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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.

Washington, D.C.

May 28, 1957

Dear Doctor Popenoe:

The announcement of your retirement has just been received. Congratulations and best wishes for a long and useful and peaceful life.

I know that you will never be content to just sit back and watch the world go by, but will continue to help others to a knowledge of the agricultural sciences.

What monuments you have given to the world in your books, your agricultural explorations, and in the many, many plants you have introduced and that have become established in the world's economy.

The hundreds of friends you
have made along the way will
always want to keep in touch
with all you do. With them,
let me wish you many happy,
interesting, and rewarding years!

Sincerely yours,

May M. Blaine

5425 Conn Av
Wash 15 DC

You surely deserve and have
earned some leisure, and it will
be nice to think of you and
Mrs. Papenoe passing the days
in your beautiful home in
Antigua. What a wonderful
time you can have and how
much you can enjoy the visits
of your children and grand-
children. No doubt, too, you
will have opportunity to
travel when you want to
without a thought of having
to return to any certain place
at any certain time. If re-
tirement affects you as it
has me, you will be a free
and happy spirit. The only
fly in the ointment is that
time passes all too swiftly.

apt. 2-D
4 Chester Place
Staten Island,
New York 10304
December 10, 1965

Dear Doctor Popenoe:

Did you receive my letter of October 8, sent airmail and with several enclosures I should be very sorry to lose. I do hope they reached you safely and that you are making progress toward getting the custody of the Meyer Medal transferred to the Fairchild Tropical Garden.

Unfortunately, my health is such that I cannot go to Washington and try to rouse some enthusiasm for the project.

Please do let me know how you have made out.

Sincerely
May Blaine

Antigua, Guatemala, 11 December 1965

Miss May M Blaine
Apartment 2-D
4 Chester Place
Staten Island, New York 10304

Dear Miss Blaine:

At long last I am prepared to thank you for all the trouble you took in connection with this Meyer Medal problem. Especially for sending me all the correspondence, which I return herewith.

I finally got an answer to a letter I addressed to Robert Cook at the Cosmos. Ben Morrison was also good enough to get me Bob's address, which is the Population Reference Bureau, 1755 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Robert does not seem much interested in the matter. I also had a letter from Ben, who thinks the Meyer Medal was handled very informally and doesn't have any suggestions.

Then, just by luck, Jim Kempton blew in here for a few days. He, along with O.F. Cook and G.N. Collins were very active in the American Genetic Assn. at the time the medal was established - as you are well aware. He was much interested in seeing the medal go into the hands of the Fairchild Tropical Garden, where it really belongs, and wrote a good letter to Prof. Ralph Singleton, at the University of Virginia. He understands that Prof. Singleton is now the active man in the Am. Genetic Assn. I have not heard from Jim, as to whether or not he had a reply from Prof. Singleton.

I am going up to Florida in a few days and will put the whole matter in the hands of John Popenoe, who is now Director of the Fairchild Tropical Garden. I shall be in Florida for several months and we will work on it together.

There are several points in connection with this problem regarding which I am not clear. Others regarding which both you and I are clear. I was Acting in Charge of the Office at the time we received the bequest from Frank Meyer, and I am quite clear that it was "for the members of the staff" to spend "on a good time". I think you are clear about this, too. It was original suggestion, backed by Peter Bisset, that we use the money to establish some sort of a memorial to Frank Meyer, David Fairchild, when he returned to the Office, approved, and he paid Spicer-Simpson (Jim Kempton Says) \$500 to make the die for the medal. The rest of the money was put in the bank to be used for having medals made from time to time. Bob Cook says the amount now remaining is very small, (I quote) it accumulates something like \$1.24 a year".

What is not clear to me is this: were any formal arrangements made with the American Genetic Assn. regarding the bestowal of this medal - who was to make the choice of recipients? You and I and the rest of the staff left this in the hands of Dr Fairchild, didn't we? And were happy to do so.

Ben thinks the whole arrangement with the American Genetic Assn. was "very informal". I don't recall ever having seen any formal document covering it, do you? If there was none, then it seems to me the surviving members of the Staff, those who were members at the time the arrangement was made with the American Genetic Assn. (which you will recall was on the basis that it would be difficult for any branch of the Dept of Agriculture to award the medal) have what might be called a vested or proprietary interest. But if the matter is, as we believe, on an informal basis with the Association, I feel that all we need is to convince them that the Fairchild Tropical Garden is the place to have the medal held and the awards made. I am sure you agree in this.

I suggested to Ben that this program be carried out, and a

Committee be appointed by the Trustees of the Garden to make the awards, along the lines originally intended when we of the Staff established the Meyer Medal. (Incidentally, Ben wrote that he did not care to serve on such a Committee). It might at the start consist of several survivors of the Fairchild days, who would elect new members as the old ones pass out of the picture. What do you think of this?

I feel that the original intent was to award the medal to people, men or women, who had done "outstanding work in the field of plant introduction". Robertson-Prowschowsky of France had never fought the jungles, but he had brought together a remarkable collection of subtropical plants at Nice. C.P. Taft of California had never travelled at all, but he had introduced many avocados and other economics. I don't think it was our idea to give it for purely administrative work; rather, it should go to real Plant Explorers and Plant Introducers. And I think, in our time, it did.

When I get up to Florida we shall see what step is to be taken next. With old-time regards, as our beloved Chief used to sign his letters,

Cordially yours,

Wilson Popenoe