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5th Floor, Hunt Library
Carnegie Mellon University
4909 Frew Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890
Contact: Archives
Telephone: 412-268-2434
Email: huntinst@andrew.cmu.edu
Web site: www.huntbotanical.org

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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.

Antigua, 21 Oct 1960

Mr Don Fiestar,
Fina Chocola.

Dear Don:

Hugh Craggs was here yesterday, talking about coffee problems and orchids and anthuriums and so on - Hugh is a real horticulturist. He says he has had some correspondence with you but has never met you personally, and I told him I would write to ask if he and I might come down to look over your work and talk with you about varieties, selection, vegetative propagation and coffee culture in general. I told him you are by far the best authority on vegetative propagation of coffee, a matter in which he is much interested.

Would you be good enough to drop me a line or send me a telegram telling what days of the week you are pretty certain to be at Chocola - not naming any particular days but I have the idea that you may come up to the City over the week-ends some times. If you dont, you are the only finquero in Guatemala who doesnt. Hugh and I would eat at Cocalas or San Antonio and drop in on you early in the afternoon; if you have lots of vacant space we might even stay overnight, but since our wives might come with us I believe we would go on to that new motel beyond Mazatenango which they say is good.

Not knowing your exact postoffice address I am sending a copy to the INA at La Aurora and one to San Antonio Such. When you reply, give me your telegraphic address, please, so we can advise you a day in advance of our coming.

Best regards to all of you.

Sincerely,

UNITED STATES OPERATIONS MISSION

THE INSTITUTE OF INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
AMERICAN EMBASSY

GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA, C. A.

November 1, 1960

Dr. Wilson Popenoe
Antigua Guatemala

Dear Pop.:

Just got your letter of the 21st and was glad to here that you haven't been of to Barnio or some other distant world. I see Jorge Benitez once in a while and he still keeps informing me of your travels.

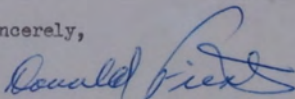
Look Doc you know that you and anyone you bring are always welcome at our diggings anytime that you can come. I am here almost all the time except Mondays and possibly Tuesdays. I try to stay away from the city as much as possible.

As for seeing my work, thats a different story since I don't have any. I am one of t hose advisors and here they aren't taking much these days.

I'll enjoy hav ing you here to talk over some ideas on a fruit program that ICA is proposing for Guatemala. It looks as if at long last they are going to give it the attention that it deserves.

Looking forward to having you, Helen, and the Craigs with us soon. Incidentally you can also consider staying in the station hotel here if you wish.

Sincerely,



Gainesville, Florida
19 April 1965

Mr Donald Fiester
AID, Guatemala, Guatemala.

Dear Don:

While up here I have taken advantage of the opportunity to discuss the problems the Escuela Nacional de Agricultura with four of the leading men in the Rockefeller Foundation and with people here at Gainesville, where, as you know, there is much interest in the agricultural development of Central America.

I have made it clear in all cases, that I was not asking for financial assistance; that would be up to the Guatemalan government, if it should later decide to do this. For the time has not yet come when this could be done, in any case. It is clear that the school will have to be put on its feet, prepared to merit the confidence of any outside aid, before we can do anything more.

What I gather from my discussions is this: Barcena should be taken out of *párrafos* to an extent which will assure continuity of its program and operation in the future. This does not mean that it should be made autonomous. The idea seems to be that the government should appoint a Junta de Regentes, composed of three to five outstanding men who are not in the political field, such men as the late Pedro Cofiño, for example. Under the Minister of Agriculture, these men would have the authority to supervise the program and see that it was kept alive, without regard to political changes.

It seems to me this could be done. I believe there are plenty of fine men in Guatemala who would be glad to take part in such an organization.

Of course, even before that step could be taken (I believe) the



AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
UNITED STATES A. I. D. MISSION TO GUATEMALA
AMERICAN EMBASSY
GUATEMALA CITY, GUATEMALA, C. A.

November 18, 1965

Dr. Wilson Popenoe
Antigua, Guatemala

Dear Doc:

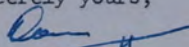
Please excuse me for the last-minute change in plans which prohibited our attending your luncheon in Antigua.

It wasn't until after you had left town that I found that I would be needed here to take one of our Washington visitors to see the Minister of Agriculture. In addition, I found out at the last minute that Dr. Adams, who was scheduled to talk with the Chief of Government and the Cabinet on his interpretation of the rural development situation, was expected to use the entire morning for this purpose. As a result, since I did not know when Dr. Adams would finish, and realizing that I would have to leave Antigua somewhat before 2 o'clock, I thought it best that we decline your wonderful invitation. I called Mrs. Lau before they left on Thursday morning and hope she conveyed our regrets to you early enough in the morning so that you didn't prepare an excess of food. After talking to Milton Lau and Ralph Vorhies, I was even sadder that we couldn't attend since both seemed to have had a wonderful time and enjoyed very very much the chance to visit with you again.

I hope, Doc, that the next time that you come to town, we can arrange ahead of time to have you and Sr. Becera of the Northern Zone of the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences get together and exchange ideas on the revamping of the Bárcena School program. This problem really needs attention by someone, and I am sure that if the two of you can discuss this difficult situation, you'll be able to come up with both suggestions for a director and a method of operation so that meaningful improvements can be made in their curriculum and methods of operation. Please let me know when you will be in town so that I can arrange this get-together.

Again, our sincere apologies for not having lunch with you last Thursday. I hope you will forgive us this time, and that we may have a chance to get together again in the near future.

Sincerely yours,


Donald Fiester

DRF/bbk

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20523

March 12, 1971

Dr. Wilson Popenoe
Antigua
Guatemala

Dear Doc:

I apologize for not having written you since returning from my last trip to Guatemala to find out if there had been any progress in your assisting with the Guatemala fruit program but I just haven't had a chance to get to it.

I have been asked to go to California Polytechnic College to participate in a seminar on "International Agriculture" being given there next month and am scheduled to give the closing talk. I don't have any idea at this point exactly what I'll be saying but I am going to have to put something together that conveys some feel for the changing economic and sociological pressures on agriculture in Latin America and the increasing concern over employment, income distribution and similar factors, as well as productivity. Any burning thoughts you may have in this direction would be appreciated.

While at Cal Poly, Doc, I thought I would, if you have no objection, offer them for safekeeping in the horticultural department the piece of wood that you gave me (through Milton Lau) from the original Fuerte avacado tree. I have enjoyed having this immensely as a memento on my desk at home but frankly Doc, more and more I feel that this is a rather selfish end. I believe it would be much more interesting and valuable if it could be placed somewhere where it would get greater attention and instill interest in horticulture by a broader group of young people. I think that words are not necessary to express to you how much I have appreciated receiving it and how much I have enjoyed having it but at the same time I would be just as appreciative of it at Cal Poly. Would you have any objection if I gave it to the Pomology Department at Cal Poly for safekeeping as an institutional memento of a major discovery in the horticultural field important to California and Mexico? I hope you will understand my thoughts in suggesting this kind of a donation. I will give it to them in our mutual names for I would want you to have the recognition and pleasure of donating it to them, if you have no objection.

With this donation in mind I wonder if it would be asking too much of you if you could give me a short letter for the College giving a little of the history of the Fuerte avacado, its discovery in Mexico and also a few words on this piece of wood as to how and when you secured it which could serve as a basis for them to document this historical moment so important to California agriculture. If you could do that before I went there in early April I would appreciate it (my

meeting there is between April 6 and 8) but at the same time if you can't do it that soon I'll give the wood sample to them if I hear from you in the meantime and tell them that an explanatory note will be coming from you later on.

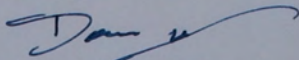
As you may or may not know, I have had several contacts with Dr. Catherine Coolidge on the Escuela Agricola Panamericana during the last couple of months. She contacted me through Dr. Scrimshaw on the question of the transfer of certain responsibilities from the Escuela to the University of Honduras. In a strictly private context I became rather concerned by it all since it looked to me as if with little effort it would be possible for the University of Honduras to take over the school lock, stock and barrel, something which I would look at with considerable concern because of what the school stands for - the last independent U.S. private company philanthropic contribution of major significance in the agricultural field in Latin America - as well as a symbol of the United States assistance from other than government sources. The school had such a reputation and you and Bob have done such an excellent job that I would hate to see it jeopardized by raising it up "to the standards of the University of Honduras". I think it safely can be said that thanks to Dr. Coolidge this kind of a takeover didn't happen and probably will not in the future. She also asked about candidates for the Board of Directors of the school and I could think of no one better than Arturo Falla. I understand he has now been placed on the Board, a fact that frankly makes me delighted since he knows what it is to farm and can keep the Board of Directors from becoming too academic and hold their feet solidly on the ground in the Latin American situation. I don't know if you agree with me on these points (I'd like your comments). I still feel very strongly attached to the school and feel that every effort should be made to continue it in the manner in which you started it. It could stand possibly a little greater emphasis on farm management and similar simple administrative operations in farming but I definitely don't think the school should be headed toward much higher academic levels at this time. There are too many other schools at the academic level in L.A. (17 at the graduate level alone) and if Zamarano should pull out of the practical training area it is going to be a real blow to getting something practical done in rural agriculture. Personally, I would much rather see the school doubled in enrollment than adding any more grades on to it. As far as I am concerned, by doubling enrollment you wouldn't have to increase the staff very much in order to handle the increased load but the school would turn out a much larger number of students of high caliber than from other institutions that have good vocational background at a smaller per graduate cost. Frankly it bothers me that the school has not increased its enrollment since I was there while its physical plant has almost trippled in quality. After having visited other Latin American institutions it is almost sacrilegious that such an excellent plant is only being utilized by 180 students.

I am hoping to be back in Guatemala in May and will look forward to trying to see you at that time. I talked to Vice-Minister Martinez personally before I left Guatemala on my last trip on getting

you involved in providing technical assistance for the fruit program. He was delighted you wanted to help and said that he was going to call you in and ask you to do a study of the avacado program as a means of breaking you into the overall technical advisory assistance you are so capable of doing there. I wonder what happened on this? Were you ever called in? I'll take this subject up personally when I get back there if nothing has really happened.

Again, my very best regards to you, wife and family. Excuse my rambling but I had a number of things that I have been saving up to get off my chest to you. Take care of yourself and please write soon.

Sincerely,



Donald Fiester, Chief
Agro-Industrial Development Division
Office of Development Resources
Bureau for Latin America

Antigua, Guatemala, 23 March 1971

Mr Don Fiester, Chief
Agre-Industrial Development Division
USAID, Washington D C 20523.

Dear Don:

Yrs of March 12 rec'd and contents noted. You should have put the second paragraph at the end of the letter, because when I read it and realised what a problem you had laid out for me, I almost gave up and went to bed. You want my burning thoughts on economic and sociological pressures on agriculture in Latin America, and the increasing concern over employment, income distribution and similar factors, including productivity.

Well, to cover all this you are going to talk as long as Castro talks every time he opens his mouth in Habana, and you will notice that his talks haven't yet made an economic paradise out of Cuba. Now here is my advise to you:

Mother said Willy, lay off the vanilly. You lay off the economists and the sociologists. They have got you whipped before you start. As for income distribution, how you goin to distribute something you aint got? Now you come to productivity. Here you can get your feet on the ground, and tell them lo que sigue:

Dont pay any attention to Bill Paddock's Starvation in 1975. Bill has done nothing but play to the galleries. He is far, far from right in saying that tropical American soils are no good.

Soil - productive land - is the first thing to talk about. We've got it, but here and there it needs drainage, and everywhere we need fertilizer to maintain that productivity you are going to talk about. As population pressure becomes greater, we are going to be forced to get right down to hard work. John Deere cant save us on these Guatemalan

mountainsides, which is not saying that I am not for mechanized agriculture. But look at the map of Latin America. I mean a topographical map. Pretty soon there won't be anything left to mechanize. What interests me, and I am serious about it, how are we going to get people these days to use the hillsides? Of course the Guatemalan Indians do it, but they have fine volcanic soils on which to operate. How are we going to duplicate what the Quichua did in those Andean valleys?

Land is the basis. The next thing is hard work. Now, of course you will say we've got to talk about land distribution. We are right against that. There is a big program for the Peten right now. If governments do not use a lot of intelligence, if they do not have some very competent administrators, the agrarian reform movements, the colonization programs, cannot work. You can't take people out of overcrowded towns and solve their problems by giving them forty acres and a mule. I don't know how to handle this problem, except through well organized, well administered, well financed colonization projects, - if we are talking about large undeveloped tracts of which there are plenty left in Latin America. But in many cases you have to face the problem of drainage and of irrigation, and this cannot be left to the small farmer.

Now we come down to economics. We have got the land colonized, we have given the small farmers large scale projects of drainage and irrigation, and we have tried to teach them how to grow crops. We are going to help them with good seed and fertilizers, the latter by paying for it when they have harvested the crop. But you know better than I do, because you have been closer to the situation down here, farmers have two big problems. First, if they produce more than they can eat, and this is not really a problem, who is going to buy their product for cash? A few years ago the government of Salvador carried

out a fine corn program (You remember that our colleague Ben Birdsall was in the picture). I talk with the Minister of Agriculture. He was enthusiastic about what they were getting - the big yields. Six months later I met him in Gainesville and he said, "What are we going to do with our surplus corn? We must sell it for cash. We can not give it away, like you gringos do. And the other problem which worries agriculturists down here so much: Our costs of production are increasing. Prices in world markets have not increased enough to make it possible for us to pay the higher prices you ask for your tractors and other things we buy from you. You should pay us better prices for our products.

Well, Don, there are your burning thoughts for you. We will make more progress talking about avocados. I am enclosing a rather lengthy memo for you, regarding that piece of Fuerte wood. Cut it down in length, add more to it, or do anything else you wish to do. I think it is a fine idea to put this piece of Fuerte in a glass case at Cal Pely and give the students a lecture on Fruit Varieties - of course you will have to explain that you are talking about cultivars. Confound it all, I have been working for fifty years to teach folks to call them variedades instead of clases and now I have to switch - but I won't do it. We don't have no equivalent for cultivars in Spanish.

As for our beloved Zamorano, I believe we are getting out of the woods. I have never been in favor of our becoming a protégé of the Universidad Nacional de Honduras, adding a fourth year to our program, and inevitably (altho they will not admit it) killing the boys' interest in milking cows and plowing corn and grafting orange trees. We have made absolutely no progress, in seven years, toward getting our endowment fund increased to the extent necessary to finance the four year program. We can't even pay our operating costs from year

to year, on the present three year vocational basis. I have wanted to stick to the program we had in your day, which involved giving the most promising graduates becas to go north and get profes ional degrees, some as high as Ph D. I dont think all our graduates want to be professionals, nor should be, but it must be admittd they would all like to have the right to be called Ingeniere. Just like I enjoy being called Dector, though the Good Lord knows I dont deserve it. I agree with you that we could well put more emphasis on farm management. And I want to see more training in irr gation and drainage than we are giving now. The farm management art is going to be difficult. It is pretty hard to learn farm management without managing a farm. In past years, quite a few big farmers who have employed our boys have told me that they should know more about farm management when they leave Zamorano. I am not sure we can do much about this.

I am not doing much to help with the fruit produc ion program. The deciduous fruit part is making what I consider quite satisfactory progress under Guillermo Arráaga. Maximo Godines wants more money for the avocado program but that is not my business. I am aseser técnico, and all I can say is that I dont think there will be a profitable outlet for the production of even 1000 hectares of avocados. Where, and in what form? As for deciduous fruits, we are in no danger of growing too many apples, pears and peaches - of the right varieties. The problem we are not really facing is making good orchardists out of good milpa operators. But we dont have extension agents well qualified for this. I guess we will have to learn the hard way, unless the government will pick out a few really good men and send them to the Yakima valley for apples or north Florida for peaches or California for avocados. I wish some money would be put into that sort of program. Maybe you could help.

Just a few last comments about EAP. I am delighted that you suggested Arturo Falla for the Board. In the first place, it was our aim from the start, to have a member of the "Junta de Regentes" from each Central American country. Some of us have the same thing in mind for the Board, which has supplanted the Junta de Regentes and the old Board of Directors, which to all intents and purposes was Sam Zemurray, Jeff Coolidge and Walter Turnbull. We did not have a Guatemalan on the present Board, and a better one than Arturo Falla could not have been chosen.

I am glad you prefer to see EAP increase its enrollment rather than aim toward more white collar técnicos. We have increased the enrollment to 200, from the 160 it was in your and my day. I believe we could go to 250, but not until we have money in sight to pay for 200, which we ain't got at present. Through all my time I stuck to the doctrine that you can't teach vocational agriculture on a mass production basis. I think we could handle 250 as well as 200, with nothing but another dormitory, and I am sure AID would give us that. But 50 more students would increase our overall costs considerably. How I wish they would let down the bars up there in Washington, so that AID could help us carry the overall load. I believe the jefes, you included, feel that EAP is a good investment of US funds, when we are talking about agricultural development of Latin America. I'll bet you can't find a Latin American who doesn't feel that way.

Enough for today - and many a day. I do hope I can see you when you come this way again.

Faithfullyyyours,

Wilson Popenee

THE FUERTE AVOCADO

Pomology is full of surprises. Hybrids, mutations, and chance seedlings. There is romance and interest in such fruits as the Navel orange, the strawberry, and the Fuerte avocado.

In 1900 avocado growing was just beginning to receive attention in the United States. First in Florida, then in California. The West India Gardens, a small but struggling commercial nursery operated by F.O. Popenoe at Altadena, decided to send a man to Mexico, to hunt for better avocados than any of the 100 or 150 seedlings then bearing in southern California. Carl B. Schmidt, a young man who had grown up in Mexico and then had gone through Cornell University, was chosen for the job.

Carl visited half a dozen regions in the Mexican highlands where there were hundreds, even thousands, of seedling avocados, every one different from the other, as is true of most seedling fruit trees. To the casual observer, maybe not greatly different, but when propagated vegetatively and tested commercially you get some surprises.

Atlixco, in the State of Puebla, was famous for its "aguacates". Seedlings of the Mexican race were abundant, and some way or other, perhaps several hundred years ago, Guatemalan avocados had been brought to that fertile valley. Natural hybrids between the two races were abundant. Budwood of some twenty seedlings, Guatemalans and hybrids, was sent to Altadena in November 1911.

Within a few years two Atlixco varieties, which had been named Fuerte and Puebla (the name Fuerte was given because it was such a strong grower in the nursery), became promising commercial avocados in California. Later, Puebla almost dropped out of sight, commercially speaking, but Fuerte became the world's most important commercial