida in Gainesville, the illustration of more than 40 books, and artistic creations of all sorts including plaques, medals, trophies, knitwear designs, and prints. Early on she undertook a major project on palms.

Marion's career began in the L.H. Bailey Hortorium of Cornell University where she had important roles in both the institution and palm studies. In 1946 she was hired by Liberty Hyde Bailey to be the artist in the Hortorium. Combining the work with graduate studies, she was awarded an MS by Cornell in 1950. At the Hortorium she contributed detailed plates for several major works including all three editions of *Hortus*, the *Manual of Cultivated Plants*, and an important book on plant taxonomy written in the late 1940's by the Hortorium's first director, the late Dr. G. H. M. Lawrence. There also she met Dr. H. E. Moore, Jr., who engaged her to do plates of palm flowers and fruits for a *Genera Palmarum*. She was involved in this project from 1962 to the book's publication in 1987.

One of Marion's outstanding characteristics was her constant search for ways to do things better. On one trip to Florida, we took a dissecting 'scope for her use. Eventually she bought a jeweler's saw and spent hours cutting the hard fruits and seeds. She became expert at slicing each one at the exact angle that revealed the tiny embryo. The real fun came when she had to tackle the double coconut, having only one fruit to work with. She finally took it to the carpentry shop on campus and used a very fine crosscut saw. I was rooming with her at a conference in Miami in 1964 when she and Dr. Moore decided that wash drawings rather than ink alone would better portray the contours of the palm materials. She told me at the time that she was pleased and excited about the decision to use a wash technique, but it meant more work as the 30 some plates already in hand, mostly of coryphoid genera, had to be redone.

Marion's observations on the often complex structure of palm flowers and fruits were excellent and sometimes revelations. She was dedicated to teaching people about plant structure and was determined to have a well illustrated glossary in *Genera Palmarum*, which she largely planned as well as executed. It took her an average of eighteen hours to complete the sketches for a plate, each part carefully drawn to scale. The sketches on tracing paper were then sent to Dr. Moore (and after his death to myself and John Dransfield) for checking against original materials. Once the sketches were returned, she still had to transfer them to drawing paper and add the wash. It was always a real pleasure to receive the pristine and beautiful completed plates. Dr. Moore was very proud of them and once told me that there were no palm plates their equal. They will long continue to be an important resource for those engaged in many levels of palm work (see Fig. 1). Marion also contributed the water colors in GP and illustrations for papers on palms by L.H. Bailey and others.

Marion's palm work was only one of many significant accomplishments in a most productive life. We at Cornell are both proud and fortunate that her work began here. Her talent has always been at our disposal; despite many commitments, she never refused a request. At the time of her death she was working on a plate of *Lemurophoenix*, a spectacular palm, described from Madagascar in 1991. While at Cornell she met a graduate student who became her husband, Dr. Thomas Sheehan, a noted Horticulturist and orchid specialist. Along with him she became deeply involved with orchids and the orchid community. Marion and Tom were coauthors of the longest running series in the *American Orchid Society Bulletin* (now *Orchids*), "Orchid Genera Illustrated," appearing every other month for the past 31 years. The series will end in January 1999 with number 186. Marion was the recipient of two of the American Orchid Society's highest awards: the Gold Medal of Achievement (April 1995) and with her husband, the Certificate of Meritorious Achievement in Orchid Education. More about Marion can be found on the AOS web page at: [HTTP://orchidweb.org](http://orchidweb.org).



1. *Kerriodoxa elegans*: a—o, *Bhoonab s.n.*; p—t, *Dransfield 5421*.
 1. **Kerriodoxa**, a palm described from Thailand in 1983. a, portion of staminate inflorescence $\times 4\frac{1}{2}$; b, portion of staminate inflorescence, flowers removed to show scars and bracteoles $\times 9$; c, staminate flower $\times 9$; d, staminate flower in vertical section $\times 15$; e, staminate calyx $\times 15$; f, staminate petal with adnate stamen filament, interior view $\times 15$; g, stamen filaments, sepals, and parts of petals, top view $\times 15$; h, stamen in 3 views $\times 15$; i, portion of pistillate inflorescence $\times 6$; j, pistillate flower in 2 views $\times 6$; k, pistillate flower in vertical section $\times 6$; l, pistillate calyx $\times 6$; m, pistillate corolla and staminal ring $\times 6$; n, pistillate corolla and staminal ring $\times 6$; o, ovary in cross section $\times 6$; p, pistillate calyx $\times 6$; q, pistillate calyx $\times 6$; r, s, t, seed in 3 views $\times 1$. *Kerriodoxa elegans*: a—o, *Bhoonab s.n.*; p—t, *Dransfield 5421*.



2. Marion Sheehan working on a painting of parrots and orchids with the parrot in attendance.

Her legacy remains apparent in the L.H. Bailey Hortorium where two prints of red and blue parrots and orchids hang in the main office (Fig. 2), and her pencil sketches of botanists adorn the current director's room. She is even known to our beginning students through large water colors of flowers designed for and used every year in the

plant taxonomy class to characterize plant families. Many of our own prints or books she illustrated and will enjoy them for years to come. She will be sorely missed not only as a creative illustrator, but also as a special, much valued friend.

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