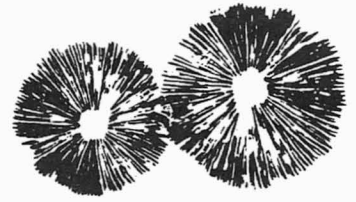


SPORE PRINTS



BULLETIN OF THE PUGET SOUND MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Number 330 March 1997

THE INUIT PUJOALUK Lawrence Millman *Mycelium*, Mycological Soc. of Toronto, Jan.–Mar. 1997

The Inuit tend to regard mushrooms as being without exception inedible. They'll eat raw seal eyes or igunaq (putrefied walrus meat) with nary a qualm, but a *Psathyrella polaris*, a *Hebeloma fastibile*, or even an *Omphalina ericetorum* seems to fill them with disgust. No doubt this disgust derives from the time-honored belief—still observed among traditionalists—that mushrooms are, in fact, the excrement of shooting stars. And shooting star excrement is not the sort of dish you'd be inclined to eat unless sorely pressed.

Yet, the Inuit do not avoid mushrooms altogether, as I learned this past summer while traveling around the Kimmirut region of Baffin island. Whenever I mentioned mushrooms, I'd be invariably told about one type that possessed medicinal qualities. This mushroom was called pujoaluk in Inuktitut. At one point, an old woman went out and gathered a batch for me. In her sack, I found several different species of *Lycoperdon* puffballs. This led me to conclude that the Inuit view all *Lycoperdon* species as pujoaluks.

Of the *Lycoperdons* in the woman's sack, I could identify one right away. It was a *Lycoperdon pusillum*, otherwise known as a Mini Puffball. Another might have been the Arctic version of *Lycoperdon gemmatum*, although I couldn't be wholly certain without a field guide. Yet another was probably an unknown species, at least unknown to mycologists.

As I soon learned, the Inuit use a pujoaluk rather like a bandage. If someone jabs his hand with a knife or harpoon, he'll place a piece of white pujoaluk flesh on the wound and then tie it there with a string. This not only keeps the wound from getting infected, but aids and abets the healing process as well. Or so the woman who'd gathered the mushrooms informed me. Also, a pujoaluk reputedly stops the flow of blood from the wound. But the flesh must be firm, the woman remarked, or else the mushroom is useless—a truth that anyone who has ever eaten *Lycoperdons* likewise knows.

Europeans once used mushrooms in exactly the same way. For example, a 1756 article in *The Gentleman's Magazine* refers to "the agaric sent from France and applied as a styptic after amputations," while, a decade later, Gooch, in his *Treatment of Wounds*, describes a similar application, albeit with puffballs. And, as recently as 1919, *Whitla's Pharmacy* mentions *Lycoperdon giganteum* as "a soft and comfortable surgical dressing. The dusty powder is a powerful haemostat."

In former times, Native American tribes as diverse as the Kwakiutl, the Pawnee, the Cherokee, and the Navaho likewise used puffballs as styptic. The Blackfoot drank an infusion of *Calvatia* to stop internal bleeding. Nowadays, however, the only denizens of the New World apart from the Inuit themselves who regularly use puffballs to treat wounds are the Maya, who collect various *Geastrum* species for this purpose.

Not having suffered a wound during last summer's sojourn in the Arctic, I didn't put the immune-activating properties of the puff-

ball to the test. Maybe that's just as well. For maybe this piece of mycological knowledge should remain with the people for whom medical care is often a long boat ride in hypothermic waters away.

(Adapted from an article in the October 1996 *Bulletin*, the Newsletter of the Boston Mycological Club, which reprinted it, with permission, from *Mushroom The Journal*)

BASIC MUSHROOM ID CLASS Brandon Matheny

A basic mushroom identification class on springtime mushrooms will be held on three consecutive Monday evenings, 7–9 PM, at the Center for Urban Horticulture (CUH) in the Isaacson Classroom. The dates are April 7 through April 21. This class will introduce participants to the identification of morels and their allies, boletes, the gilled mushrooms that fruit in the spring, and mushroom poisons. The class will emphasize distinguishing edible species from inedible look-alikes. Instruction and tips on collecting practices and where to find springtime mushrooms will also be emphasized. Stress will be placed on attending scheduled PSMS field trips, though attendance is not mandatory.

Required Text: *The New Savory Wild Mushroom*, 3rd edition, by Margaret McKenny and Daniel Stuntz, revised and enlarged by Joseph Ammirati, 1987. This is the book for the mushroom hunter of the Pacific Northwest who wants to know "What is it?" and "Is it good to eat?"

Recommended Texts: (1) *A Morel Hunter's Companion*, by Nancy Smith Weber, 1995. For those who are particularly interested in the many facets of morels and their allies—names and classification, biology, recipes, cooking, preserving, and poisonings—this book is highly recommended. (2) *Mushrooms Demystified*, 2nd Edition, by David Arora, 1986. I hesitate to require this text for a 3-week course, but you might as well get it. This voluminous tome will come in especially handy for the fall ID classes and is a wonderful reference to have lying around. Among other virtues, it has dichotomous keys and a dictionary of selected Latin and Greek word elements.

Books will be offered for sale before the first class. Please arrive early to make your purchase(s).

This class will be limited to the first 24 registrants. To register, please enclose

1. a check for \$15, payable to PSMS
2. a self-addressed, stamped envelope
3. a note indicating you are registering for the Basic ID class

and send to

Brandon Matheny
3214 S. Byron St
Seattle, WA 98144

You will receive confirmation of your registration and further information. If you have any questions, I can be reached at (206) 722-8458.

Spore Prints

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PUGET SOUND MYCOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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CALENDAR

- March 14 Survivors' Banquet and Annual Meeting, Edmonds Community College, 6:30 PM
- March 17 Board meeting, 7:30 PM, CUH Board Room
- March 21 *Spore Prints* deadline
- March 22 MacDonal Park field trip
- Mold workshop, Isaacson Classroom, CUH, 9 AM - 5 PM (pre-registration required)
- March 23 Mold workshop, Isaacson Classroom, CUH, 9 AM - 5 PM (pre-registration required)
- April 7 Basic ID class, 7-9 PM, Isaacson Classroom, CUH (pre-registration required)
- April 8 Membership meeting, 7:30 PM, CUH

FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW Colleen Compton

A big thank-you to all those PSMS members who staffed the mycology booth at the 1997 Flower and Garden Show. Those volunteers introduced our club and its activities to the public while answering various questions about the fascinating world of fungi. Over a dozen new members joined as a result of this exposure. A special thanks to those who also worked to set up and dismantle the booth. Paul Stamets graciously donated examples of cultivated, fruiting mushrooms. This is very useful in a February exhibit when the woodlands are scarcely producing. Lynne Elwell has offered to chair the PSMS booth for the 1998 Flower and Garden Show. We will gather together and give her our best support.

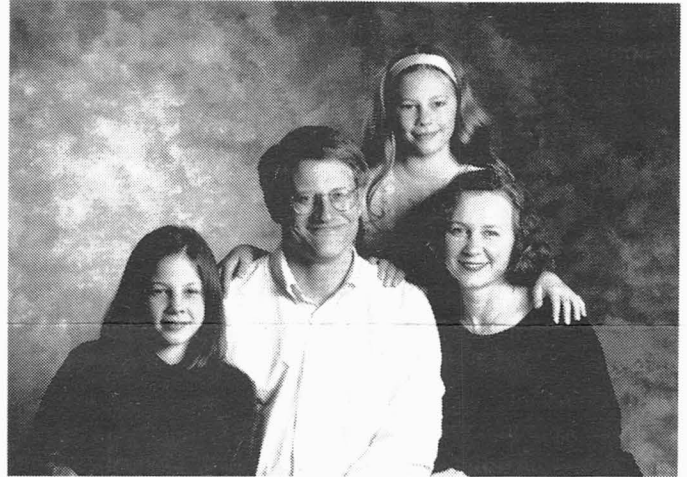
Last Chance for Banquet Registration. Decided that you'd really like to go to the banquet after all? Call Sara Clark at 284-6177 or Joanne Young at 633-0752 *now* to ask about last minute registration.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

This month is the Annual Meeting and Survivors' Banquet, to be held Friday, March 14, at Edmonds Community College under the aegis of Chef Walter Bronowitz.

MEET THE BENSONS

Inga Wilcox



Dr. Edward Benson, wife Patrice, and daughters Katie and Jill all enjoy mushrooming. Which member of the Benson family loves to teach and cook and has devoted lots of hours to PSMS? If you know the answer, read on and learn more; if not, you'll find out!

Patrice's great-grandparents came from Poland. Patrice grew up in Pennsylvania and had lived in North and South Carolina, but she had also visited Puget Sound. Having handed in her last finals (she has a degree in biology from the University of Pittsburgh), she took the next plane out to Seattle, where she found work at the Puget Sound Blood Center. Though she did not pick fungi until she came to Seattle, Patrice had been exposed to mushroom cookery, and she joined PSMS in 1976 after attending the PSMS annual exhibit at the Science Center.

Patrice was introduced to her future husband, then a resident at Virginia Mason, on a blind date. They were married and decided to see something of the world. For the next two and a half years they worked their way around the globe, he as a doctor and Patrice in medical technology and biology. Starting out in Samoa, they went to New Zealand, camping and tramping the islands, where they found fungi on outings with the Royal Forest and Bird Society. On to Hong Kong, where Patrice attended cooking school to master Chinese cuisine. Next came a train ride to London via China, Siberia, Russia, and Poland, ending on a boat and a rough crossing of the Channel to England. Back in Seattle, Ed returned to Virginia Mason as an endocrinologist, and Patrice spent the next 5 years with the biotech company Immunex. Now she stays home and cares for their two daughters, Katie and Jill.

Patrice teaches part of the Beginner Class for PSMS and gives talks about fungi at elementary schools, colleges, and other mycological groups around the state. As Mycophagy Chair for about 10 years, she demonstrated some of her delicious dishes using fungi. She also served on the Board and was PSMS President from 1994-1996. Patrice now takes care of general PR and newspaper publicity prior to the exhibit. Attending NAMA and Breitenbusch conferences gives her a chance to meet with other mushroom enthusiasts from this country as well as attendees from other nations. She also finds time to work in her organic garden, and she loves to do "computer stuff."

Well, by now everyone knows who that very active person is. We at PSMS are happy that she is giving the Society so much of her time and are pleased that all the Bensons share her interest.

THINK EXHIBIT

Charles Pregaldin

October may be a long way off, but it's not too soon to begin planning for the 1997 PSMS Wild Mushroom Exhibit. Yes, I'm about to ask for your help, but not the kind you think. Although I'd be happy to accept offers of time, labor, money, etc., what I really need right now is your ideas.

I'm sure many of you would like to see things at the show that we haven't been doing or could suggest ways to improve the things we do. Is there something you really don't like, or something you like a lot and want to see more of? Maybe you know somebody, in the club or out of it, who could help us make the next show the best ever. Whether you're an active member involved in lots of club activities or someone who doesn't have time to do more than pay your dues and read the newsletter, whatever your thoughts about shows past or future, I'd like to hear them.

I'm open to anything—don't worry at this stage about whether your ideas are just vague concepts or fully thought-out plans or just a suggestion about one small detail. Don't worry about cost or logistics or other practical matters. Those are concerns that can be addressed later. What's needed now is your input.

Don't be afraid that if you speak up I'll pressure you to work on one of the show committees, though of course your help would be welcome if you want to give it.

Suggestions so far have included having activities especially for kids, exhibits on fungal roles in ecosystems, lectures about various mycological topics, ideas about the physical layout of the show, a request to put a microphone on the chefs who are demonstrating mushroom cookery, complaints about the signage, and so on. Thoughts on these topics or any others are welcome.

I can be reached by e-mail at bugatti@seanet.com, by telephone at (206) 524-9997, and by mail at 5827 57th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105. Let me hear from you, and thank you for your help.

FRENCH POLICE SNIFFING OUT DOGNAPPERS

PARIS, Jan. 31 (Reuters)—French police said on Friday they were trying to sniff out the kidnappers of seven highly skilled truffle dogs which disappeared in southern France at the height of the truffling season. The police spokesman said they suspect truffle hunters from a neighboring area unwilling to put in the time and money required to train their own animals.

Three of the valuable dogs have since turned up wandering the countryside after the kidnappers apparently released them, but four are still missing. "An investigation is in progress," said a spokesman for the unit of para-military gendarmes based in tiny Pernes-les-Fontaines, in the Vaucluse department.

Town mayor Herve de Chiree called a meeting of truffle gatherers and law enforcement authorities this week to discuss how to combat the problem but came up with few practical ideas. Among possible remedies were offering rewards for the dogs' return or equipping other dogs with electronic tracking devices on their collars.

Truffle dogs are used to detect the delectable and highly marketable fungus in the region's oak forests, where they grow buried

in the ground. A good truffle dog requires a year or two of training and can cost up to 15,000 francs (\$2,700). Truffles sell at the wholesale level for up to 1,600 francs per kg (\$130 per lb).

MOLD WORKSHOP WITH BRYCE KENDRICK

Brandon Matheny

Dr. W. Bryce Kendrick from Sidney, B.C., will be conducting a workshop on molds in the Isaacson Classroom at CUH on the weekend of March 22–23. Well-known for his work in the fields of imperfect fungi and Zygomycetes, among other things, Bryce presents an opportunity for PSMS members to expound upon fungi that grow right in our own refrigerators, on our bread and window sills, and in other unthought of but opportunistic places.

Exact times are

Saturday, March 22, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Sunday, March 23, 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM.

The workshop consists of both sessions. Cost is \$30. Size is limited to 15 participants, so register early. Pre-registration is required.

Workshop Requirements

Participants will be expected to contribute moldy materials for hands-on study. Please prepare an informal "damp chamber" to incubate various substrates for at least several days in advance (no meat, fish, or long-lived storage tissues such as potatoes). Potentially interesting substrates would be tropical fruit, old bracket fungi, dried mushrooms, dead insects, etc. Please try anything. You may come up with something very interesting. The workshop will entail microscopy (minimal experience with a compound microscope is required) and work with a computer key/database. If you have a laptop computer, please bring it. In addition, you may want to bring lunch and/or snacks. Please call Brandon Matheny at 722-8458 for any concerns/questions you may have.

Registration

To register, please enclose:

1. a check for \$30, payable to PSMS
2. a self-addressed, stamped envelope
3. a note indicating you are registering for the Mold Class

and send to

Brandon Matheny
3214 S. Byron St.
Seattle, WA 98144

You will receive confirmation of your registration and any further information.

FORAYS AND SYMPOSIUMS

Mushroom Dyers Symposium: The Eighth International Fungi Fibre Symposium will be held at Paul Smith's College, Paul Smith's New York, on August 5–10, 1997. For information, write Susan Hopkins, P.O. Box 291, Oldwick, NY 08858.

Oregon Mycological Society Spring Foray: OMS will hold a spring study foray at Wallowa Lake Camp on June 6–8 under the guidance of Mike Beug. It's a beautiful site, the cabins are heated, and the food is good. All are welcome. For information, write Maggie Rogers, 1943 SE Locust Ave., Portland, OR 97214, or e-mail rogersmm@aol.com.

FUN IN OLD BOOKS

Ellen Warren

Mycelium, Mycological Soc. of Toronto, Jan.-March 1997

Getting high on literature is taking on a whole new meaning. It turns out that if you spend enough time around old books and decaying manuscripts in dank archives, you can start to hallucinate. Really. We're not talking psychedelic Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds stuff, here. But, maybe, only a step or two away from that.

Experts on the various fungi that feed on the pages and on the covers of books are increasingly convinced that you can get high—or at least a little wacky—by sniffing old books. Fungus on books, they say, is a likely source of hallucinogenic spores. The story of the “Strangeness in the Stacks” first started making its way through the usually staid antiquarian books community late last year with the publication of a paper in the British medical journal *The Lancet*.

There, Dr. R. J. Hay wrote of the possibility that “fungal hallucinogens” in old books could lead to “enhancement of enlightenment.” “The source of inspiration for many great literary figures may have been nothing more than a quick sniff of the bouquet of moldy books,” wrote Hay, one of England’s leading mycologists.

Well, said an American expert on such matters, it may not be that easy. “I agree with his premise but not his dose. It would take more than a brief sniff,” said Monica Rossol, an authority on the health effects of materials used in the arts world.

For all the parents out there, these revelations would seem ideal for persuading youngsters to spend some quality time in the archives. But attention, kids. You can't get high walking through the rare books section of the library. Rossol said it would take a fairly concentrated exposure over a considerable period of time for someone to breathe in enough of the fungus to seriously affect behavior. There are no studies to tell how much or how long before the strange behaviors take hold.

Still, this much seems apparent. If you want to find mold, the only place that may rival a refrigerator is a library. Just recently, the Las Cruces, New Mexico, public library was closed indefinitely, prompted by health concerns after a fungus outbreak in

the reference section. Library director Carol Brey said the fungus promptly spread to old history books and onward to the literature section.

The town's Mold Eradication Team, she said, shuttered the library as a precaution. “We didn't want to take any chances,” she said. A mold removal company will address the problem, which is believed to have originated in the air conditioning system. Brey, who suffers from allergies, said she has noted minor increases in her coughing, runny nose, and sneezing. But nobody has reported any hallucinogenic effects.

(This account first appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and was reprinted from *Atencion San Miguel*, a Mexican weekly newspaper.)

SPRING FIELD TRIPS

Mike Lovelady

Spring is in the air! Can mushrooms be far behind? Our first field trip this year is a half-day excursion (9–noon) to MacDonald Park in Carnation on March 22 to look for *Verpa bohemica*. The schedule for the rest of the spring field trips will be printed in the April *Spore Prints*.

March 22

MacDonald Park
(30 miles east of Seattle)

This is our traditional half-day trip to introduce newcomers to the mushroom *Verpa bohemica* and its habitat and whet the appetite for the spring mushrooms to come. MacDonald Park is on the Tolt River about ½ mile south of the town of Carnation in King County. Enter the park on N.E. 40th Street from State Highway 203. Watch for PSMS signs on the corner and use the day-use parking lot. We will meet at the main shelter across the suspension bridge for a general introduction to mushroom hunting. Then we will break into small groups and go out to gather specimens. Identifiers should be available around 10:30 AM. There should be *Verpa bohemica* under the cottonwoods in the surrounding area. We'll meet rain or shine. You may want to bring lunch.

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