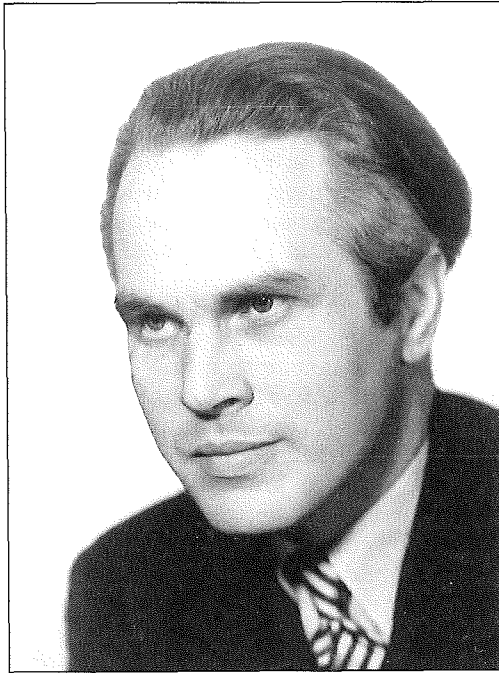


Áskell Löve, 1916-1994.

In Memoriam



Áskell Löve, a world leader in the science of plant cytotaxonomy and phytogeography, died on Sunday, 29 May 1994, at 3:00 p.m., in San José, California, of complications from Parkinson's Syndrome. He is survived by his wife of over 50 years, Doris (née Wahlén), two daughters, Gunnlaug (Gayle) Swanson, and Lóa Kaersvang, and three granddaughters

Áskell was born in Reykjavík, Iceland, on 20 October 1916. He matriculated at Reykjavík in 1937, received the B.Sc. in 1941, and Dr.Sc. in 1943 (genetics) from the University of Lund, Sweden. He served as corresponding geneticist at the Research University of Iceland, 1942-1945; Director of the Institute of Botany and Plant Breeding, University of Iceland, 1945-1951; Associate Professor of Botany, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, 1951-1956; Prof. de Recherches (biosystematics), Université

de Montréal, 1956-1963; Professor of Biology, University of Colorado in Boulder, 1964-1973, Associate Curator of the Herbarium and Research Associate of the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research.

For all his international scientific activities, Áskell was intensely loyal to Iceland and he never relinquished his citizenship. Besides being an outstanding scientist, he was a human being proud of his Icelandic upbringing. In an unpublished letter, he wrote these words:

"I should emphasize that the three Icelandic families of my grandparents have always been characterized by the strict conscience and disposition that has been the hallmark of all the many respectable Icelanders for more than 1,100 years; in their genealogical records that go back to before the colonization of Iceland there are only peaceful and honest men, many of them leaders in various fields, and from them I believe I inherited the various mental attributes which are amply documented in my own activities for a lifetime. I know, however, only a little about the genealogy and characteristics of my paternal grandfather, who was a Danish merchant risen from the class of farmers and sailors as, of course, were my Icelandic ancestors.

My father was his illegitimate son and his mother a very poor woman who had lost her parents when she was an infant. Despite all drawbacks in the severe conditions of the last century, he became a successful though never wealthy sea captain who is said to have been the essential power behind the belated revolution in Icelandic fishing when he, as a young man, got a loan to buy the first motor for a fishing vessel. He married twice. I am the oldest of six sons and a daughter of his second marriage, so I was brought up in the poverty between the wars, and I was still only a boy when he was forced to retire from the sea because of ill health.

So I and my brothers had to work our ways during the depression to get through the very competitive Icelandic upper school system. With understanding from home and earned state scholarships, however, we all made it so well that two of us got doctorates abroad; one became the vice-president of the Teachers University; one was the organizer and manager of the exemplary Icelandic organization of rehabilitation of people crippled by disease or accidents and a leader in the European association of such organizations; one is a successful businessman and importer; one died while still preparing to become an artist for which he had apparent talent; and my sister is a librarian who has brought up three intelligent children, all university-educated as is the entire third generation.

At home we were encouraged to enjoy and take part in all kinds of cultural activities and handicraft. Since we could not afford to buy more than a limited number of books, we all read through the good libraries available in our community, including of course the enormous Icelandic and Scandinavian literary heritage and the Great Books of civilization, even the Bible, the books of Plato, and *Das Kapital*, which certainly have influenced my life no less than did my spartan upbringing and my years of study in Sweden. I even dreamed of becoming a philosopher, and good old Kant,

who presently is read by too few and probably no scientists in America, became so dear to me that his learned but complex *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* still is placed in the bookshelf on the back of my desk together with some other works of classical philosophy and poetry. Still I continue to feel, with Kant, the greatest wonder and awe from the starry heavens above me and the moral and ethical law within me...

The influence from home and good teachers, from the Icelandic heritage and the great books, made me a promising young poet during my college years, and I am still proud and astonished by the considerable contributions that I could make in that field during those few romantic years of my youth. That training probably led to my success in writing my own language that culminated in an essay in a competition that, at graduation, resulted in the Golden Pen Award for Icelandic composition, still the most prestigious but rarely given award at our very old and esteemed college.

I also became deeply interested in philosophy, mainly metaphysics. However, I knew all Icelandic plants then known when I was only thirteen, and made during two summers a mature collection in the far northwest of the country, in the most Arctic coastal area, where my then retired sailor father was a lighthouse keeper. That was probably the main cause ... of my going to Sweden to study botanical genetics rather than either to Heidelberg for aesthetics or to Paris for philosophy, for which I had received a nod from both places. But it may also have been my interest in contributing to the development of Icelandic agriculture, because I made efforts to learn everything about plant breeding, with which I mainly worked after returning to Iceland in 1945."

During his entire career of teaching and writing, Áskell continued to pay homage to his Icelandic heritage. He left a small but important legacy to all Icelanders, young and old, with his *Íslenzk ferðaflóra* in English and Icelandic versions, illustrated by the famous Norwegian botanical artist, Dagny Tande Lid. His bibliography, published here, bears witness to the breadth and excellence of his productivity as a scientist and a citizen of Iceland and the world.

William A. Weber
Professor emeritus, Boulder, Colorado

A Bibliography of the published works of Áskell Löve

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