Henry O. Whittier, bryologist (1937–2008)

**Harvey A. Miller**  
Miami University Herbarium, Oxford, OH 45056, U.S.A.  
e-mail: bryoladonna@aol.com

Henry Obermanns Whittier, botanist and specialist for Pacific Island bryophytes, was born in Schenectady, New York, on September 1, 1937, and passed away suddenly at his home in Oviedo, Florida, on December 20, 2008. He was retired from the University of Central Florida, originally Florida Technological University, where he was the only botanist among the charter faculty.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara, a retired biology teacher who shared his interest and passion for science. She is continuing to work on their collections. His daughter Rebecca Johnson and granddaughters Samantha and Sarah live in the Orlando area.

His father, Robert Whittier, served as mayor of Oviedo and was an accomplished oboist. His mother, Grace Obermanns Whittier, studied microbiology at the Pasteur Institute in Paris and was a gifted organist and harpist. His only sibling, Herbert, is a retired professor of anthropology from Michigan State University. Their grandfather Obermanns was an inventor and a rock and mineral collector as well as a professional paper chemist for Hammermill. His shop held many wonders for the boys who delighted in experiments that sometimes were downright dangerous. Hank loved sailing from an early age and throughout his life. He was preparing to drive to the marina to work on his ketch, “Sea Witch,” when he was stricken.

He inherited his parents’ talent and love for music and was an accomplished flutist who played in the Miami University Marching Band, the Florida Technological University (now UCF) Symphony Orchestra, as well as several civic and Masonic bands. He read widely and at an early age showed promise of being the Renaissance man he became with interests in science, history, education, exploration and technology.

Henry graduated from Ashtabula, Ohio, High School and entered the McGuffey School of Education at Miami University. There his studies were directed toward a degree in science education. On completion of the B. Ed., he earned the M.S. in botany at Miami. He undertook further graduate study at the University of Hawaii before successfully completing the Ph.D. at Columbia University while working as research assistant at The New York Botanical Garden under the direction of William Campbell Steere.

I first met Hank at Miami while he was an undergraduate. Shortly after he began work on his M.S. as a botany graduate student, he learned of the possibility to accompany an expedition into the tropical Pacific as a field research assistant. A round-the-world cruise was planned on the “Collegiate Rebel,” a 124 foot, steel-hulled schooner, departing from Tampa, scheduled to visit the Galapagos, Marquesas, Tahiti, Samoa, Kusai, Ponape, Micronesian Atolls, Palau, Yap and Guam for botanical collecting. Hank was an enthusiastic recruit for the crew, combining his love of sailing with an opportunity for botanical work in a little known part of the world.

For his report to the department on his return to Miami, Hank submitted a detailed narrative of the expedition. A copy was deposited in the archives of Miami University, The New York Botanical Garden, and the Explorers Club of New York. His field books and first set of specimens are to go to NYBG with duplicates to the Miami University Herbarium and the B. P. Bishop Museum.