In What Way a Mentor?
What I Should Have Said ...

Letter from Grace B. Iverson, 2001 Mentor Award Winner

With deep appreciation, I received the FNPS Mentor award at the 2001 Conference, recognizing my work in teaching, research, and preservation of native Florida ecosystems. In Broward and Palm Beach Counties, I studied the plants and physiography, writing, speaking, and educating for preservation of the native ecosystems. Broward County's Fern Forest and Florida's MacArthur Beach State Park are last surviving sites of their kind on the Atlantic rim of the Everglades. In this region, Pleistocene dunes and dune-back lagoons held back vast wetlands, and through these old dunes, Everglades rivers overflowed into the ocean, once a sweeping wild display of wilderness! Who was protecting this subtropical eastern rim of the Everglades, where expanding municipalities have joined into a city-coast? Should we, could we, leave at least islands of wilderness for ourselves and future generations, a spectrum of living history on this unique peninsula of North America? Local leadership and effort needed to arise; and it has.

We wanted to establish a system of wilderness islands for Palm Beach County. Many, including FNPS, agreed, and we formed the Coalition for Wilderness Islands (CWI). Under pressure of rapid development and vanishing possibilities, CWI proposed to the county: 1) a scientific search to locate by aerial photography, examine on the ground, and evaluate surviving sites, so that we could acquire the best examples of each ecosystem type; 2) developing means to buy sites by bond issue, and other strategies; and 3) planning to make Wilderness Island Preserves publicly accessible.

With skill and dedication, our members educated each other, government, and other citizens, explaining the concept. Palm Beach County added staff for the preserves and established DERM (Department of Environmental Resources Management), bringing together its permitting, enforcement, and other environmental staff. CWI members turned out to promote both the county and Boca Raton bond issues, and serve on county and city committees related to preserve purchases and planning. As consultants to the county, Dan Austin and I did the survey to locate all types of native ecosystems, in more than 500 square miles, and examined each on the ground. The Inventory of Native Ecosystems in Palm Beach County, Iverson and Austin, 1988, is a detailed database of our work. CWI composed stated goals that appear in every plan, read as much of the management plans as possible, continued voicing questions, concerns, and alternative ideas. Many people gave time toward these first steps. To remain successful, citizens will have to maintain a caring vigilance!

Thanks to those who have believed and participated in preserving wilderness. Whether you actually enter into wild Florida, study its many facets, show others your interest, relax as you drive by, or simply want to be sure native Florida survives—all are deeply important values for people. Pre-history environments have produced this wilderness over eons of time. Since it is impossible to make wilderness 

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Rolla Milton Tryon
August 26, 1916 - August 21, 2001

Memorial
by Dr. Richard P. Wunderlin

It is with sadness that I note the passing of a very remarkable member of the Florida Native Plant Society. Rolla M. Tryon, born in Chicago, received an A.A. and B.S. at the University of Chicago, a Ph.M. at the University of Wisconsin, and an M.S. and Ph.D. at Harvard University. After receiving his doctorate in 1941, he taught at Dartmouth College, University of Wisconsin, University of Minnesota, Washington University, and then Harvard University from 1958 to 1987. He traveled throughout the world pursuing his passion for ferns. He served as president of the New England Botanical Club and American Fern Society. He was associate editor of the American Fern Journal and Rhodora, and held positions in many other professional botanical societies. He received the Merit Award from the Botanical Society of America in 1984. Rolla is the author or co-author of many books, including The Ferns and Fern Allies of Wisconsin, The Ferns and Fern Allies of Minnesota, The Ferns of Peru, and Ferns and Allied Plants, with special reference to Tropical America, the latter co-authored with his wife Alice. He published over a hundred scientific papers on ferns, including monographs or revisions of the genera Pieris, Doryopteris, Selaginella, Notobola, Dennstaedtia, Pityrogramma, Cyathea, and Sphaeropteris.

In December 1988, Rolla and Alice made an unannounced visit to the USF Herbarium. Favorably impressed, the next month Rolla informed me of his decision to move to the Tampa area, bringing with him his fabulous library of fern and biogeographic literature. Shortly after arriving at USF, Rolla and Alice helped form the Institute for Systematic Botany and endowed the Tryon Lecture Series in the Biology Department. Rolla remained very active in research at USF and continued to publish scientific papers on ferns. He was very active in the Suncoast Chapter of FNPS. Rolla was a very remarkable person who made significant contributions to our knowledge of ferns, was internationally acclaimed, and willingly shared this knowledge with many.