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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.

Dr. A. V. Guzmán
Apartado 1519
San José, Costa Rica

9 de noviembre de 1972

Dr Wilson Popenoe
Apartado 260
Antigua, Guatemala, C.A.

Estimado Dr Popenoe:

Nuestra buena amiga Alice Louise Dunn, tuvo la gentileza de mostrarme la carta que usted le envió en contestación a la que ella le había enviado a usted referente a una conversación que tuvimos referenté a la Escuela Agrícola Panamericana. Mi hijo Alejandro fue alumno hasta abril de este año en que se le pidió que se retirara. Quiero hacer algunos comentarios que creo a usted le pueden interesar y que yo quisiera dejar claramente establecidos.

Quizás no me expresé claramente y la señora Dunn lo interpretó de otra manera respecto a la acogida que me dispensó el Dr Armour durante mi visita a El Zamorano. En efecto, el Dr Armour me recibió cortesmente y nos sentamos en su oficina a conversar sobre el motivo de mi visita: darle personalmente las excusas por la falta cometida por Alejandro, de la cual yo no me habpia enterado sino varios meses después. Además, pedirle que me diera una opinión sobre la verdadera situación de Alejandro y su futuro en la Escuela, toda vez que ya tenía cuatro deméritos comenzando el segundo año. Si bien la acogida que me dispensó el Director fué cortés, la consideré fría y me dió la impresión que no quiso conversar más largamente, pasándome a continuar la conversación con don Juan. En su opinión, la juventud no ha cambiado y no cambiará. Cree que somos los padres quienes tenemos la culpa de todo. Creo que mi señora y yo, que tenemos ocho hijos y hemos sido muy conservadores y exigentes en la educación de nuestros hijos, podemos pensar de otra manera.

He conversado con algunos estudiantes de El Zamorano, algunos muy buenos. Se quejan de que hay mucha frialdad en las relaciones entre el Director y los alumnos. De que no hay calor ni consejo al que puedan recurrir en sus problemas, a veces tristezas. Para quienes tienen que estar alejados de sus hogares por tanto tiempo, habríapla necesidad de revisar ese aspecto tan importante, del punto de vista psicológico y humano. Me da la impresión que se exige demasiado del cumplimiento del carácter del joven, que por naturaleza es rebelde y más en estos tiempos, sin que se le ayude a encauzar sus problemas y a encontrar comprensión y afecto.

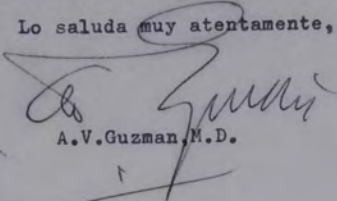
Hay otros aspectos que querría comentarle, como por ejemplo, el que un alumno que ha perdido una asignatura no puede graduarse, pues no existe en El Zamorano, recuperación de materias. Este es creo el caso de Teddy Littleton, alumno del tercer año, quien no obtuvo la nota suficiente en una @signatura y ha debido irse, pues no puede, de acuerdo con el reglamento de la Escuela graduarse por ese motivo. En todas las escuelas, colegios y universidades un alumno puede tener otra oportunidad para recuperar su materia y poderse graduar, aunque sea posteriormente. La Escuela Agrícola Panamericana cierto que le da al estudiante una certificación con los créditos obtenidos para que pueda ingresar en otra universidad y terminar en ella. Esto está muy bien para quien tenga medios económicos, pero qué pasará con el pobre estudiante que no tiene medios para irse a los Estados Unidos, pues en varios de nuestros países no pueden continuar los estudios o bien no aceptan los créditos de El Zamorano como ocurre con la Universidad de Costa Rica.

El asunto de mi hijo Alejandro no tiene nada que ver y " I am not sore about it", pues él bien sabía que estaba procediendo mal. Pero por los demás muchachos que continuarán en la Escuela, yo pediría, como padre de familia, que se hiciera algún análisis de las relaciones humanas actualmente existentes así como de la revisión de algunos aspectos de la disciplina y sistemas de enseñanza, como por ejemplo, el que apunto, de la recuperación de materias.

Le ruego perdonar esta larga carta y el tiempo que le he quitado, pero no podría pensar de otra persona que usted para comentar sobre estos asuntos, pues no creo que haya otra persona que quiera más a la Escuela Agrícola Panamericana que usted y quien la conoce mejor. Pueda que yo esté muy equivocado, por falta de información y por tenerla equivocada. Pero si no fuera del todo así, de algo serviría.

A mi señora y a mí nos gustaría tener el placer de que cuando venga a Costa Rica, visite nuestra casa. A usted lo visitamos en Antigua hace unos seis años. Mi señora es Dr Mary G. Stein, hija de John H. Stein, quien siempre lo recuerda desde que ambos trabajaron para la United Fruit Company.

Lo saluda muy atentamente,


A.V. Guzman, M.D.

Antigua, Guatemala 18 November 1972

Dear Doctor Guzman:

I really appreciated your letter of November 6th. While I had to retire from the Directorship of Zamorano in 1963, I never lose interest in the school nor in "my boys" as I call those who went through the school in my time.

Mrs Popenoe and I are going over to Honduras on the 28th of this month to attend the annual graduation exercises and at that time I am going to inform myself about the case of your son Alejandro, without involving you in any way. As regards your "cool" reception by Mr Armour, I think I explained this, in part at least, in the letter I wrote to Alice Louise, which she showed to you; I know Mr Armour very well, I have known him, for more than twenty years, when he came out from Scotland to take charge of the Lance-illa Experiment Station at Tela, which I had founded in 1925. Bub is a gentleman, but he is a British gentleman, trained at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh and five and a half years in the British army during war times.

When I have been with him at Zamorano, I have often noticed that it was hard - almost impossible - for him to get close to the students - to make them feel that Zamorano is just one big family. I think you might think the situation was paternalistic; people from the outside sometimes called me a dictator, but I believe I was a paternalistic dictator. Alice Louise can tell you just how it worked. I took a very personal interest in every boy, and they knew it. They also knew that if they behaved themselves, worked hard, and were ambitious to get ahead I encouraged them and helped them. If they didn't behave themselves they got kicked out, and knew they deserved it.

because of his British background - reserve, dignity, never too much familiarity even with close friends it is impossible for him to work as most of our Roman Catholic chaplains do: these fellows go through mass in the most reverent fashion, then go into the sacristy, change into overalls and rush down to the football field and get into the game with the boys. That is a pretty good kind of religion, isn't it?

I am going to work on Bob, without making it apparent. And it is quite probable that we are soon going to get an assistant director, or dean, if you want to call him that, and maybe we will get someone who will be a go-between and help the boys to feel closer to the administration. I just want to mention one point, on the wether side of the picture: you know the change in attitude which has come over students in these past few years. I have just been reading the farewell speech of the President of my Alma Mater, Pomona College (California); He resigned after 28 years in the Presidency, and he said: Everything went fine until these past two years, when I was forced to feel that I no longer had the students with me. I think in this past year I have felt a change in the attitude of the older students at Zamerane, a change which not due to Bob's administration.

Now about this matter of dropping a student who was about to graduate, because he failed to make a passing grade in one subject. We didn't do this in my time, unless the boy failed his make-up exam and had been a very poor student in general. I am going to look into this when I go over to Zamerane two weeks from now. I know that the teachers are much tougher on the academic side than they were in my day. Zamerane was founded as a vocational school and we have fought hard to keep it vocational, but the pressure from the teaching staff and from the outside is to raise the academic level, and not bother too much about vocational training.

Gale Plaza, who is, to my mind, a great man, has been fighting for the vocational angle (he is a member of our Board). I was with him and still am, from the sidelines. Our argument is that we need more vocational training in Latin America; there are very few schools who meet that need; and there are lots of scholarships available for these boys who have the ability to get a Ph D or even a B.S. A school as small as ours could never afford enough highly trained professors to give advanced in training in all the different lines. Gale Plaza has told us a dozen times, "Don't let's change the best vocational school in Latin America for a mediocre Facultad de Agronomia."

But I am getting away from the point. When I go to Zamerano on the 28th of this month I am going to look into that matter of flunking out a boy just because he has failed in one examination, and was not allowed a chance to make up that one subject. I can't believe the situation is as bad as that.

You will probably hear from me again. In the meantime, please tell your good wife that I remember, Oh so well, my warm friendship with her father. In United Fruit we were just one big family, enthusiastic and loyal to each other and to the Company. That was the way I wanted things to be at Zamerano.

Faithfully yours,

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