

France fell because too many of its citizens failed to measure up to the responsibilities of a democracy; this ought to be a warning to us in the United States.

The Birmingham Eccentric

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"Tea for Two"

By NELLIE HURLEY MINFIE

ON THE second floor of the Cranbrook Institute of Science building in a spacious, book-lined office sitting behind a desk piled high with thick botanical volumes, five days of each week you will find a woman who as a high school student postponed the study of botany because she didn't think it would be very interesting.

She is Mrs. Marjorie T. Bingham, of Walnut Lake road, whose position as botanist at the Institute of Science dates back seven years. It dates back to the day she moved her family out here, sent her children to school and went back to her work that had received only a temporary set-back when she married.

In telling her story to me this week, Mrs. Bingham recalled that it was when she was a high school senior and desperately in need of science credit that she walked into a botany classroom. She entered the class at the beginning of the fall semester, she remembers, and was only mildly interested at first.

Like *Bolt From Blue* Then came spring and the botany field trips. Like a bolt from the blue—it was almost like a visitation she recalled with an embarrassed little shrug—it struck her that botany should be her life work. From that moment she went about the business of fulfilling her ambition with a systematic air that from the brief talk I had with her this week I knew must be an inherent part of her personality.

The following fall she entered the University of Cincinnati and sought out the head of the botany department to present her story. "I wanted," she tells the story so simply, "to become a botanist and I put the future in his hands. I have never been sorry."

Today, one of the foremost women in her field, she scurries throughout the state on field trips that have netted her thousands upon thousands of specimens. Counties thousands reside in neat piles in the herbarium in the basement of the Institute. Rows upon rows of tall steel filing cabinets house these specimens that will in a few more thousand years serve as documentary evidence of the flora that covered Michigan in the early 19th century. And then, too, this herbarium is a reference library. Mrs. Bingham pointed out. If in the course of his wanderings a botanist comes across a specimen that he is unable to classify he returns to this herbarium, thumbs through the files and emerges with the answer.

Perplexing Problems The portion of our talk that fascinated me the most was the perplexing problems for which Mrs. Bingham has no answer. For instance, the cactus that is carefully and neatly planted in a ray little pottery dish. It sits nonchalantly in the wide picture window in her office and looks far into a particularly lush and abundantly green landscape of Bloomfield Hills. If this prickly little cactus could talk it would answer the question that perplexes its owner.

Where did it come from, she would like to know. Mrs. Bingham only knows that she found it high atop a rocky section on the southern exposure of Huron Mountain up in Marquette County. It is not native to Michigan but is found normally in southwestern United States. Why is it in Michigan, she asks. And why, in Michigan, is it confined to a patch no more than a few feet square in a nearly inaccessible rocky spot of a northern Michigan hilltop?

Mrs. Bingham doesn't know the answer to these questions. Nor does anyone. She could hazard a thousand guesses, she says, but at the best they probably would never approximate the true picture. This is but one maddler. Listen to another: As a personal survey Mrs. Bingham is examining the flora of Round Island, one of three small islands in the Straits of Mackinac. When this survey is finally finished it will complete the study of the three islands. Mackinac Island was studied some years ago and Mrs. Bingham expects to have off the press this season an account of her research of Bois Blanc, the second island in this group.

Vegetation Different Why she asked me is the vegetation not the same for these three islands when they are but a stone's throw apart? "I do not really know the answer," she confessed. "I can only guess. I know that climatic conditions often cause changes, but

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... Visits with Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills Women ...

an oak-hickory climax. Both scenes come from Oakland County, the beech-maple is in Farmington Township and the oak-hickory specimens come from a woods at Lone Pine and Franklin roads.

Perfect Plant Communities Carefully placed bulbs that give exactly the correct tint to make the scene appear as spring sunshine or summer dusk, light each of these two scenes that are perfect reproductions of plant communities.

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stitute is threefold. Mrs. Bingham explained: exhibition, education and research. The education phase of the Institute is carried out by lecture series offered out there each season, by talks before women's clubs, at Kingswood School, and by the publishing of bulletins outlining work at the Institute.

At the present moment Mrs. Bingham has two manuscripts in the writing. One tentatively titled, "Flora of Oakland County," will go to press within the next few months and another, "Plant Survey of Bois Blanc Island" will (Continued on Next Page)

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Mrs. Bingham this, naturally, does not hold true in the Straits where the islands are approximately. "Soil plays an important part in the vegetation of two of this group of islands not being identical with the third. Topography, too, is important, for one of the islands is swamp and another has highlands with hardwoods and a third is a highland abundant with hardwoods and evergreens." With the exception of the Round Island trips, which is a personal project, Mrs. Bingham's field trips are sponsored by the Institute of Science. The Institute sponsors, wholly or in part, these trips that take her throughout the state. The results are on view today. Although far from completed, much of her work can be seen in the Hall of Michigan Plants, a corridor that leads off from the Institute of Science. When the project is finally completed there can be seen in this hall seven typical plant communities, she says. Two dioramas are complete today and the third is moving into the final stages. One scene illustrates the beech-maple forest climax in Michigan and the second is

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