

## A tribute to James Edwin Cruise, Ph.D., L.L.D., 1925–2021

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### Introduction

During the middle 1800s, Jim's Irish ancestors lived in Norfolk County, Ontario. They supplemented a meagre farm income by boarding itinerant lumbermen during the winter months. The loggers slept on hay in the barn and were served an unvarying diet of porridge and lamb stew. Early on, Norfolk's loggers had cut the pines, up to 30.5 m tall and 1.2 m in diameter, used for masts by the Royal Navy. By the middle 1800s, timber from a dozen tree species was being cut, largely for shipping across Lake Erie to the United States.

Jim was born on 26 June 1925, almost a century later, in the eastern part of the county, in Port Dover. At the time, it was a fishing village with the largest freshwater fleet in the world, based partly on Lake Erie's Blue Pike (*Sander vitreus glaucus*), a fish that would soon be harvested to extinction. Jim's life is the fascinating journey of a great gentleman in a time of great change, an influential field biologist, and a close friend.

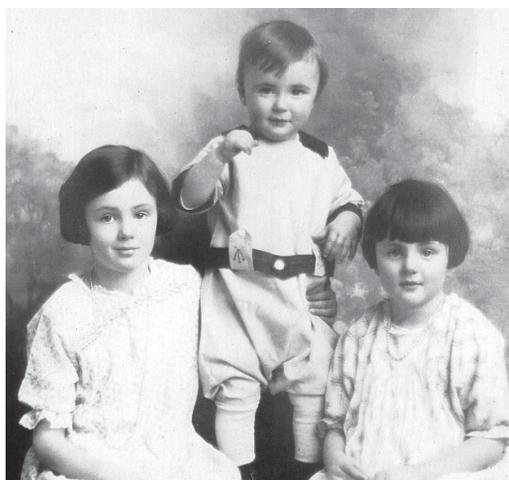
### Early Days in Norfolk and the War

The hamlet of Marburg, where Jim grew up, included the farm and the one-room schoolhouse that he attended with two other students in his class. It was 6 km north-northeast of Port Dover on the Haldimand Clay Plain. Although he did leave Marburg, he returned to it, and spent most of his life there.

Jim's parents met in Grace Church in Port Dover where his father sang in the choir for 61 years. The four Cruise kids also sang in the choir (Figure 1). They drove there every Sunday on unforgiving roads, regardless of the conditions.

Jim always loved nature and when five years old he looked after his own garden. School at Marburg was a happy memory. On sunny spring days the students and the teacher would walk down to Black Creek. The limestone floor of the creek was good for wading and Jim collected crayfish and frogs in its deeper pools.

In 1937 things changed to a more stressful life that was split between high schools in Port Dover and Simcoe. At the time Jim was a beekeeper and he gave a presentation at school on beekeeping. His knowledge and enthusiasm contributed to a very



**FIGURE 1.** Jim in about 1928 with sisters Eleanore (left) and Isabel (right). Jim also had a younger brother, George (also deceased), who was a clever mechanic and provided Jim with a series of cars beginning in high school days. Photo: courtesy of Mr. Monte Smith, Port Dover.

successful presentation. Afterwards, he was asked to be a speaker when one was needed. In later grades Jim drove a 1927 Chevy to school and he gathered the same several fellow students from the countryside route each day. Smaller children were sometimes buried in quilts in the back seat. It was a circuitous route often blocked by mud or snow. They were always in a hurry but rarely on time. The “Marburg Express” gang was an anticipated arrival at the principal’s office some time after school had started.

In 1943 Jim enlisted with the Royal Canadian Air Force. He was selected to train as a navigator which involved ‘book learning’. This was a good fit and Jim received the Dominion Skyways Proficiency Award as top of his class. He was soon Sergeant and Commissioned Pilot Officer, and later became a Navigation Instructor and a Flying Officer. At 20 years of age, following VE Day (Victory in Europe, 30 May 1945), Jim was tasked with numerous flights across the English Channel to evacuate wounded troops. These were also his “drug dealing days”, as he called them. He received a ration of 300 cigarettes a month, which was highly valuable, and these, along with the rations of others, he sold on the streets of Copenhagen to buy gifts for the children of his fellow servicemen.

### University of Toronto as an Undergraduate

Jim had finished high school in 1942 with a dream of teaching agricultural science and biology, but the family could not afford to send him to the Agricultural College at Guelph as he hoped. However, when he returned from the war in 1946, the Department of Veterans Affairs was willing to assist in his further education. He was accepted by Victoria College at the University of Toronto. He served as President of South House, and also as President of the Men’s Residence Council. His leadership and administrative talents were becoming clearer.

### The Cornell Years

Following graduation from the University of Toronto in 1950, Jim (Figure 2) went to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York: just the kind of place he needed. One of the original eight Ivy League Colleges, it had a strong reputation for academic excellence. Its botanical resources were extraordinary. Its libraries were well stocked and its collections well curated. It has been rated among the top 20 universities worldwide (QS World University Rankings 2022). Regarding botany, there was the Bailey Hortorium, a major centre for the study of wild and cultivated plants, with associated greenhouses and gardens. Liberty Hyde Bailey, who started it, is best known for his books on cultivated plants, 65 books in total, and over 1000 articles concerning plant growth,



**FIGURE 2.** Jim in about 1954 when he graduated from University of Toronto. Photo: courtesy of Mr. Monte Smith, Port Dover.

ecology, and systematics.

Jim completed an M.Sc. degree in plant physiology under the direction of Dr. D.G. Clarke in 1951, and a Ph.D. under the direction of Dr. W.C. Muenster in 1954 (see Bibliography). Jim was influenced here by talented staff and by his close friend William (Bill) Dress who stayed at Cornell and became Chief Curator and Professor Emeritus. After his Ph.D., Jim continued at Cornell teaching, then moved to Princeton, and a New Jersey college. The move into a 1771 house in New Jersey was memorable, but he was not there long. He spent almost 13 years in New York and New Jersey, but his parents were weary of managing the farm so he returned home in 1962, to Marburg and the Botany Department of the University of Toronto.

### Botany Professor and Associate Dean 1963 to 1975, University of Toronto (U of T)

It was during this period that Jim made his greatest contribution to botany, especially to teaching systematics, ecology, and phytogeography. He was an entertaining and charismatic teacher and made botany important and interesting in a way few others could. His classes were always full and he was loved by his students who could not help but learn. He had an uncanny ability to remember faces and names. By the second lecture he knew everyone and his door was always open to his students. He set the path for hundreds of knowledgeable and eager biologists.

Field trips and individual plant collecting projects were frequent in his courses and his students learned how to enjoy plants everywhere. He took his students into vacant city lots, industrial areas, and markets. He took his classes on longer, weekend trips to his Marburg farm, where 40 students (Figure 3) slept on hay in the barn and visited some of the best examples of Carolinian habitats in southwestern Ontario.

In 1968, a handful of graduate students in systematic botany accompanied professors Jim Cruise and Jack Maze, and several support staff, on a major field expedition and training session to Washington State and Oregon. This was a special treat and the first excursion of its kind at the Botany Department. The group left Toronto by train from Union Station and headed west to Vancouver (Figure 4). From there, the field party made its way initially into Washington State by rented cars to experience the diversity of its ecosystems from the temperate rain forest of the Olympic Peninsula to the dry scrublands in the east. Stops along the way provided opportunities for collecting specimens, and in the evenings, time was spent in identifying and pressing plants (Figure 5). One characteristic of Jim, as noted by one of his graduate students, was his immaculate appearance: not a hair out of place or a wrinkle in his pants or shirt when he came out of the tent in the morning.

In view of the successful outing to northwestern USA, another excursion was made in 1969, organized and led by Jim. The group, consisting of students, Botany staff, and some spouses, left Toronto in a cavalcade of cars. This trip was to provide students with first-hand experience in vegetational changes with climate and topography while moving southward. The field party travelled down the Appalachians of

the eastern United States, camping that first evening in forested bear country. In the middle of the night, the sleeping Drs. Dengler awoke to an inquisitive bear ripping open the seam of their tent. A bit of shouting resulted but no major harm was done. Continuing south through Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris* Miller) country, the party made its way through the Florida panhandle ending up finally in hot, humid New Orleans. That in itself was a special experience—spending the night in a quaint hotel in the Bourbon Street area. What an opportunity to wander through this famous locale absorbing the sights and sounds! The return trip provided quite a contrast in the landscape going northward along the Mississippi lowlands and cotton fields. A side visit arranged by Jim to a historic former plantation mansion was an interesting interlude on the homeward drive. The comradery among students and staff, as was the case the year before (Figure 6), was heartwarming and memorable.

Jim often had lunch with the support staff, stores managers, greenhouse staff, and lab technicians. A rowdy group of as many as twenty sat at a long table. They joked and played cribbage, and Jim was sorely missed when he was not there. Few if any other professors were part of this group. Jim could fit in anywhere.

The herbarium at U of T, a dried plant collection with the international acronym ‘TRT’, was a major resource with a half million specimens (Figure 7; Text box 1). Jim was the curator. It was the leading collection representing the flora of Ontario, and was consulted on an ongoing basis for specimens from Ontario and other parts of Canada. Herbarium guests were welcomed, some of them for months at a time. They included scholars and characters such as Bernard Boivin, Bill Dore, John McNeill, and Herb



**FIGURE 3.** Lunch during a weekend field trip at Marburg, Norfolk County, Ontario in June 1973. The field trip was attended by 40 students and it is possible to identify four future university biology professors, high school teachers, major conservation leaders, and prominent nature writers in this photo. Photo: Jim Cruise.

Wagner—all part of the education to be had at the herbarium in those days. Jim made himself available to explain the herbarium, check plant identities, and



**FIGURE 4.** Jim Cruise on the train westward to Vancouver and Washington State, on a field excursion with Botany students and staff. He had just received a special libation offered by one of the students. Photo: E. Haber.

provide access to his own library as well as the herbarium's library. Jim's herbarium was an experiment in teaching that yielded great results, in publications for sure, but most importantly in students who went on to become teachers, researchers, wildlife managers, and conservationists themselves.

Jim was also responsive to the spirit of the times—the 1960s and 1970s—and encouraged his students in their interactions with senior program staff of the provincial government, just across Queen's Park from the herbarium, on the day's emerging issues of endangered species and park system development, among others. The herbarium was on the speed dial of Toronto hospitals for calls about ingested toxins; Toronto port agents needed their problems solved as well. Jim received requests by mail and phone, and in those days, people could just walk in. A curator with Jim's knowledge and kindness, who made the herbarium's resources fully accessible, was a benefit to the public as a whole. Anyone of the herbarium group would happily take over, as best they could, if Jim was away (Text box 2; Figure 8).

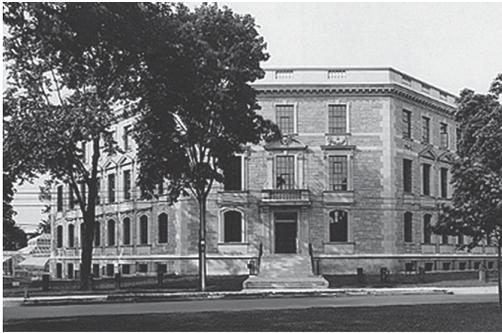
Jim contributed directly to some of the important research and conservation initiatives of the day. He directed the international seed exchange program gathering and identifying seed and producing accurate lists of available seeds to be sent around the world for research, especially on economically important plants. He developed protocols and surveyed areas



**FIGURE 5.** Jim Cruise and Jack Maze, both to the right of the plant press, overseeing students grappling with the task of identifying one of the day's collections in Washington State. Photo: E. Haber.



**FIGURE 6.** Mealtime was always a happy occasion for Jim Cruise (right side of table) and the Botany field party after a long day of driving and plant collecting in Washington State. On the left side of the table is Botany Chairman Tom Hutchinson (wearing glasses and hat, is also very happy). Photo: E. Haber.



**FIGURE 7.** Botany Building, University of Toronto. Photo taken 7 June 1932, from the northeast showing the main entrance. The greenhouse can be seen on the left, behind the building. This is what the building looked like during the years that Jim Cruise was there in the 1960s and 1970s. The herbarium (TRT) was on the third floor above the entrance and offices of curators were beside it on the north side. Photo: University of Toronto Archives, public domain.

for the International Biological Program (IBP) to help identify priority sites for protection of significant natural areas. After one of these survey missions, he spent three days in hospital following a close encounter with Poison Sumac (*Toxicodendron vernix* (L.) Kuntze) shrubs. His students were quick to point out that they thought a plant like Poison Sumac would have been among the thousands of plants he recognized and he was supplied with the appropriate references upon his return to work. Actually, Jim had made a sensible choice of either drowning in quicksand or pulling himself out with the plant he recognised only too well!

Developing forest classifications benefitted from Jim's help and he contributed to numerous ecological and phytogeographic studies. In particular he carried on the traditions of previous U of T plant systematist, Dr. James H. Soper, in emphasizing field studies, floristics, and phytogeography (Haber 2012). He also introduced biosystematics techniques including

**TEXT BOX 1.** An educational and training hub of its own.

The University of Toronto dried plant collection, curated and managed by Jim, included a few large rooms on the third floor overlooking University Avenue. You never knew what you were going to find going on there. There may be 100 small aquariums being made with glass cutters and silicone to house newborn snakes as part of a study of their food preferences for an ecological paper (later published in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist*). Another day there may be a foul smell coming from the herbarium rooms where stomachs of White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) were being examined to enable a better understanding of their ecology. The tables may be covered with plant materials to be sorted and analyzed for heavy metals. To many students the herbarium

was home away from home and there were many regular visitors. A retired schoolteacher, Emerson Whiting, came to work on the flora of Muskoka. Renowned artist Walter Coucill RCA, came in often to use herbarium resources to improve his paintings. Legendary Quetico Park Naturalist Shan Walshe was often in to work on his Quetico flora published by U of T in 1980. There was always something happening. Other professors often dropped by including a stereotactic neurosurgeon from the medical sciences building next door who was a frequent casual visitor for lunch. People gathered there and learned there and made life-long friends there. It was a result of Jim's indulgence in encouraging the use of the space.

**TEXT BOX 2.** Jim's Team.

Jim's core botany team changed over the years because students and technicians come and go. Among those who were part of the systematic botany team, but not at the time of Figure 8, were Victoria Connolly, John E. Dawson, Dale Leadbeater, Katherine M. Lindsay, Dave Marchand, Cathy Pointing (now Keddy), Nancy Purcell, John L. Riley, and Ron Thorpe. All of these people were encouraged to help operate the herbarium and worked together as a family. Some are authors of this tribute and all would agree with the sentiments expressed here.



**FIGURE 8.** Jim surrounded by his botany staff and students in the early 1970s in an illustration that was made for the retirement party of Botany Chairman, Nick Badenhuizen. Clockwise from the top around the circle is Hamda Saifi (Herbarium Technician), Paul Catling (General Technician), Leila Gad (General Technician), John Grear (Associate Professor), Sheila McKay (Graduate Student), and Erich Haber (Graduate Student). Photo: E. Haber.

cytology, thin-layer chromatography, biostatistics, anatomy, and ecology to the tools of plant taxonomy at U of T.

During Jim's decade as professor of botany, he accepted numerous administrative and committee positions. He was President of the Ontario Society of Biologists, Secretary of the Canadian Botanical Association, and a consultant to the National Science

Foundation in Washington, DC, as well as serving in various editorial roles. He taught regular classes, and played the central role in the supervisory meetings of his own seven graduate students (Table 1), as well as those of other professors. He authored and co-authored a number of articles and papers (see Bibliography). His interactions with graduate students were always most enjoyable and encouraging. He allowed his graduate students a great deal of latitude in their work, accompanied by serious and valuable advice. His patience was unique. No doubt Jim was ambitious but he was fundamentally a gentleman, who earned his support and respect through natural kindness more than anything else.

Jim became Associate Chairman of Botany in 1971. He was gravitating toward administration and leadership and, in 1972, he was invited to become Associate Dean of Science and Mathematics. He served in this position until 1975, but still maintained his ties with the Botany Department and its herbarium. He was responsible for 600 faculty members and he chaired 65 tenure committees.

### The Museum, 1975 to 1985

Jim became the ninth director of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) on 1 July 1975, and he left a decade later on 30 June 1985 (Figure 9). Jim's appointment rocked museum circles far and wide because he was unknown in the museum domain. People thought that he had come out of nowhere. Of course, the U of T or Cornell, were hardly "nowhere", even if Marburg was new to them. Regardless, it was a strategic appointment. Rapid change was needed at the ROM. No one was better able to manage the stress and the diversity of opinions than Jim, and no one seemed better at calming the Board of Directors and successfully encouraging the donation of many millions of dollars.

One of Jim's publications, based on a speech to the Empire Club on 27 April 1978 (Cruise 1978), provides an insightful outline of the past, present, and future of the ROM. He reminded listeners that, at the time, it was regarded as one of the world's 10 best museums. Jim described its inception in 1851, its development since, and some of its unique features. His anecdotes were delightful as always. The ROM was then and is today Canada's largest field-research institution, with research and conservation activities around the world, and with more than one million visitors each year.

One of Jim's most enjoyable experiences at the ROM was in 1983. A tour for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip was poorly conceived and became awkward with people not knowing what to say or do. Jim, near the front of the procession, went to the Queen's side and initiated a conversation that they both

**TABLE 1.** List of completed graduate work (all University of Toronto) supervised by J.E. Cruise. Author, degree, completion date, and title.

Author	Degree	Completion date	Title
Haber, E.	M.Sc.	1967	Systematic studies of <i>Circaea</i> in Ontario
Haber, E.	Ph.D.	1971	A biosystematics study of the eastern North American species of the genus <i>Pyrola</i>
Thorpe, R.C.	M.Sc.	1972	Floral and dispersal biology of <i>Polygala paucifolia</i> in Algonquin Park, Ontario
Dawson, J.E.	M.Sc. (Pro parte)	1973	Systematic and ecological study of the Ontario taxa of <i>Parnassia</i>
McKay, S.M.	M.Sc. (Pro parte)	1973	Biosystematic study of the genus <i>Amelanchier</i> in Ontario
Riley, J.L.	M.Sc.	1980	The flora and phytogeography of the Hudson Bay lowlands
Catling, P.M.	Ph.D.	1980	Systematics of <i>Spiranthes</i> in northeastern North America

**FIGURE 9.** Jim in about 1975 when he took the position of Director of the Royal Ontario Museum. Photo: Toronto Star Archives, public domain.

enjoyed for half an hour—while Jim took over the tour of the “Georgian Canada Exhibition”. Of course, Jim remembered everything, partly because he had signed the letters requesting the loans of the priceless objects. Imagine him saying: “Your Majesty, you may wish to know that this particular Queen Anne lady’s writing table we have borrowed from your Royal collections at Windsor”.

When Jim left the university, he continued to supervise his graduate students who met with him regularly in a lofty balcony above the front entrance and overlooking the main rotunda and a spiral staircase with walls of blue and orange sodalite and the back-painted gold mosaic ceiling above. It was created for

the 1933 addition to the museum by the first director of archaeology, Charles T. Currelly. The expansion of the ROM that Jim completed won the Governor General’s Medal in Architecture in 1989.

Jim’s work at the ROM had many facets. He had to manage his board, deal with museum expansion, special exhibits, minerals, textiles, archeology, Chinese and Egyptian artifacts, etc., and he had to allocate his time among all of these areas. He loved all of it as was evident from the way in which his eyes sparkled when he talked about any of it. He was especially proud of the life sciences departments, and he was among those who understood that field biology and the life science collections were essential to discovery and conservation. He knew that every museum person is at least half educator and showman, as he was himself. And he shared the opinion of C.H.D. Clarke, Ontario’s Chief of Fish and Wildlife Branch, that “no institution in Canada means more to naturalists than the Royal Ontario Museum” (Barr 1983: 14). The museum was home to the Brodie Club, which started the Federation of Ontario Naturalists (details in Taylor 1981), which gave rise to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, all of them based on the same timeless kinship. (A special issue of *Seasons* [Parsons 1983] is dedicated to the big story of natural history work at the ROM. It is an interesting read.)

### Always a Collector

The gardens around the Marburg farm steadily grew as did the number of buildings. By the 1970s and 1980s there were spectacular perennial beds with unusual plants (Figure 10) and many trees and shrubs restricted to the Carolinian ecoregion. Screaming peacocks were chased by Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*), and several semi-domesticated breeds of guinea fowl ran over the lawns. In the fields were Long-horned and Aberdeen Angus cattle, llamas, and emus. Easter Egg (*Araucanus*) chickens were laying pink and blue eggs. In 1963 a dam was built across the small creek

creating a beautiful and extensive pond (24281 m<sup>2</sup>). A variety of unusual swans soon arrived. Shelves in the house displayed one of the best collections of Quimper (pronounced “cam-pair”) pottery in Canada (a tin-glazed, hand painted pottery from Brittany). There was a collection of a few hundred Moustache Cups, apple peelers, fossils, arrowheads, farm tools, etc. Jim operated his own museum, botanical garden, and zoological park.

### Back to Marburg

After splitting his time between Toronto and Marburg for a few decades, Jim returned full-time to Marburg after leaving the ROM at age 60 (Colaicovo 1985). He turned Marburg into a major horticultural showplace. He specialized in wild plants, showy cultivated plants, and agricultural crops. He was the one to beat at the Norfolk County Fair; he would tell tales of his second prize for a 271-pound squash in 1994.

Jim met hundreds of busloads of visitors at the foot of his driveway and provided a free tour packed with information about unusual and spectacular plants, ecology, gardening, and agriculture. Some of the Eva Brook Donly Museum Garden tours that he welcomed included more than 1000 people in a day. He hosted church, society, and family picnics and became well-known to many thousands of people. Guests from as far away as Japan were introduced to rural Canada at Jim’s farm. He lectured at the Simcoe/Norfolk Regional Campus of Fanshawe College,



**FIGURE 10.** American Lotus (*Nelumbo lutea* (Willdenow) Persoon), one of the well over 1000 species in Jim’s gardens, was one of his favourites. If Jim was told the bus would be another 20 minutes, he could easily fill in the time and keep everyone together by talking about this plant alone. He would discuss its evolution, habitats, dispersal, pollination, uses, distribution, and value for dry bouquets. Photo: Liz West, Massachusetts. CC-BY-2.0.

chaired many local committees, and was an active member of numerous clubs and societies. He became an honorary life member of some of these groups, including the Norfolk Historical Society in 2015.

The Marburg farm, so well known to naturalists and horticulturists, was sold to family in 1997. Jim then moved to a house on Highway 6 with an acre (4047 m<sup>2</sup>) of land. It had been a hill of blow sand 70 years earlier. At the time he acquired it, there was just a dense thicket of wild raspberries. Truckloads of these were removed to prepare a biodiversity-rich habitat full of rare plants and many species of restricted range. Surely it is no surprise that he turned this into a spectacular teaching opportunity and again had many visitors (McMillan 2012). It was here that he established an outstanding collection of peonies.

Jim moved to Parkview Meadows Retirement Village in Townsend early in 2013. Here, in his late 80s and early 90s, he took visitors on tours of the pond trail and woods nearby. Naturally, he also had a garden at Townsend where he grew native plants and was eager to show them off. He was mentally and physically well for most of this time and an authoritative speaker. In late 2021, he spent a short time in hospital in Simcoe and passed away on 27 November at almost 96.5 years of age (Tong 2022).

### Commemoration

Jim never married, but he was very close to his large family and many friends. He was always surrounded by activity, always seemed to have an audience, and influenced many thousands to love and enjoy nature. People came to him for advice on diverse subjects and for his good judgement. He had numerous achievements in many different fields and received equally diverse awards and honours. Among those not already mentioned were: a Queen’s silver Jubilee Medal in 1977, Honorary Doctor of Laws and Letters from University of Guelph in 1982, Ontario Heritage Foundation Award in 2006, Silver Fir Award (the highest honor of the Ontario Horticultural Association) in 2006, and he became an ‘Honorary Master Gardener’ of the Master Gardeners of Ontario in 2013. *Chrysopsis cruiseana* Dress (= *Chrysopsis gossypina* subsp. *cruiseana*) was named in his honour (Dress 1954) by the compiler of Hortus III and Curator of the Bailey Hortorium at Cornell (Dress 1954).

Jim contributed to field biology and ecology in most of the ways it is possible to do so: as leader, administrator, editor, researcher, innovator, and advocate, but particularly as an exemplary teacher and a close friend.

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