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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.

yr letter brought me back to the old days in California - over 40 years ago! -

Fornaci
Tripoli
Libia
(North Africa)

24. 4. 1955

My dear Wilson,

Thanks for yr very
welcome & newsy letter -
Indeed ^{though} it is very many years
since we met, it only seems
to be just a while ago that
we saw you for the first
time in Santa Barbara -
Those old days are very

present with me, & my life
there with my father and
'the boys'!

In yr letter you tell me
of yr visit to Santa Barbara
& yr not able to place the
old Haly place on Pedregosa
& corner of Laguna. There
was a row of *Cocos plumosa*
on the sidewalk of Pedregosa

Thank you for yr very interesting
publication of 'Fruicicultura

Centro Americano' though
in Spanish, still I can
make out the sense -

I have read what you say
about the citrus, & perhaps
it may interest you to
know, that the 'Late Valencia'
probes the most resisting to
the hot desert winds - The
first budwood came from
Riverside over 30 years ago -

We also have growing date
palms from seed from

Yuma, which reached my
father, just a few days
before he past away in 1926.
They began bearing about
10 years ago, & some bear
very good fruit every year, though the
greater part are males; but
our arabs appreciate them,
for it saves them climbing
up the high palms in the
oasis -

Our work is practically all
the government furnishing

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our nursery we furnished over
a million plants -

My cousin Cesare Ricotti, has
a citrus orchard of 1 hundred
ettari, & has planted a 100
thousand 'gums' - Really
'gums' are the best investment
in this country - Pity I am
too old to try, & have not either
the means, or I'd do it -
even if I am 82 - It would
be a good thing for those
that came after -
It is interesting what you

tell me of the bamboos,
here I have growing, *B. vulgaris*,
Thouarsi, which is different
from *B. vulgaris variegata*, the
stems being very much straighter
& the canes have thicker wood -
Then *D. latiflorus* that Franco
brought from Santa Barbara
25 years ago, & *D. strictus*
from seed from Darjeeling
received in 1924 - It is, though,
very different from the
specimen that grew at
Montarivosa that was so

all kind of trees, for a song,
comprising olives & budded
orange trees - Of these, though,
there is a demand for special
guaranteed varieties label &
the 'Sweet Vanilla' which ripens
early and is never tart,
I do wish & hope when next
summer you come to Italy
you may find the time
to hop over & see what the
Italians managed to perform
in the time we were here

During the first ten years
not much was accomplished,
because of the first great War
& rebelling of the whole country,
but after 20 or better 25 a
great push was made in
bringing the country up to
date in the way of roads,
schools and hospitals, as
well as planting thousands
of etars to olives, almonds,
vineyards, & reforesting the
dunes, & woods of acalyptus.
In those first years with

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very graceful - These have
zig-zag canes which in age
become completely black!
I have also the *Ynara Tagnara*
of South America, which
was brought over by a rich
Brazilian Italian, years ago
(about 20) & which I was
fortunate to have - & it grows
well; only people have
found it makes good
fishing rods, & if I had not
put a stop, the plants
would have died out - The

italians as a rule have very little knowledge of plants or love of flowers - just think, I am considered an authority on plants!!!

I only know those that I have seen really or in pictures. Fortunately for me I have a good memory in the past, though I often forget in passing from one room to the other what it was I was going for -

If you came, you might identify a plant which I

know my father must have had under a wrong name, here at Tripoli as well as in Santa Barbara Artocarpus integrifolia. The leaves look something alike, I remember a plant similar at Montaroso - The plant growing I had never seen flower or fruit but this winter to my great surprise I have found a seedling growing spontaneously under a Dorychia, so it can't be anyway an artocarpus which is absolutely tropical -

I have just looked up 'gamble'
in 'Indian Bambus' for D.
Strictus, there it says the canes
turn yellow with age, + must
be straight for they use them
for lance stems, masts etc; whilst
these are black + zig-zag -

Forgive this long digmarole
+ thank again for your
long - Please remember
to yr wife, though I hope
to have the pleasure of
knowing her + see you again
in Africa - There are places
from Sicily ^{Palermitani} + from
Tunis - With my sincerest + kind
regards
yrs truly
Ernestine

ING. FRANCO F. FENZI
PIAZZETTA BAGNASCO 7 - PALERMO
TELEFONO 17613

Palermo, Italy
May 28, 1958

Dear Wilson:

Well, well! I am dazed and completely amazed by the news you are in this part of the world.

The Hotel is the "Esperia Hotel, Via Nazionale 22".
Besides the Borsalino hat you may remember the fish-soup in Trastevere!

In Florence Guido Corsini passed away last year - very sad - cancer of the lung. I have lots of relatives there but those I am intimate with, are on their properties outside Florence. The Agrarian reform keeps them on the land most of the time now. A good friend in Florence is Prof. Abetti, astronomer, director of the observatory of Arcetri. A very active and interesting man. Please go and see him. Some years ago, returning from Mt. Palomar, he brought to Florence a few Fuerte fruits from Pasadena, planted the seeds and had a tree blooming and setting fruit in a sheltered place near the observatory. (It is still there if it has'nt died after the freeze of two years ago).

Right now it does'nt seem at all likely I shall be in Rome during June as I am tied-up with business that requires my presence here, but I do hope you may arrange to come to Palermo, even for a short visit.

The Sicily climate is ideal for Avocados although in most places the winds that don't bother lemons very much would be very harmful for them. There are several bearing trees around Palermo but only one has fruit of really good quality. (I am trying to propagate it). The bud came from California and the fruit looks like a large Fuerte. Some years ago a friend had some restaurants in New York save Avocado seeds and so gathered several hundred which I turned over to the Botanical Garden here to grow, but they did not have much luck - kept them too wet. In the meantime we set several buds on an old sterile tree and now two kinds are bearing on it. Those that have tasted the fruit don't like it and this makes it difficult to create an interest to plant even on an experimental scale. I have given away trees here and there and some are beginning to bloom now.

I am getting off this letter right away so you will have it before leaving Spain. I take it for granted you and Helen will really decide to come here and when you arrive in Rome, please telegraph me when you will reach Palermo.

As ever yours,

FRANCO

Rancho California, Almuñecar (Granada)
España. 11 August 1958

Ing. Franco P. Fenzi,
Piazzetta Bagnasco 7, Palermo, Italy.

Dear Franco:

I wrote you that I received your interesting letter of 28 May and was sorry that we could not get over to Palermo to see you and the avocados. In your letter you gave me a number of interesting data re avocados in Sicily and even in Italy. I am now working up a paper on avocados around the Mediterranean and want to include as much information as possible. I got a lot of data in Israel where they are really going to town, so far as avocados and a lot of other fruits are concerned - mangos and bananas and apples and peaches and plums. A fine lot of enthusiastic and hard working chaps, with real devotion to The Cause because they dont get much in the way of salaries.

Now, I wonder if you could give me a memorandum, which I will include in my general paper with due credit to you, regarding the following points:

Do you know anything about what has been done with avocados on the Italian Riviera. It seems to me I have heard something about avocados at Ventimiglia but I have no recent information, and probably you dont wither.

I remember your father once told me an avocado tree, Mexican, had been growing in Rome.

You mention the ones at Florence. You probably dont know anything more than you told me in your letter, but you might mention this again in your memo.

Did your father or your sister Ernestina ever do anything with avocados in Libya and what came of their experiments?

And finally, a few more details regarding avocados in Sicily. Such a memorandum would be of much interest in connection with the report I plan to publish in the Yearbook of the California Avocado Society next year, and I will greatly appreciate anything you give me.

Helen and I are leaving next week for the Canary Islands, to see what they are doing with avocados in that region. We will go to Madeira if we can make it, but I can get little information here about steamers from Tenerife to Madeira. We will come back here, spend a few weeks more in Spain, and then head northward, to pick up a new Volkswagen in Stuttgart, do a bit of touring, and probably sail home with a banana boat from Rotterdam.

Please address me as at the head of this letter. We join in old time regards and all good wishes.

Sincerely,

October 29, 1959

Ing. Franco Fenzi
Piazzetta Bagnesco 7
Palermo, Sicilia, Italy

Dear Sir:

With the compliments of Dr. Wilson Popenoe of Honduras,
we are sending you, today, a copy of our 1959 Yearbook.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Mercedes Rogers
Secretary

/m
Sep. Cov.

cc: Dr. Popenoe