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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.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

July 15, 1940.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Antigua, Guatemala, C. A.

Dear Wilson:

You will recall that some time ago you gave me the opportunity of meeting your esteemed friend, Sr. Jaime Villegas D. of Cali, Colombia. He has come and gone and sent us some tomato seed which we are very happy to have.

He asked us, however, to send him various things and, in writing, gave no address for himself except Cali, Colombia. This, according to the Post Office, is not enough and they have returned to us both our letter and the publication which we transmitted. I wonder if you could give me the name of his institution.

Very sincerely yours,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM:MMB

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

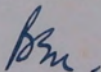
July 24, 1940.

Dr. Wilson Popence,  
United Fruit Company,  
Tela, Honduras, C. A.

Dear Wilson:

Some time ago we had an inquiry from the Jefe del Servicio Investigacion, Ministerio de Agricultura y Cria, Estacion Experimental de Agricultura y Zootecnia, Caracas, Venezuela, for seeds of Nephelium lappaceum and Garcinia tinctoria. We understand that the former is available from your gardens at the proper season and we wonder if you would care to send us some for his use, or whether or not you would prefer to send it direct; either way would be agreeable to us.

Very sincerely yours,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM:MMB

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

July 30, 1940.

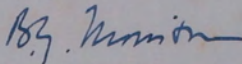
Dr. Wilson Popenoe,

Antigua, Guatemala.

Dear Wilson:

Now that you are "floating in a sea of quinine" I suppose it is rather ridiculous to ask you to consider anything so plebian as seeds of *Cordia*, but one of our eternal "Gimmies" (I believe you will recall the type) wants seed of *C. dodecandra*, and the botanists say that it occurs in Guatemala. If in any of your peregrinations you can snatch a few seeds yourself, or if you can send some of your innumerable henchmen on this errand, we shall count it a good deed on your part and send you a polite letter of thanks.

Very sincerely,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM-N.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
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DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

August 6, 1940.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Antigua, Guatemala.

Dear Wilson:

This morning as part of the routine service of the world, I received copies of correspondence from the American Legation at Guatemala dated June 26, transmitting through the Secretary of State your memoranda of June 10 on the subject of Cinchona cultivation in tropical America and Para rubber production in tropical America. The latter at the moment does not concern me, but I certainly read the first one with great delight - all three pages of it - and looked with anguished eyes and shall I say palpitating heart, for one kind word for the dear Department of Agriculture which has worked so hard not only for the United Fruit, but for Merck & Company, and what do I find? - Nothing.

Considering the fact that Merck & Company have received rather generous treatment at our hands and did not hesitate on occasion to invoke the State Department's assistance in putting a little prod under the Bureau of Plant Industry, I must simply go on record as thinking that this is "a little sad."

Very sincerely,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM-N.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

August 12, 1940.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Antigua, Guatemala.

Dear Wilson:

Your letter of July 29 arrived here on August 9, and we are grateful for the suggestions as to the differences in the packing of Cinchona. I have had the letter copied and am transmitting it to the Station so that they may see just exactly what you say.

The question of the moisture content of sphagnum has been up before, and we do not seem to have any likelihood of ever working out a system which will suit the recipient.

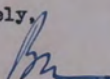
I have no idea what you are talking about when you mention "Philippine Ledgers", as there is evidence in our files that Merck & Company have Philippine Ledgers of their own, as well as the special Philippine Ledgers which we sent them. These latter were absolutely not mixed stock, and I commence to wonder if you are suffering from the old P.I. complaint of mixed labels.

As you know by now from the "narsty" letter I wrote you the other day after having seen your State Department "blurb" with never a word of "Thank you, dog" for the U.S.D.A., that I am out to get my "pound of flesh".

As for your thinking I would enjoy that job, nothing doing, for I have reached the time of life, my dear Wilson (if I may paraphrase our mutual D.F.) when I would like to look for less and not more agony.

Hoping you are the same,

Very sincerely,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM-N.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
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DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

October 10, 1940.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Antigua, Guatemala.

Dear Wilt:

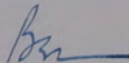
Thank you for yours of September 22 with the magnificent stamps on the cover, which enchanted the stamp collector who got it and inflamed the rest to envy. Thanks you also for the excellent seeds of Annona diversifolia. We are sending some to Coconut Grove in the hope that the trees will come through the occasional cold winters. The remainder goes on to our correspondent in Jamaica.

By the time you actually send me the manuscript of your new essay on Cinchona in Guatemala, I shall probably be so embarrassed and perhaps even ashamed of my outburst that I shall not be able to offer any foot notes, marginal notes, or other diatribes.

Dr. and Mrs. Fairchild passed through the other afternoon, looking amazingly well after their expedition. Of the two, I think Dr. Fairchild looks rather the better, which distresses me no end, not because I think either would make an unbecoming angel, but because I should hate to have Mrs. Fairchild cut off in her prime. Perhaps it was only because she seemed disturbed, having just wished Nancy Bell and her husband a safe departure for Bolivia or some such spot where in time the new Bates will appear on the horizon, and being particularly anxious to get to Coconut Grove to welcome Graham's wife and new daughter. I understand that there is also an expected Muller. With all this on the way, doubtless their responsibilities as grandparents must weigh heavily, and of course I have to remember, no matter how reluctantly, that they do not altogether approve of the calculating way in which I run the Division, and so perhaps never have the proper degree of sangfroid as they move through our set of "cells".

With all good wishes,

Very sincerely,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM-N.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

October 17, 1940.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Antigua, Guatemala.

Dear Wilt:

I am returning herewith your manuscript transmitted with your letter . Vicariously for the Department, the Bureau, and the Division, I am "purring aloud." I think it is quite elegant - all my ruffled feathers are back in position. Undoubtedly this pamphlet will be extremely helpful.

When it comes out, will it be possible for us to have a copy for our own file here, and one for deposit with the Department Library?

Very sincerely,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM-M.  
Enclosure.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

October 23, 1940

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Antigua, Guatemala.

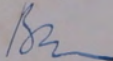
Dear Wilson:

I have your air mail letter of October 13 in regard to your magnificent assistance to Edward Stanwood, which I shall remember with esteem and affection, but, alas, he is not "my" man. This whole emergency rubber program is under Doctor Brandes' tender care and we have to be very careful to remember it at all times.

It is quite in order for me, however, as a member of the Bureau of Plant Industry and so-forth to be very grateful for all of it.

We are thankful also for the seeds of Nepelium lappaceum and N. mutabile, and for the Garcinia cambogia. These have just come in and I am glad to have your instructions as we have perhaps not handled them in the best fashion.

Very sincerely yours,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM:IMS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

December 20, 1940.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Antigua, Guatemala.

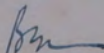
Dear Wilt:

I have your letter of December 14, and am not sure how much we can do for you about the supply of the plant yielding the drug Ipecacuanha. I will make inquiry as to where we think it might be had, and if I have any luck will then dump the correspondence back on you.

Three loud snickers for Knowles and maybe one or two for you. As soon as I get through having Spanish beaten into my stupid brain, I am going back and revive all my German. Apparently one needs that in your beloved Latin-American countries just as much as Spanish.

Thanks also for your magnificent example of double Rs. I would like you to understand, Sir, that I need no piano for anything like this. This is performed unaccompanied in the same fashion as the famous Bach air for the G string. I have not yet reached the stage of "virtuosity" where I really like to stop my friends in the hall and go into the "canary act". As it is now, I merely annoy them with a reiteration of "Why, why, why does the Spanish go like this?" Of course, in these early juvenile weeks of study I should not expect to have any real knowledge of anything, but there are many things which are being crammed down our throats at the moment which strike me as truly naive.

Very sincerely,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM-N.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY  
WASHINGTON

DIVISION OF  
PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

June 21, 1941.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Care Magdalena Fruit Company,  
Santa Marta, Colombia.

Dear Wilt:

Thank you for your disturbing letter of June 6, all the paragraphs and all the subject matters.

I am not certain that I did actually tell you an address for Melinis minutiflorus - I may even have given you merely a Latin-American promise. At any rate, I believe you can buy it from the following firms:

Dierberger & Co.,  
Rua Libero Badaro 20,  
São Paulo, Brazil.

Cocito Irmaos Ltda.,  
Rua São Benito 490,  
São Paulo, Brazil.

Loureiro Costa & Cia, Ltd.,  
São Paulo, Brazil.

We do not know of any source of the seed in Cuba. I believe that any grass which has been so widely cultivated ought to be available and so on, but under these circumstances undoubtedly one buys it best in a country where it never grows.

Now about this future school of yours in Honduras - as my life is entirely inundated in Latin-American things at the present time, I see no reason why I should not ask for full details. It is only fair to warn you, however, that both Brazil and Peru are in the market, and I also have a little feeling out for Bolivia, so you had better make it good!

Of course you know without my explaining to you, that I really would not do. I can pass as a North American, although my newest Peruvian friends assure me that I look exactly like a Peruvian. My knowledge of Spanish is certainly not "reasonably good" and my general knowledge of agriculture has some "aching voids." As for the last item in your category, I can only say that every now and then I see my colleagues wince, and as for Miss Nolen, she just plain "makes faces". Whether or not they would admit that they were suffering under my missionary instinct, Heaven only knows,



but I never lose a chance to quote Scripture to Miss Nolen because she resents it so bitterly, and as for Church History, I can make it up at a moment's notice.

All joking aside, I am interested, but I think you ought to be able to do better. The only person who comes immediately to my mind is someone you probably know, but whose name I do not have in full. I met him through Knowles when he was stationed at Davis. His name is Moore and he is familiarly known as "Dinty". He seemed to me to be an excellent person, and I believe that he has lived in Honduras. He may even have worked for you.

Stadelman was in the other day and found me chuckling about this letter, so just as a vengeance I said "I don't suppose you would like to go as an 'Agricultural Bishop' to Honduras?", but he seemed to feel that he was more interested in other pastures.

I will keep the whole thing carefully in mind, because the way in which Latin-American things are coming in my direction is truly appalling. If I had dreamed that my innocent little ten dollar check to the Berlitz School last September would have precipitated so much and so quickly, I am almost afraid I would not have spent it.

Very sincerely,



B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

BYM-N.

While it is impracticable to provide a complete list of dealers, this partial list is furnished for your information, with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no guarantee of reliability implied.

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WASHINGTON

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PLANT EXPLORATION AND INTRODUCTION

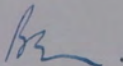
July 30, 1941.

Dr. Wilson Popenoe,  
Care Magdalena Fruit Company,  
Santa Marta, Colombia.

Dear Wilson:

We should like very much to obtain seeds of Nephelium lappaceum and Durio zibethinus for two of our correspondents in Brazil - Dr. F. de Assis Iglesias, Diretor, Servico Florestal, Ministerio da Agricultura, Rio de Janeiro, and Sr. Pimentel Gomes, Diretor de Departamento de Assistancia ao Cooperativismo, Joao Pessoa, Paraíba, Brasil. If these plants are fruiting at Tela, I am wondering if you would use your good offices with your colleagues to have sample lots sent direct to these gentlemen. We shall be very grateful for the assistance, and I am sure our correspondents will be keenly appreciative of the courtesy.

Very sincerely,



E. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

N.

July 30, 1941.

Dr. Wilson Fopence,  
Care Magdalena Fruit Company,  
Santa Marta, Colombia.

Dear Wilson:

We should like very much to obtain seeds of Henkelium lannaceum and Durio gibethinus for two of our correspondents in Brasil - Dr. F. de Assis Iglesias, Diretor, Servico Florestal, Ministerio da Agricultura, Rio de Janeiro, and Sr. Pimentel Gomes, Diretor de Departamento de Assistancia ao Cooperativismo, Joao Pessoa, Paraiba, Brasil. If these plants are fruiting at Tela, I am wondering if you would use your good offices with your colleagues to have sample lots sent direct to these gentlemen. We shall be very grateful for the assistance, and I am sure our correspondents will be keenly appreciative of the courtesy.

Very sincerely,

B. Y. Morrison,  
Principal Horticulturist in Charge.

H.



COY

APARTADO 93

ESCUELA AGRICOLA PANAMERICANA

TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS  
CENTRO AMERICA

20 May 1945

Mr B Y Morrison,  
USDA, Beltsville, Maryland.

Dear Ben:

Yours of 20 April came while I was over in Guatemala. I had a look at Finca El Naranjo while there and found much progress. They have sampled some of the Krukoff Calisayas; one showed 10%  $QSO_4$  which is pretty darn good for a tree not yet three years old. They have a tremendous grafting program on foot, and are making fine progress with it. Pinkus is doing a lot of budding; and Cowgill is laying out some experiments there. All in all, things are booming.

Incidentally, I saw all the correspondence re Shuman's work and final report. All very interesting.

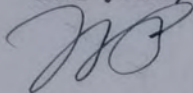
I have just heard from Heuer that he is much interested in the job down here. I had written nothing, so he is referring to our conversation of January last, and apparently has no new plans. I am a trifle fearful about the family end; I am asking him for details as to ages of the children etc, etc. If I were sure he would fit in here I would like to go ahead and get him, as he is probably sufficiently well trained to do the work we need. I would appreciate some further advice from you.

Mighty sorry to hear you are not going to Caracas. I have just received my nombramiento from President Carias, appointing me to represent Honduras, so it looks as tho we are going. Jim Kempton sent me a list of the American delegates; the only one I know is Homer Henney, tho I have met M.L.Wilson.

After having given more thought to the problem of that trunk, I believe the best thing will be to ship it out to Paul in California. He can open it with a cold chisel, take out the few things we want, and bring them down when he comes about the middle of June. So if you will just drag it up to Takoma Park and put it on the railroad express agency scales and have them forward it to Paul Popenoe, 2503 North Marengo Avenue, Pasadena, California, we will all be out of the woods.

We've had a fine lot of *Cagleyas* in bloom this past month. No news of interest from the Turrialba side. Looks like OFAR has gone in for a big project in Guatemala - the experiment station at Chocóla. Maybe it is so big Dinty will have to move down to run it.

Ever yours,



Route 1 Box 24,  
Pass Christian, Mississippi,  
20 April 1959

Dear Wilson,

Forget? Certainly not. I suppose my reasoning, if any, is open to the usual criticisms, but the one thing that I asked of retirement, aside from a location where I need never again shovel snow, was a chance to lead some sort of a life where I need no longer bear the burden of being a "public servant." This in no way suggests that I did not, do not care about people, far from it, only that I wanted a place where I would not be within immediate reach by telephone, mail and visitation. Of course, I have failed in all of this, and I get visitors from far and near, known and unknown, and each in his way contributes to the joys of rural life. It is rural here, even if we have the benefits of electricity, bottle gas (we are off the line for natural gas), a wonderful artesian well of our own, a rural mail carrier who still likes me in spite of my tons of mail, and a few friends locally, who have minds and interests of their own as well as a mild interest in mine. A good doctor, and not too far off an excellent dentist into whose tender mercies I shall soon have to commit a lot more teeth! A reasonable market for food; not for gourmets, and a simplicity of clothing that is a joy. Best of all, only about six weeks of unpleasant weather in winter.

It is perfectly true that the one personal experiment that I should have liked to try, I have not; and equally true that my hope that I could once more take up painting, has not materialized, but other things have. Music (voice) again, in spite of the years is in pretty good form and I find that my old Italian singing teacher laid a foundation that bears the years very lightly.

Of course not all is "sweetness and light" but that is a delusion that I foreswore, ages ago in USDA. Remember?

Travelling, for the moment is out of the questions I had planned to carry on my azalea breeding which I had to drop officially thanks to the reorganizations set in motion by one, B.C. Aucter, and started it well before I quit. But I was allowed to be taken in by a commercial notion of "friends" of mine who had it all more carefully planned for themselves and whom I have had to ease "out", in part; leaving the burden of a small nursery on me, financially and otherwise. I hope that by the end of 1960 I can be out of all that too. Meantime, I have produced some of the most beautiful azaleas one could dream of, and have a small army of seedlings treading on their heels. Also I find that I am a pioneer in the plant world here, and am developing a small following over the State and into the nearby States, all of which I did NOT have in mind. Until I am either free of the nursery or it is successful in terms of money, I am stuck. I plan to go to Washington briefly the end of the month, for AHS and National Arboretum meetings and probably will go to Washington in mid-summer to work on some planting plans for the N.A. but this time is not set.

Meantime, I am making ties in Japan, with my imports of azaleas from there and am even flirting with the idea of learning Japanese which I should have done immediately I came back from the Orient in 1916. I find the methods worked out during the war years especially through the center at Yale a little out of my line of perceptions. But we will see, if I plug along. I'd really like to be able to read the stuff and that is another matter.

As for looking again, at the places where we tried to grow cinchona, I am not too sure. I do not hold much with going back: But I recall your house in Antigua and the fact that I saw the fabulous Maria then! Even if then I could not talk with her.



Here we have a pleasant piece of land, only about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres in cultivation, the rest woods, and part of the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  in grass under pecans. It belongs to Anderson whom I knew up north and have known for some 30 odd years. Our house mate is a male dachshund, now sleeping beside me as I type. There is a simple but rather stunning garden laid out for display purposes and a nursery that is run rather like a European one, no fields, no machinery to plow the open fields, and from the usual point of view too much hand labor. But we grow beautiful plants, all azaleas of course in the nursery. The commercial Glenn Dales to make my helpers living; my own seedlings in mass and in selected stocks now in propagation for later sales, and my collection of Glenn Dales, Japanese satsukis, old Southern Indicas, Belgians and various miscellaneous things in the azalea tribe. Plenty of other plants, a good small collection of camellias, old tea roses, some satsumas, kumquats, a Meyer lemon, a fine collection of magnolias, species and varieties, lycoris, zephyranthes, Habranthus, Coopersia, and all their allies. Some of the new named Dutch hybrid amaryllis and for iris, only the bulbous Dutch. My narcissus collection is represented only by those sections that like the climate, and fortunately for me, some are kinds that did not like the north.

It is all very simple and very comfortable, as we are both good cooks, although Ivan does most of it. Our one major lack is a guest house and that is something that I had hoped to have long before this, but I did not plan properly. Of course none of this is comparable to the things you have seen or the places you have been, but should you ever come this way, and would be willing to try our simplicity, we would welcome you both. And we can put you up, if, again that if, you could endure the simplicity. We'd even get out and shine up my coin silver, and flash the linen napkins that we do not use! But, we would eat in the kitchen, which I find gives little pause to most of my friends. If you should come in winter, there would be excellent heating; should you come in summer, there is air-conditioning. Outside there might be mosquitoes but we have repellants and such that usually work! And I'd promise not to sing to you, unless asked.

Change of scene before quitting. I do not recall Ernest Casseres. Should I? My Latin American life seems ages past, and I'd have some trouble sinking my mind to that level of speech again, but once I could duck under I am confident I could speak once again! It was fun too. But I wonder if I, in my own person, did anything that amounted to anything at all. But that is a doubt I have of much of life!

My best to Helen, and to you always my friend, no matter how little you may hear or see....

Hasta aquel entonces cuando nos viamos...felicidades!





Antigua Guatemala, 9 Julio 1960

Mr. B. Y. Morrison,  
Route 1, Box 24,  
Pass Christian,  
Miss. USA.

Mi nunca bien ponderado amigo de antaño:

Acabo de recibir una cartita de nuestro también nunca bien ponderado amigo Knowles Ryerson, con motivo de su jubilación. Knowles dijo que Ud. le había pegado un telefonazo, también a base de esa maldita jubilación. Yo le dedico a Ud. estas líneas para manifestarle mi aprecio por ese telefonazo a Knowles. En este mundo traidor hay muy pocas gentes que recuerdan a sus amigos como Ud.

Cuando me jubilaron de la Frutera, al alcanzar la edad de 65 años y cuando en la misma época me jubilaron de la United States Navy, y de la Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, pasé varias semanas contemplando mi futuro, sin saber si existía un futuro o nó. Encontré y acabo de decirle lo mismo a Knowles, que después de esa maldita jubilación uno tiene mas trabajo que jamas ha tenido en su puerca vida y hasta estoy resentido que nó me jubilaron diez años mas antes.

No he contestado su carta del año pasado pues ya no escribo muchas cartas, con excepción de aquellas que tratan de las mejores variedades de aguacates para sembrar en la nueva república de Ghana o para aconsejar respecto a los mejores fertilizantes para usar en el nuevo estado de Alaska. Todo muy sencillo verdad?

Gracias a Dios que en su infinita misericordia no me ha puesto el problema que Ud. tiene, o sea el de aprender el idioma Japonés. Yo estoy dedicando mis últimos días al cultivo de ciruelos en las alturas de Centro América, y al cultivo de el Pili nut en tierra caliente. Como solía decir un amigo mio en México, hace 40 años, "Basta con lo suficiente".

Yo temo que no hay mas probabilidades para visitarlo en Mississippi, que las posibilidades de una pelota de nieve de durar en una estufa caliente, pero sí creo que Ud. bien podría venir a pasar un mes aquí en la Antigua, donde todavía abunda el caldo de frijol negro.

Un abrazo cariñoso de su amigo de siempre,

Wilson Popenoe

Antigua, Guatemala, 10 October 1960

Mr B Y Morrison,  
Box 24, Route 1,  
Pass Christian, Miss.

Dear Sir:

I understand that you are a Vice-President of the Royal Horticultural Society and that you are considered to be something of an authority on the genus *Narcissus*. Therefore I am ~~imposing~~ on you to ask, what is the enclosed? It is the only *Narcissus* (I assume you will tell me you have reduced it to an allied genus); but it is the only what shall I say, *Narcissus*, which I have been able to flower here, at an altitude of 5100 feet. I thought maybe it would do better if I kept the bulbs at low temperature for a while so I put them in our Electrolux refrigerator and went off to Venezuela and forgot about them, and when I got back they were nicely frozen - had been for six weeks or more - and I planted them and they grew, but they didn't give any more blossoms than they had without freezing. I say this because I left a lot in the ground without freezing.

And now, Ben what do you think of this idea: Our Camellias make lots of buds but they all dry up just when they opening - I suppose due to our dry climate. I am thinking of enclosing the buds just as they are about to open, in polyethylene bags to maintain a moister atmosphere around them. Dr Hume said our hope is to use early-flowering varieties and I believe he is right. Of course the standard here is Chandleri (elegans). But I want to grow Pink Perfection and Alba Plena also. Perhaps not so easy on a pile of rubble, as is our garden at the walls that fell down in 1773. The pH is about 7.5. I have tried aluminum sulfate (I believe it is) and total nada.

Hombre, I wish you had come to Guatemala or Salvador or Costa Rica instead of Mississippi. How useful you could be down here - But I suppose you will come back with a bang saying, You think I aint being useful here in Pass Christian?

I have just done a little job in Nicaragua. My main attention right now is devoted to developing the production of Temperate Zone fruit trees in tropical America. Plums are the best bet. People down here don't like those Florida peaches - say they are dry and mealy. We are getting way ahead in the apple business, based mostly on Winter Banana; but as regards pears, only Seckel is turning out satisfactorily up to now.

I get just about as much news from the USDA as you get from the planet Mars, probably less. As a friend of mine told me here, When you retire you are completely out of the picture and you better get used to it.

Ever yours,



Route 1 Box 24,  
Pass Christian, Mississippi,  
21 de octubre de 1960

Bien recordado amigo:

Cuando llegó su carta anterior, pensaba, unas semanas, en escribirle en español, y, despues de tantas vacilaciones, escribí, un desfile de tonterías, tan idiotas, que llegó la carta en hojerascas. Resulta siempre así, cuando escribo en español, y no se quien sea de mis ancestores, que me toque la locura.

En cuanto a su carta de hoy, puedo decirle sin ambages, que la planta es verdad, Narciso, eientificamente llamado Narcissus Tazetta orientalis, o en inglés, Chinese Sacred Lily. La forma presente es, o parece, doble, y así, es nombrada en catalogos de ayer, como los de Child's de Floral Park. N. Y., "Old Roman!" El porque de eso, no puedo explicarle. N. Tazetta es indígena del Oriente, y no puedo imaginar necesidad alguna de invierno artificial. Lo que necesita, es abono, fosfatos, etc. Es el tipo mas comun aquí, con los junquillos varios. Y ahora, despues de experimentaciones, puedo indicarle, que las especies de N. triandrus, N. bulbocodium estan como indígenas igualmente, aunque los libros no dicen así.

Noticias de Washington? Hombre, me encuentro ahora como un desheredado, a menos que alguien necesite algo, y entonces..... Es verdad, que en el Arboretum Nacional, los miembros de la junta consultiva, triunfaron sobre el "top brass" del ministerio y las apropiaciones del año sobran un millon de dolares! Ahora hay por todas partes, una confusión increíble! ¡ Gracias a Dios, que no este ahí!

No sé, y nunca sabía, el buen criterio de ponerme aquí en Mississippi; pero a la vez, ¿por donde puedo ir sin dudas de juicio? La vida aquí, es muy sencillo, somos paisanos, pero con aficiones de millinarios en cuanto a plantas, y a plantas solamente. Tengo colecciones de azalea de no debe tener: de narciso, en experimentacion, de España y de la Africa del Norte, y así, así -- y para silenciar la consciencia, trabajos en la iglesia de aquí, trabajos con mas méritos de ejecucion que de teología. Y para satisfacer los instintos de padre, unos desfiles de semillitas de azalea, año por año, los de 1959, ya naciesen. Pero? que importa todo eso, como dice el psalmista " hoy, aquí, mañana, donde?

Y ahora lo promiso, que nunca le escribiré otra vez en español, así llamado; pues, reírse de carcajadas! Como debe!

Un abrazo carinosamente, de,

Ben [Morrison]



Route 1 Box 24,  
Pass Christian, Miss.,  
22 October 1960

Dear Wilson:

Having exhausted myself last night with one page of putrid Spanish, I find, this morning when I am going through yesterday's work, that I did not comment on the camellia problem. I do not know all the answers ever about camellias and we can do them without much thought here except to be sure the kinds will not bloom at the period when frosts are more likely to come.....hence no alba plena for us. Curiously, December is our worst month, not the coldest, but the month that is not decisively cold, as is January.

What about the pH of your water supply? If the water is all right, why not try the stunt of making raised beds with perfect soil in them? I do not remember the garden in Antigua surely enough to be categorical but it seems to me that it was or could be formal enough to allow some such treatment. I do not know if you have brick to use? If you do, it would be simple enough to make a design from the raised beds, and be sure to leave a few bricks out of the walls, so the drainage would be perfect. Then with a soil mix, mostly humus of whatever acid kind you can get (I hear from Claude that he had some used on azaleas by a one-time helper, and found out later it was alkaline humus) some sand, and a little of the best soil. What about using sulphur instead of aluminum sulphate. It will acidify, I am told; as I never needed to know, I have never tried it.

Falling buds, usually have some relation to moisture supplies, not necessarily amounts but continuity of even moisture.

If they were not so ridiculously costly, I'd urge you to try some of the reticulata hybrids that came from China, "they say" from inland back of the Hongkong, Canton areas.... and may be they would like your latitude as well as elevation?????? I do not grow them here, still too costly for me, but they are more likely to be offered in California catalogues than eastern lists. Want me to look for you? Can do, but may be slowly.....

What else did I skip?????

Best to you, my friend.

Antigua, 25 Oct 1960

Mi dilecto amigo (I used to write, mi nunca bien ponderado amigo, but I found some of my friends didnt understand:

Pretty darn nice to get your prompt reply to my letter. I think both you and I are losing too much contact with those dear dead days beyond recall. You remind me of the Carib clerk we had in the drafting room when I first went to Tela. Cipriano - we called him Sippy. Well, he called together all the Caribs one night, and said: "This wont do. Look at these gringos; they have their Masonic club, and their Golf Club, and their Uluu Society, and they all get together and have a good time and improve themselves mentally, morally and physically. It just boils down to this: We Caribs have got to cohabit more!

Now, dont apologise for your Spanish. It really is remarkably good and remarkably colloquial, tho you dont seem to take cognizance of the maternal ancestry of anyone. You should read your Mark Twain again.

How interesting to find that our narcissus is no more nor less than our old friend the Chinese Sacred Lily. Unfortunately I no longer have a catalog of John Lewis Childs; I guess when he put Burbank's Wonderberry (né Solanum nigrum) on the market he lost so much money that he had to go out of business. But now, knowing that what we have here is what we used to buy from the Chinaman in Topeka and grow on the dining room table, I will take a fresh start and not freeze any of the bulbs for 3 months. But since they never seem to go dormant here, my problem is to get them to lie low for a while and then come back with a back, and I will give them all the 20-20-16 they want. I will not buy a carload lot of that fertilizer which Charles Deering's manag bought for the Deering estate at Buena Vista - just before we moved out and made that great mistake of moving to Chapman Field. He showed me the analysis on the tag - you know the law has always required an analysis on the tag: Nitrogen 2%, Silica 98%. "Nature's Plant Food", it was headed.

But let us return to our muttons. If you will come down here I will land you a job immediately as head of the choir at the Union Church in Guatemala City (where I have a lecture to the Womens' Auxiliary last year, and I might add it was just before Thanksgiving and the lad who opened with prayer told everybody how thankful we ought to be for many things, and then I got up and added, Madam, you missed one very important point; we should give thanks that we are able to live in Guatemala). I really wish, Ben that you had moved to tropical America when you retired. There is so much to be done down here. I have just an hour ago, before Helen set us up a fine chop suey with sprouts of Phaseolus mungo finished an 8-pp memo on where we stand today in tropical America in re temperate zone fruits. I took a crack at the boys who say gibberellin acid is the answer and talked a bit about Nitrogen. Twenty five yrs ago, when I was in chg of experiments for United Fruit Co, we decided the only element which gave us back our money with a profit was Nitrogen; and I have just now read a recent



bulletin of the Research Dept of UFC, which is spending three million dollars a year as against two hundred thousand in my time, that they have not found anything except Nitrogen which pays dividends.

Allright; I will see how I can handle those Sacred Lilies. Seems to me I must dry them off some way or other. I shall probably give up by just cutting them hard, dividing them up, putting them in new soils and shooting the Nitrogen into them.

Do you know Lilium formosanum var. philippinense? It is in blossom right now, whereas the old fashioned Easter Lily, out of respect to tradition and perhaps other factors, will come in next March. I was telling Claude Hope about this, and he said, But yes, it is a pretty thing but it has a purple vein in the flower and the little girls cannot go to first communion with purple veins in their lilies. So I sent him a lot of seed, of our stock which does not have a purple vein (and is just now in blossom) and let's see if he cant fool the padres and the little girls. Incidentally, Claude gave me last year two dozen of the finest Gloxinias I have ever seen. Twice as large as the stock usually offered in American catalogs. And he gave me a lot of swell geraniums, but we have trouble with geraniums here; if we leave them outside during the rain season they rot and die. We have to put them and keep them out of the rain. We are hitting the hybrid amaryllis hard. Helen thinks they are just about the finest cut flowers. I suspose we must have 500 plants now - growin' all of blooming size. And I got a batch of hybrid Watsonias from Theo Payne of Los Angeles because I am very fond of them, but they have done practically nothing and are about to die. Maybe too wet for them in our wet season; maybe our soil is too alkaline (rubble from the watts of the old house which has fallen in during the last 250 years to a not unreasonable extent, and has given us a pH of about 7.

And now as to those camellias: I think you are quite right. We could build up beds and fill them with acid soil, wh I would have to bring from a long distance, as even the horse manure we are getting has a pH of about 8.0. And I could shoot the sulfur into them and I suppose someone will insist on gibberellic acid and then of course we would fertilize with nother but aluminum sulfate - and everything mig be fine - 20 years from now. I have two plants in the garden I got fro Reasoner Bros in 1929. They are six ft high; one of them bears a lot of pink flowers which ordinarily blast before opening, the other does not even give us the satisfaction of catching the buds blast. That idea I mentioned to you in my last - bagging the buds in polythelene bags to keep them moist, has done absolutely no good whatsoever. So I am going out of the camellia business, practically speaking, but will hang onto about four varieties we have out of the big batch of 80 plants we brought down from Mrs Zemurray's garden in 1939. And the behavior of these four convinces me that there must be more which will behave properly here; as I told you, Dr Hume said "Plant the early flowering varieties. But at aetas 68, pushing 69, I dont think I will plant many more camellias. Better plant Raphanus sativus; I shall have time to see the results, and even eat them, if I can get a little butter so I can eat them French style.

The least you can do to keep right with your Maker is to come down here for a good visit some time after New Year's. Dont you think



Antigua, 2 Novbr 1960

Vice-President B.Y. Morrison  
Royal Horticultural Society  
Roue 1 Box 24, Pass Christian, Miss.

Dear Benhameen:

Maybe you weren't so far wrong when you wrote me the other day that you only receive letters cuando alguien necesita algo. Here is what this alguien wants: I am trying to drum up interest in a big program for the cultivation of temperate zone fruits in the tropical American highlands. Damon Boynton, more or less the leader in this movement, wants to limit our zone to 20 degrees N and 20 degrees S, but I am going to talk him into limiting it to the tropical region proper - why quibble about three degrees N or S? I suspect we shall have a really important symposium on the subject at our meeting in So Florida next April - a meeting which I believe I have already mentioned to you, and which you will of course attend. Frankly, it is going to be an interesting mtg in general - if they don't scare away too many of us Latins by the high cost of living. (I understand the FAO boys now get \$15 a day when they have to come to these hardship areas such as Honduras, etc). Reminds me of the Caribbean Conference at Gainesville some yrs ago; young chap got up and asked me, are there any chances for exploration trips like those you used to make for Dr Fairchild? And I replied, Well here is Ralph Allee, who is intimately associated with the tropical American field, let's ask him. And Ralph got up and said, There are opportunities but no one wants to face the hardships. And I jumped up and commented, with tears in my voice, Oh Lord, just give me more of those hardships!

But I am wandering far afield. El objeto de la presente, despues de saludarlo etc, is to talk a moment about Colombia. They've got a new organization down there, or I assume it is new: El Instituto de Investigaciones Tecnológicas. And they have hired the Institut Francais de Recherches Fruitières Outre Mer (I.F.A.C.) to handle the development of temperate zone fruit culture. Now, You and I had a little to do with a similar program some yrs ago. When I was in Bogotá at one time they had a tremendous lot of grafted trees on the sabana, I believe some 20 miles north of the city. And who was that fellow they had in charge, who was for quite a while in charge of fruit culture at Palmira? And who was that other guy that I sent up to Gainesville with a Burpee scholarship, and who had a nice little nursery at Villa Maria, I believe it was. I remember he got into a big row with Dave Burpee because he sent home for his wife, after getting to Gainesville, and then I believe he broke his arm - nothing to do with the arrival of his wife, I am sure - but he eventually went back and was again at Villa Maria, where I thought they had a nice place for a nursery of temperate zone fruits.

Well, it all boils down to this; let's you and I put heads together and see what information we can stir up for this symposium next spring. Maybe you have, or could get from the SPI files in Washington, some good data on what you sent to Colombia - and maybe there are even some reports in the files in re the results. The only thing which seemed to interest Geo Darrow when he visited Colombia 10 yrs ago was that apple which has been grown there a long time and which they call Emilia, and

which one of your colleagues in England identified as Blenheim Orange. Both Darrow and Boynton (who has not seen it, I believe) feel that this apple has a lower chilling requirement than most others - though I hold out for Winter Banana, which is not the best apple in the world but which bears tremendous crops here in Guatemala at 7500 feet and is commercially quite successful.

So think it over, and see what you can contribute to this investigation of temperate zone fruits in tropical America, but dont write and tell me to plant Pineapple Pear or even Kieffer; I am sticking to Seckel.

Ever yrs,



Route 1 Box 24,  
Pass Christian, Miss., USA.,  
16 November 1960

Dear Wilson:

Colombia? It all seems now like part of some other life and to my shame I cannot fish up a solitary name, although I have clear mental pictures of the man who was particularly interested in apples. The other chap, the Villa Maria man I do not place as such, though I recall Villa Maria vaguely. When the time came for shipments, all was handled by Whitehouse and Bradford. Now WEW, is one of the most difficult persons in the world from whom to get anything and I mean precisely 'anything.' But I'll write him and see if the usual dose of butter and apple sauce will do the trick. Erlanson, who is now in charge, is or recently was, in India, so I cannot beg him to crack the whip, and even that did not always work.

My recollection of the apple business was that we sent (we <sup>e</sup> had the office) a complete collection of all the East Malling stocks we then had, a fine lot, and scions of practically all the apples then at Glenn Dale, a prodigious collection as Bradford was still working on stocks, combinations of stock, inner stock and so on, plus a project on cider apples. He wrote up, or so I was told, voluminous notes on everything but after his sudden death, all stopped, and as far as I know nothing has ever been done with the data. The collection was eventually destroyed!

The Colombian then in charge, ran a store in Bogota, that sold all sorts of farm tools, supplies, etc. I could take you there and I would know the man if we met, but his name....No! I do not have a copy of my report here so I cannot tell you anything.

As for Palmira itself, I am sure I am correct that there were no deciduous fruits at all, too hot.

The only Colombian from whom I hear at all, is Guillermo Ramirez R. Calle 5: Oeste No. 2-110, Santa Rita, Cali, Colombia, but he was never a fruit man. He has been away from Palmira so long and there have been so many changes, none of them retailed to me, that I have no idea what he does now, or even if he is still in Government service. Our exchanges are no more than Christmas greetings, rarely more than the names signed, his wife and his.

The David Burpee man I never heard of. You know of course that when it became apparent at Beltsville, that all the Latins came to see me, personally, and asked me to arrange or help arrange their appointments, I was informed by the top brass that, as of such and such a date, all Latins would report to Tullinan, who would make all arrangements. These instructions sent to FAR worked, but of course I got to see a lot of them anyway and when some one was needed to translate letters or to act as interpreter, I came in handy!!!! But my "career" as such was ended. I could even fudge an interpretation with the few Brasilians who came, if they were game.

Me attend a meeting about tropical practices with deciduous fruits? Man alive, are you mad? No sir, remember I'm retired, and stuck, by the way, with a lot of fine things to do, that delights me even if no one else in the world cares one whit!



In a way, I hope that WEW will produce the records for you, as he made it very plain to me when I returned, that he looked upon my suggestions as impositions of a major category. If something good has come from it, he will swell with "pride and joy." I'll try but believe me, I could wish for an easier task of persuasion!

It is still fine here, warm by day, cool at night, rather too dry for comfort, but a tiny shower this evening made me laugh as I had to stop watering when it began. I had done hours of light watering all morning, as a heavy dose would start growth that would be caught by the frost that usually comes here about Nov. 25. The more decent weather with no serious cold until early January. The last two years have had fine winters, cooling off gradually, and then staying relatively cold until early March. The damage always comes from the fluctuations. After one January frost last season, I picked up 7 bushels of camellias that had been touched.... just to make things look tidy again.

Now, I have any number of azaleas in fine flower and more coming so when the frost does come there will be some havoc.

Am busy planting into permanent positions, things I have bought from hither and yon, some few PEI things and more of the latter to come as soon as some of the more urgent jobs are finished. I have all of my newly imported English daffodils, etc. under cover, but not all that I have from places in this country. I find that if I choose places that will not be watered all summer, by hose, and are well drained and hot, i.e. sunny, I can do very well all the species from the Iberian peninsula and north Africa. I even had a first flower on the autumn blooming *Narcissus elegans oxypetalus*, not much of a flower, but exciting as it has practically no cup, all reduced to a mere rim. Who saw it? No one except we on the place. Who cares? No one, except we three. With luck we will have pictures in color and in black and white and then I may run a note in the AFM which will not care either, except that it has never been pictured in the U.S. before as far as we know. The other day, I planted bulbs of *N. viridiflorus*, and these too should be autumn bloomers but we will see. But again, who cares?

And now, for dear old Bill!!!! Wish me luck and you'll know as I'll suggest that he write you directly! He will probably prefer that any way.

Every best wish,

Bgm

Route 1 Box 24,  
Pass Christian, Miss., USA  
31 December 1960

Dear Wilson:

I sent you,

Thanks for the cc of your letter to Whitehouse. If the Winters to whom he referred in that letter is the Winters I once knew you should certainly get copies of the plant orders. And if they were sent to the good man in Bogotá whose name I still cannot fish up, from my memory, and if he has survived all the changes in government, you should get good reports from him, as he was sound.

If you do not hear anything from Winters bombard him, as that office now has one of those "verifax" type of things and any old steno can push the orders through and under!!!! Don't let it all drop.

Nothing exciting here, just one day after the next, with the present stretch of drizzle and fog weather not unlike that of Berkeley at this time of year. I have one more lot of narcissus to get under the ground to-day and then I believe, I am through with that stuff. I had pushed myself yesterday to what I thought was a finish, and later when I started to clean up all the things I had been handling, flats and boxes, I discovered - one more! Too late then to do any thing about it, so it is or was postponed and as far as I can see, no rain yet this morning though it is only a little after 7 a.m. and there is time enough for rain before noon!

The narcissus things of greatest interest to me in the near future, whether winter bloomers of spring, will be the performance of the various species that come from the Iberian Peninsula, most of which do very well, here, in a part of the garden that gets sun baked in summer, and is always quick draining, so that our occasional deluges do not harm. All the jonquilla tribe, the triandrus tribe and the hoop petticoats do well and this autumn I had a flower from *N. elegans* which is one of the rare autumn flowering species but at the moment, I am not sure if it is not from North Africa! It does not amount to much as a flower, but the puny bulb sent me from PEI gave one leaf only last autumn, two this year and now one flower scape. The other species, *serotinus*, so far has provided only healthy leaves! There is quite a rage now for the "small daffodils" and as no narcissus are supposed to do well in these parts, I rejoice in all that I can succeed in growing, though I have high hopes of acclimatizing more and more, plus building up my collection of tazettas like the one you sent me. Old Chinese Sacred Lily! Why should I bother? Don't ask me such questions, for I suspect that I am a little dotty and know it!

All good wishes, for 1961 to you and Helen,  
and all your projects!



Route 1 Box 24,  
Pass Christian, Miss., 39571  
23 April 1965

Dear Wilson:

You can never guess what a joy it was, this morning, to have your letter, and your praise!

When Menninger made the request of me, I tried to beg off, as I know, and all my colleagues know, I do not have the background of experience to justify any connection with such a book. Ed refused me and said he wanted a foreword that was not written by a taxonomist! Surely I am not that either. It took a hellish long time to write, and it went through various alterations, and when finally I had nerve enough to mail it to Menninger, I told him quite frankly, that it was the best and only thing I could do and if it did not suit, to have no compunction about tossing it out. As you see, it was used and he insists that it is precisely what he wanted. I hope that may be true.

My ties with the old life are very few now. I rarely hear from any one in USDA, but I accept the fact that I belong to a generation that is almost gone by, and to a type of horticulturist that is no longer "in style."

Here I have built a garden and it is now too large for me! But I continue my absurd way, and have been importing satsuki azaleas from Japan for years, and probably have the largest collection in this country. Many are exquisitely lovely; some I value more for their historical background or some association. I have had good help in Japan, through the broker, a few individuals, and this last year or so, a young man of value and standing, who is now earning his living in some Vegetable Growers Association, but can take time to see nurseries and make slides for me. The last shipment came two weeks ago, and in wretched condition, as I suspect that the new man had had no experience in overseas shipments. I had to cut all down drastically and have given them special care, and of course hope I will get as many to live as possible. Many are already showing signs of new buds along the stems, but for a month I dare not be too sure of any.

We have just had a visit from a nice nurseryman and his wife, who have a place in West Australia, and with whom I have had azalea correspondence. They called from the Pass, and then Anderson went in for them and they stayed for supper, and talk. To-morrow, we have them again, but I do not know if for Sunday, but if so, they will be taken to Angelo's in Gulfport for his famous flounder! So, the old horticultural world still hangs on and I like it. Also, I thoroughly enjoy, the opportunity of giving courtesies to foreigners, as a token for all the fine things that have been done for me, in the past.



Next morning.

As usual, after a long bout of talk, I am dead on my feet but it was all most interesting and good fun.

So, I cannot add anything of interest to-day, and am sending this along by air so you may have it before you start off on your travels, again! It would be great fun to come and see you in Antigua, but until I have "set my house in order here" I cannot go anywhere. Not ill, just over burdened as a result of my own enthusiasms!

All best wishes to you, always,

Bm

Route 1 Box 24,  
Pass Christian, Miss., 39571 USA  
20 October 1965

Dear Wilson:

Frankly I do not know what to answer to your letter re the Meyer Medal and its handling, etc.

The only thing I know I can do, is to find out for you, the present address of Robert Cook, in D. C. or near by Maryland is that is the case. This I will attend to at once and write you again.

Frankly from all I have heard, and it is not much, the medal has been awarded curiously in the past, and the present award to Carl Erlanson, in ceremonies held at Purdue means nothing to me at all, re the how and why. I heard of this only through John Creech who is a poor letter writer at best, writing always too briefly and to me, here in this isolated spot, in a way that tells little.

I am totally out of touch with the inner doings of the American Horticultural Society. I must remain in that state for my own self preservation as I have many small duties that I feel I must complete and not leave to some one else to finish.

As I understand it, my first objection was to the way the fund was set up. If Meyer wanted it to go to the staff of old P. I., then I think it was only a little short of dishonest for DF to do what he did. But since that is now an accomplished fact, and the medal is minted, etc. the die cast and so on, it should be fine if any one could get the thing decently in order in its use. To me it is only one more example of the slipshod way in which dear DF mismanaged so many things that had to be cleared up after him! Heresy, doubtless, but deny it if you dare!!!!

Most certainly I would not agree to be on any committee for any future handling. Of that I can now be definitely final.

I'll write you soon again, meantime, bear with me!

*Sincerely  
Ben*

[Benjamin Morrison]

Antigua, Guatemala, 24 October 1965

Dear Ben:

Do you remember that Navy chaplain who said "Praise God and pass the ammunition?" Well, right down the street, at San Francisco, they have just fired six specially built bombs, and the Indians are working on the tamboes and the chirimias. All of which will not deter me from answering your letter of the 29th instant, for which I thank you; one reason being that I dont hear from you often enough (mea culpa, mea culpa!) and the other that I believe you would like to see that Meyer medal in good hands and bestowed upon worthy recipients. Apropos of this point, I never quite agreed with my colleagues in the Explorers Club about letting amateur explores fly the club flag when they scaled the heights of the Volcan de Agua, elevation 12,313 feet, which I can see from the window of this my little office, and which I have scaled with great eclat no less than five times, usually on horseback. Invariably I made one and the same mistake: I didnt have myself photographed planting the flag of the Explorers Club at the very summit. To prevent misunderstanding, I must add that the Explorers Club no longer permits this sort of thing. It happened in those dear dead days, fortunately beyond recall, when the Club fell into hands of those lads who went on safari into the jungles of the Hilton hotel compound at Tingo Maria.

But let us return to our muttons: Why dont we get the Meyer medal into hands which will be able to finance it (which I understand the Am Genetic Assn can not) and which will give it prestige when it is bestowed? I would like to see it on the basis of the George Robert White Medal of Honour of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, for example. Dont you go along with me in this? But how to do? It has seemed to me that the Fairchild Tropical Garden is the ideal place. Can you suggest a better? Among the sponsors of that Garden are some pretty fine and distinguished people. If they sponsor a medal, it will mean something in the horticultural world. Which isnt saying that there are not other institutions which are not sponsored by fine and distinguished people.

In short, however, the Meyer medal really belongs to the heirs of the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction, on which be peace and the blessings of Allah. Frank Meyer left One Thousand Dollars to the members of the Office - those people who were members at that time - for them to spend "having a good time" if I recall correctly the terms of his Will, and I believe I do. He was thinking of his colleagues, those people with whom he had worked and whom he loved.

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Now here is my first point of disagreement with you. As you say, Meyer wanted the money to go to the staff of SPI. We accepted it, all of us, and enthusiastically agreed not to spend on a joy ride or something of that sort, but to create the Meyer medal. You cannot deny that we had a right to do this, nor do I believe you will say that sentimentally we were wrong. You are right in saying that we left the matter in the hands of David Fairchild, and I agree that we left the matter of recipients of the medal, during his lifetime, practically in his hands. But can you point to many recipients, except myself, who were unworthy? I can't. I do not recall them all, but I do recall old Robertson-Proschowsky of Nice, and C.P. Taft of California, and several others. These men were real plant introducers. Of course there were many others, equally worthy, who did not receive the medal. David Fairchild did not live long enough.

Now to the practical aspects of the present problem. I can see that legal aspects may come into the picture. Does the American Genetic Association have any document in its possession which gives it legal possession of the Meyer medal, and legal authority to bestow it without consulting those persons, their heirs and assigns forever, to whom Meyer left the One Thousand dollars? I must confess that I never saw any escritura publica covering this point. I doubt that there ever was one. Am I right in thinking that if simply used the money - with the approval of the rest of us members of the staff - to have the medal designed and the die made. Here, I believe, is where Robert Cook must come in, and I thank you for offering to get me his address. I wrote you that I had written him at the Cosmos Club, but presumably he has not yet received my letter. I am sure he will not object to clarifying the picture, in so far as he is able to do so.

If there are no documents in existence covering this matter, it seems to me (not being a lawyer, gracias a Dios, I may be wrong) that those of us who were members of SPI at the time Meyer's will was probated (and I don't even know that this was ever done, but I assume it must have been) have a vested interest in the Meyer medal, that is, possession of the die, and I think also, in the right to name the person or institution authorized to award it. As I wrote you, we do not need to worry about the financial end. If the American Genetic Association has any funds left out of the original amount dedicated to striking medals from time to time, it must be small, and we would not bother to go through the courts to have this turned over to any other institution. Perhaps the American Genetic Association needs it worse than we do, anyway.

I am not interested in how this medal has been handled in the past. I am interested in seeing it kept alive, to honor the memory of my colleague Frank N. Meyer, and stimulate interest in the work of Plant Introduction by rewarding the efforts of those who deserve it. On this last point there will be room for disagreement, as there has been regarding the awarding of medals in the past - apart from the Meyer medal. The best way to avoid unfairness and favoritism, in this connection, is to have the medal in the hands of a group of people who are too well informed and too unselfish to make serious mistakes. Personally I do not believe any group of people is better qualified than the Board of Trustees of the Fairchild Tropical Garden.

Ever faithfully yours,

Antigua, 28 October 1965

Mr B Y Morrison  
Pass Christian, Miss.

Dear Ben:

Well, whaddya think? Jim Kempton mit wife, daughter Tini and husband blew in here and had lunch with me yesterday and I seized the opportunity to bring up the problem of the Meyer medal.

As a pretty active member of the Am Genetic Assn at the time the medal was set up, and possessing a better memory than este su humilde servidor, has clarified several points.

He says the amount of money left by Meyer was not \$1000 but \$800. That Spicer Simpson was paid \$500 for designing the medal. He does not know how much the die cost but there was enough left to strike a few medals, and to leave a little in the bank, the earnings of which would strike another medal de cuando en cuando. You probably know all these details as well as Jim does, or better. He thinks we might as well forget about any sum which still remains in the hands of the Am Genetic.

He seems to go along with you in feeling that the whole matter was very informally handled. I agree with him that the selection of recipients was left entirely in the hands of DF. But he feels, as I do, that DF intended to give it to men who had done pretty creditable field work in plant introduction. He thinks this policy should be continued. He does not think the medal should be given for purely administrative work, but that it is not necessary that a man should have gone on long exploration trips to merit the award. The case of C P Taft in California would be an example.

He does not think the Am Genetic Assn would object to placing the matter in the hands of the Fairchild Tropical Garden. All that has to be done is to turn over the die to the latter. We now have to find out who has the authority to do this. He thinks it could probably be handled through Robert Cook.

Let's get this matter straightened out, Ben. In my opinion there is not better institution to handle it than the FTG. I would like to see the die turned over to the latter, along with a statement from the proper person in the Am Genetic Assn, outlining the objectives to be kept in mind when an award is made. Though perhaps there is no one fully qualified to do this. I don't think it is really necessary, because I am sure a few of us old timers, like Robert Cook, Jim Kempton, yourself and Knowles could indoctrinate John Popenoe sufficiently.

Will you go along with me?

Siempre su afmo amigo y SS,



Antigua, Guatemala, 24 October 1965

Dear Ben:

Do you remember that Navy chaplain who said "Praise God and pass the ammunition?" Well, right down the street, at San Francisco, they have just fired six specially built bombs, and the Indians are working on the tamboes and the chirimias. All of which will not deter me from answering your letter of the 29th instant, for which I thank you; one reason being that I don't hear from you often enough (mea culpa, mea culpa!) and the other that I believe you would like to see that Meyer medal in good hands and bestowed upon worthy recipients. Apropos of this point, I never quite agreed with my colleagues in the Explorers Club about letting amateur explorers fly the club flag when they scaled the heights of the Volcan de Agua, elevation 12,313 feet, which I can see from the window of this my little office, and which I have scaled with great éclat no less than five times, usually on horseback. Invariably I made one and the same mistake: I didn't have myself photographed planting the flag of the Explorers Club at the very summit. To prevent misunderstanding, I must add that the Explorers Club no longer permits this sort of thing. It happened in those dear dead days, fortunately beyond recall, when the Club fell into hands of those lads who went on safari into the jungles of the Hilton hotel compound at Tingo Maria.

But let us return to our muttons: Why don't we get the Meyer medal into hands which will be able to finance it (which I understand the Am Genetic Assn can not) and which will give it prestige when it is bestowed? I would like to see it on the basis of the George Robert White Medal of Honour of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, for example. Don't you go along with me in this? But how to do? It has seemed to me that the Fairchild Tropical Garden is the ideal place. Can you suggest a better? Among the sponsors of that Garden are some pretty fine and distinguished people. If they sponsor a medal, it will mean something in the horticultural world. Which isn't saying that there are not other institutions which are not sponsored by fine and distinguished people.

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