

OBITUARY: JAN FRITS VELDKAMP (1941–2017)

Jan Frits Veldkamp passed away on 12 November 2017, during the course of a chemotherapy treatment compromised by an infection. Up to his last weeks, even in hospital, he was actively working to solve taxonomic and nomenclatural problems.

Jan Frederik (Jan Frits, but mostly JF or JeF to friends) Veldkamp studied biology in Leiden, and was destined to embark on a career as a *Drosophila* geneticist until in 1965 he was ‘snatched’ by Professor van Steenis from the genetics lab to join the Rijksherbarium staff. Initially he was to study seed structure and dispersal of coastal plants, but soon his task became to contribute to the *Flora Malesiana* (FM) effort as a grass taxonomist.

As a result of one of his MSc projects his first contribution was the treatment of Oxalidaceae for FM in 1972. His PhD thesis on the grass genus *Digitaria* followed



Photo: Esperanza Maribel Agoo.

in 1973. Altogether, JF contributed 378 papers to the taxonomic literature, mostly on Malesian grasses but a fair number also on representatives of 27 other flowering plant families, most notably Asteraceae, Melastomataceae and Oxalidaceae. He was the author of 431 names, mostly new combinations resulting from his great interest and expertise in nomenclatural matters, but also including over 115 new taxa (genera, species, subspecies and varieties), testifying to his talents as a keen observer and taxonomist.

JF was a prominent personality in the FM family. As a good classical taxonomist, in excellent command of botanical Latin and botanical nomenclature, he generously helped many colleagues at home and abroad to solve nomenclatural puzzles or to obtain literature important for their studies. For almost 40 years he taught the plant taxonomy course in the Biology curriculum of Leiden University, and inspired many students to specialise in the subject and ultimately make taxonomy their profession. His dedication to the cause of FM was most visible during the years that he was editor of the *Flora Malesiana Bulletin*, between 1984 and 2008. He solved a chronic problem of shortage of news copy from the international FM network by filling literally hundreds of pages himself with very comprehensive bibliographical updates, book reviews, obituaries, points of view and even short taxonomic papers. The service he thereby provided, in the times before large-scale internet availability, for isolated colleagues in Malesia and elsewhere cannot be overestimated. He was angry and frustrated about the decision of the FM Board in 2007 to abandon the hard-copy publication of the *Bulletin*, which consequently led to its total demise.

JF's field work was mainly focused on the mountain flora of New Guinea, and on Kalimantan where he made important collections. He loved the Malesian region, and went there many times. Only in 2017 he visited the Singapore Herbarium twice to complete his contribution on the grasses for the *Flora of Singapore*. Unfortunately his *magnum opus*, a family treatment of the grasses for FM, was never finished.

JF was a very kind and helpful colleague, although he sometimes tried to mask that behind a grumpy façade (not unlike that of his great example Professor van Steenis). In Leiden we will miss his friendship and expertise terribly.

A more detailed obituary with a full bibliography and eponymy is published in *Blumea* 63:1–10 (2018).

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