Evalyn Lucy Klein Farnsworth (1912-2003):
Devoted Cattlewoman and Naturalist
by Nancy Nies

ON A FAMILY-OWNED RANCH SOUTHEAST OF Glennville, at an elevation of around 4,000 feet, on a steep hillside accessible only on horseback or by four-wheel drive and a half-mile walk, grows a rare native plant — *Streptanthus farnsworthianus* (Farnsworth’s jewel flower) — named for the remarkable local woman who first discovered it, Evalyn Lucy Klein Farnsworth.

 Evalyn, an only child, grew up on her family’s cattle ranch near Porterville, which had its beginnings in land homesteaded in 1863 by her grandfather. (Subsequent generations added land, and today the ranch has the distinction of being one of the few ranches continuously owned and operated by the same family for over 100 years.) Evalyn rode several miles on horseback to attend grammar school at White River, and went on to graduate from Porterville High School and Porterville Junior College. During her youth, Evalyn also spent much time on the ranch, helping her hardworking parents with their ranching and cattle enterprises. It was from her parents that Evalyn inherited a love for the land and an interest in nature. Like her father, she was a keen observer of the world around her. Young Evalyn had an exceptional memory and was to become “a walking encyclopedia” of plants, animals, and nature in general, says Sandra Southard, her daughter.

The family ranch would be hugely significant in Evalyn’s life, as she was to spend her life there as a self-employed cattlewoman and rancher. The family acquired the first registered Hereford cattle in 1931, and Evalyn and her husband Freeland Farnsworth became well-known in livestock circles for their outstanding Hereford herd, according to Ernest Twisselmann in his 1967 *Flora of Kern County*. It was one of the leading herds until the early 1990s, says Evalyn’s daughter. A lifelong member of the American Hereford Association and the National and California Cattlemen’s Associations, Evalyn Farnsworth founded the Tulare Cattlemen’s Association and served as its first president, as well as president of the Kern County Cattlemen’s Association. She led a local beef awareness campaign that grew into a national one. On the ranch, she devised a record-keeping system which gave rise to the Cattlemen’s Beef Cattle Improvement Association. Evalyn hosted ag classes from Fresno State and Cal Poly, which came to observe the ranch’s operations, management, cattle, and records.

Cattle were by no means Evalyn’s only interest, however. Her daughter Sandra calls her “the most well-rounded person I have ever seen . . . interested in everything.” She was an accomplished horsewoman. She excelled at arts, crafts, and needlework. She “kept volumes of notes about weather conditions and would refer to earlier years for comparisons,” says her daughter. In addition, she assisted Eben McMillan in his studies of condors and their habitat, in the days before the captive breeding program began.

And then there was her interest in native plants. In his *Flora*, Twisselmann acknowledged Evalyn Farnsworth’s contribution of nearly 800 collections. He wrote: “Mrs. Farnsworth has collected in the Greenhorn range since September 1962, primarily on the ranches she and her husband own at Woody, White River, and Glennville; many of her collections are made while doing range riding for the family cattle operations. Her careful botanizing along the drainage of Cedar and Lumreau creeks is an example of the value of intensive collection of a relatively small but critical area; her collections have yielded numerous Kern County and several Sierra Nevada records. Among them is the type material for the remarkable jewel flower *Streptanthus farnsworthianus*.” Evalyn sent many letters and samples of the plant at different stages to botanist J. T. Howell, at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, for identification. Her *Streptanthus* finding, native and endemic to the Sierra foothills of California, was published by Dr. Howell in *Leaflets of Western Botany* 10(11):182-183 in 1965.

Roger Raiche, of the Bay Area garden-design firm Planet Horticulture, writes in his blog: “If you want to add an annual to your garden that no one has ever seen before, one that will amaze you...”
Evalyn Lucille Klein Farnsworth (Continued)

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every time you see it, try the Farnsworth jewel flower.” He describes it as having spikes of bright white flowers, set against “a very unusual expanded bract of rose purple, overlaid with a strange bluish color that reflects the light.” Favoring sterile, rocky “balds” and ledges, it has grown well on Raiche’s rock outcrop. When it went to seed, Raiche “crushed [the seed] up and sprinkled [it] around to a wider area,” which resulted in good numbers of the plant the next season. Raiche goes on to say that the plant is available by mail-order from Annie’s Annuals of Richmond, CA. He credits Evalyn Farnsworth with hitting upon “one of the weirdest,” but also one of the loveliest, of California’s native jewel flowers.

When Evalyn died in 2003 at the age of 91, she left behind her daughter Sandra and son-in-law Lawrence Southard — who would like it to be known that he “thought the world of her” — two grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, and the ranch to which she had devoted her life. Evalyn Farnsworth’s legacy also includes a native plant bearing her name, a possibility she likely never suspected when, on 13 May 1965 on her family’s ranch near Glennville, she first spotted an unusual purple-and-white plant blooming on a steep slope of decomposed slate.

Author’s note: Many thanks go to Sandra Southard, of Porterville, for her help in providing many personal details; to Aaron Schusteff for his photograph of Streptanthus farnsworthianus; and to Lorie Barker of the Porterville College Library and Annamarie Olson of the Porterville City Library, for their assistance in obtaining photos.

Verbena de la mina

Native Plant Gardening
by Monica Tudor

I LOVE FALL PLANT sale time. Well, make that the time after the plant sale. This is the best (and some say the only) time of year to plant natives. Based on my own experience, I have to agree.

The cooler weather seems to be appreciated by the plants as evidenced by their growth spurt this fall. The Aster chilensis (California aster) got a few new blooms as did as the Allen Chickering sage. Even the Quercus lobata (valley oak) sprouted some twigs which grew several inches.

I had planted a new section of garden in spring this year, a full sun exposure, using the plants from the Las Pilitas field trip and the Garden Fest. They lasted through the first set of 100 degree days but that was it. I had probably overwatered at least some of them, but others certainly looked parched right before they croaked. In any case, they did not have enough time to develop a large enough root system to sustain them through Bakersfield’s extreme summer weather. The survivors: a Verbena de la mina and an Isomeris arborea (bladderpod). The verbena tolerates summer water and the bladderpod grows locally on the Panorama Vista Preserve, so it survives with NO additional summer water. Those two are good choices for the garden, too. The verbena has lilac blooms and the bladderpod has yellow blooms.

This fall, after the first rain, I followed planting directions from the Las Pilitas website as well as the hints