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About the Institute

The Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, a research division of Carnegie Mellon University, specializes in the history of botany and all aspects of plant science and serves the international scientific community through research and documentation. To this end, the Institute acquires and maintains authoritative collections of books, plant images, manuscripts, portraits and data files, and provides publications and other modes of information service. The Institute meets the reference needs of botanists, biologists, historians, conservationists, librarians, bibliographers and the public at large, especially those concerned with any aspect of the North American flora.

Hunt Institute was dedicated in 1961 as the Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt Botanical Library, an international center for bibliographical research and service in the interests of botany and horticulture, as well as a center for the study of all aspects of the history of the plant sciences. By 1971 the Library's activities had so diversified that the name was changed to Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. Growth in collections and research projects led to the establishment of four programmatic departments: Archives, Art, Bibliography and the Library.

COPY OF FADED CORRESPONDENCE

*[Original tossed due to
high acid content]*

Cafetería Almendra Tropical, Hda.
Calle 38 No. 27 - 71
Apartados de Correo:
Aéreo: 127 - Postal: 716
Barranquilla, Colombia, S.A.
Agosto 28 de 1957

Mr. Robert Beasley
Escuela Agrícola Panamericana,
Apartado 96
Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Dear Bob:

Greetings and a perequito.

*[In original, this word is underlined
by hand and noted "??"]*

Please see if you can help me find out the powers that be in Mexico if it is true that Mexico is beginning to reap benefits its olive tree plantations. *[sic]*

The information is of interest to the firm I work for because it owns a large tract of land in the Sierra Nevada of Magdalena that is urgently needing some good cash crop and a tree like the olive to help control erosion. The land in question is not appropriate for coffee plantings and the experiments made so far with corn and rice have not been economically successful, partly because it is impossible to mechanize any part of the activity and because peon work is, to say the least, not inexpensive.

It has occurred to me that the only solution to our current predicament is to develop a good forest in that land or to plant fruit trees like the olive that yields a fruit that sells well and helps combat erosion.

Perhaps the Mexican Embassy in Tegucigalpa could help you enlighten me regarding the reaps that Mexico is beginning to obtain from its olive tree plantations.

Ruth joins me in affectionate regards to you and Mary and in best wishes for your continued success.

Sincerely,

Julio J. Moeller

La Lima, Honduras
September 4, 1957

Mr. Julio J. Moeller
Apartado de Correo Aéreo 127
Barranquilla, Colombia

Dear Julio:

Your letter of August 28 regarding olive oil production in Mexico arrived after Mary and I had returned to La Lima. I don't know of anyone in better position to give you the information than our mutual friend Dr. Popenoe, so I am sending copy of your letter to him herewith. From what I have heard him say in the past, I don't believe his reply is going to be very encouraging.

Best regards to Ruth and you.

Sincerely,


R. M. Beasley

cc - Dr. W. Popenoe, Antigua, Guatemala

Antigua, Guatemala, 10 Sept 1957

Sr don Julio J. Moeller
Apartado Aereo 127, Barranquilla, Colombia.

Dear Julio:

Our great and Good Friend Robert M Beasley (as the jefes de Estado put it when writing to each other) has sent me your letter of 28 agosto pxmo pndo, and has warned you that my reply may not be very encouraging. Now, growing olives in northern Mexico (near the U S border) is one thing, and growing olives in Colombia is something else already. There have for many years been olives in northern Mexico; in recent years the folks from Portugal have been selling trees for planting in Michoacan and more southern areas. These trees are young and not yet showing results.

Many trees have been sold in Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras during the past two or three years - all from Portugal.

Olive trees have been planted in tropical America since early colonial times. Between Mexico City (and really, somewhat north of there) and Lima, Peru, olives have not been grown successfully on a commercial basis. The reason they have done well near Lima is that the Humboldt current exercises a very remarkable effect on plant life. Apples grow well right on the beach near Lima, which is at the same latitude as Tegucigalpa, but you couldn't grow apples on the beach at Tegucigalpa, even assuming that Tegucigalpa had a beach.

Some 15 or 18 years ago I collaborated with Eduardo Mejia Velez, who was then Director General de Agricultura, and with others in the govt, in an investigation of the possibilities of olive growing in the Leiva valley, at 7200 feet, in Boyaca. Olives had been grown there in colonial times, tho we never knew how successfully, but there were a few old trees still there, enough so we could buy a quart or two of olive oil now and then. We introduced new varieties and we encouraged the formation of nurseries. You can check up on all this - I think Eduardo Mejia is still Decano de la Facultad de Agronomia in Medellin.

Since that time - and we convinced ourselves that olives would produce a little fruit in Leiva (they will grow almost everywhere in tropical America but not produce commercial crops) Professor Hartmann of the University of California has made a thorough study of the whole problem and finds that olives need more winter cold than we have in tropical America, even if you go up to 8000 feet. You may hear that there are reports of fine olive crops from individual trees here in Honduras. Photostatic copies of a letter from Sister No se Cuantos were sent around to prove that olives would grow and bear fine crops here. The tree in question was not the true olive, but the Ceylon olive (*Elaeocarpus serratus*) which has nothing to do with the former and has no value for oil.

Personally, you could not sell me any stock in an enterprise which proposed to plant olives in the Sierra Nevada. Better go in for timber trees, and of the right kinds. Best regards to you and Ruth.

Ever sincerely yrs,

Barranquilla, Sepbre. 16 de 1957

K 51 No. 72-96 (or Apartado aéreo 127)

Dr. Wilson Popenoe
Antigua (The House in Antigua)
Guatemala, Rep. of Guatemala

Dear Doc:

Thanks a million for your most enlightening letter of Sept. 10th.

I had a sneaky suspicion that the olive tree was not the thing for Colombia in general and Sierra Nevada in particular, ^{now} I know for sure that olives are not for the Sierra Nevada.

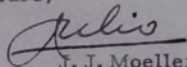
Molto agradecido as the Brazilians would say.

Since Castillo Armas⁴ was bamped off have not heard how the country is getting along, but banking on the old saying that no news is good news, hope everything is conspiring quietly and the country weathering the storm.

We too went through a little shaky period a while back and even right now the "old political ambitions" of a small faction of the right wing party seem to forget at times that what this country needs is less politics and more constructive work. There is plenty of work to be done as well as lot of belt tightening.

Ruth joins me in a cariñoso abrazo to both Helen and you.

Ever sincerely yours,


J. J. Moeller.

As regards the two addresses above - The Apartado aéreo is the office address. . . . ; the street address is the home address. Since at times I am out of town Ruth prefers that personal mail come to her to the home address. In that way she receives it without delay.

By the way when are you and Helen leaving for Spain? From what I have been hearing the country is now full of strangers. According to unconfirmed reports there are at least some 25,000 Colombians living in Spain. The Noguerras have a sister living in Sevilla and even my own boss has been away living in Madrid for the last 12 months - with no desire to come back.

Pedro Pablo Salzedo (who married a Venezolana a few years ago) is embarking for New York in a day or so and from what his wife told me he was planning a long stay. To avoid the so called "ausentismo tax" (15% sur tax) Peter Paul as I understand it is going to enroll in some Spanish University. Residents of this country are exempt from that tax if they travel for education. In that way many Colombians are getting

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Dr. Wilson Popenoe -. Antigua - Guatemala

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educated these days. And in the case of Peter Paul who is worth some \$7 or \$8 million pesos education of that sort is a quite a rewarding activity *or inactivity*