

on a huge barbecued meal back in civilization ("civilization" being a word that we would never have used to describe that small frontier town, at least not before spending thirteen days in the rainforest!). We had all survived the hike, fortunately with only minor injuries and illnesses. Nonetheless it had been the most exhausting and demanding trip any of us had ever been on. Technically speaking, the final leg of climb to the summit of Mt. Neblina was the most difficult mountain trail I have ever done, and involved quite a bit of rock climbing skills. We later learned that we had hiked up along the northeastern ridge of the Neblina Highlands while previous botanical expeditions had landed their helicopters on the northwestern ridge. This explains why we did not find a single *D. meristocaulis*, which had been reported as common.

Maybe next time...



Figure 1: The exuberant, but sodden expedition at the top of Mt. Neblina, holding innovative champagne servers (*Heliampora* pitchers). From left to right: Christoph Scherber, Andreas Wistuba, Gert Hoogenstrijd, Joachim Nerz, Fernando Rivadavia. The guide Deco is in the rear, by the Brazilian flag. Photograph by G. Hoogenstrijd.

## CARNIVOROUS PLANTS HIT THE BIG TIME!

SHAWN LYONS • 890 S. Abbeywood Place • Roswell, GA 30075 • USA

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When I was four years old, my mom read to me a book called *The Reason For A Flower*. It had a few pictures of carnivorous plants, and I just had to learn more about them. I read all the library books I could get my hands on, and when Easter came the Easter Bunny brought me a butterwort (*Pinguicula primuliflora*) and a Venus Flytrap. Then mom took me to The Chattahoochee Nature Center to meet Henning von Schmeling. He knew a whole lot about carnivorous plants. He gave me some and I grew them really well! Since then I have been reading and studying a

whole lot about them.

I am learning how to take care of ones that are more difficult to grow, like a *Pinguicula* species from Pachuca. I won two blue ribbons at the Southeastern Flower show for my *Utricularia gibba*! I have *U. gibba* because I went to an aquatic plant store to buy some water hyacinths for a plastic basin in my back yard. A year later I noticed there were some plants in my basin that had little bladders on them. I said, "Mom! I think there's a carnivorous plant growing with my water hyacinths!" She said, "That's not possible! You're just imagining carnivorous plants everywhere!" I took some of the plant to show Henning and he said they really were bladderworts. He said those water hyacinths might have come from the wild and maybe had some bladderwort plants or seeds hitchhiking in their roots.

Once I wrote a letter about my carnivorous plants to a TV game show called *Figure It Out*. (It is broadcast by the Nickelodeon Network, and my dad says it is like a kids' version of an old show called, *What's My Line?*) In March 1998, they picked me to be a contestant on the show. I won the grand prize because no one on the panel could guess I grow carnivorous plants. The producers from *Figure It Out* called the producers of *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*, and on July 15 1998 I was on *The Tonight Show*. I taught a few million people about carnivorous plants!

Instead of flying my plants to Orlando and Burbank for the shows, Henning knew carnivorous plant growers who helped me out. Steve Steward from Orlando let me borrow plants for *Figure It Out*. He showed me all the cool plants he grows at IBW Enterprises, and he even gave me some to take home. Leo Song at California State University at Fullerton, and Tom Johnson who is in charge of the ICPS seed bank, helped me out and showed me around their greenhouses. I was very excited to see their awesome plants! I borrowed a few of their plants for *The Tonight Show*.

Jay Leno acted like he was scared of the plants, but I told him and the audience that the biggest thing ever eaten by a carnivorous plant was probably a rat. On the show I put one end of a long worm in one trap of a Venus Flytrap. I put two other parts of the same worm into two other traps on the same plants. I said, "Food fight!" Everyone clapped and laughed. I showed Jay a *Nepenthes bicalcarata*. He pretended the plant was eating him. I said, "Oh Puh-lease!" I told Jay about the two thorns that look like fangs under each trap's lid.

At California State Fullerton's greenhouses, where I met Leo Song, I also got to meet Art North. He raises *Nepenthes*. He showed me some great pictures he took of *Nepenthes* on his trips to Mt. Kinabalu in Borneo. My biggest dream is to go to Mt. Kinabalu someday.

I am very lucky that I have met plant growers who are interested in talking to kids about carnivorous plants. I feel very happy when they talk to me and answer my questions. I am a kid with a lot of questions. I have made presentations about my carnivorous plants to other kids in different classes at my school, even kids who are much older than me. I show kids what my carnivorous plants can do, and they love it. I tell them that many carnivorous plants are endangered and should not be collected from the wild. I think it is a good idea to teach kids all about carnivorous plants, because we want kids to learn about nature so they will help preserve it.

*Eight-year old Shawn wrote this article with a little help from his mom. ICPS members who attended the 1996 meeting in Atlanta may remember Shawn—he passed around a giant cookie that he and a friend had decorated to look like Drosera erythrorhiza.*

