

## NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

### A Mainlander's Impression of the Post-Biennial Trip to Hawaii

Hawaii—To those of us who are from the temperate zones (this includes me even though I have lived in Miami for 50 years) the very word Hawaii evokes visions of the tropics, friendly people, warm sunny days, perfumed nights and exuberant vegetation with extravagant blooms. How right those fantasies are—what we saw of Hawaii on the Post-Biennial trip June 29 to July 6 lived up to my expectations yet added new dimensions to the pictures long carried in my mind.

Forty of us flew to Hawaii, the Big Island, from California, though not on the same plane. Our hotel at Kona-lua Kai was a pleasant structure with open areas, planted patios and the dining-room located along the side of a bay, sheltered yet in the open air. The next day we got a whiff of the eruption of Moana Loa, but a change of breeze soon brought back the fresh air.

The first morning our group met and was briefed on our day's activities. We were to go in a caravan with Ray Baker and Jaime Lee as our leaders. A car had been assigned to each room but many teamed up with someone from another room thus getting a more comfortable car and incidentally making it easier to find parking space. Even in Hawaii such space was sometimes at a premium.

We followed our leaders into a hilly area where Norman Bezona has a fascinating piece of property on which he is growing palms, heliconias and gingers as well as ferns and many other tropicals. It was pleasantly cool and damp. No wonder the plants looked so happy, but like many other places in the world in this age of quick and easy transportation, plants from elsewhere have been introduced and find the climate of their new home greatly to their liking.

Then they often crowd out the native plants. Such was the case with a pretty pink flowering vine that produces a banana-shaped pod, hence called the banana vine, though it is really a passiflora. It becomes enormous, covering (and eventually killing) large native trees in undeveloped areas.

Norman had many young palms planted out, most of them familiar to South Floridians. His collection will be impressive as his plants become larger. However, the overwhelming effect was of the magnificent tree ferns that towered over us. Among them, to my astonishment, was *Angiopteris evecta* with trunk to six feet (80 cm); this fern is grown in Florida but does not reach such huge proportions—we walked under them! They are almost a weed in Hawaii.

From this place Norman led us down to Kealakekua where he is Agricultural Agent. Behind the office was *Veitchia joannis* but unfortunately most of the fruit had already been collected. He also had a thornless individual of *Bactris gasipaes* which he was trying to propagate since it is one of the palms used for hearts of palm. After lunch we visited Jaimie Lee's nursery nearby to see many different tropicals. Then on for some distance along the road which paralleled the coast and occasionally gave delightful glimpses of the ocean. We passed an orchid nursery that was a mass of vanda blooms, possibly for use in "leis." An old nursery with many mature palms was the next stop. It had recently been taken over by Jaimie Lee but unfortunately there were few ripe seeds to be found.

The next morning we drove to Hilo, passing through areas that are still comparatively new lava, with just a few plants beginning to take hold. The black lava was an astonishing sight. We were on our way for an unscheduled visit to the nursery and cut flower business of newly-elected Board member Jules Gervais. He had a big, high warehouse where his people were busily taking care of hundreds of containers filled with cut anthuriums as well as many hel-



1. *Pigafetta filaris* in palm collection of Jules Gervais.

iconias and gingers. It was a breath-taking sight; no one was prepared for such a sea of red bloom. We then each were handed a large square of plastic to help protect us from the imminent rain, and thus protected, took off to see Jules' plantings of palms. He has not too long ago set out his collection but it was already very impressive with the palms obviously happy. Among his treasures were many *Areca catechu* from which he had to keep the seed cut as otherwise the tree was damaged when people came to steal the nuts. He had a large collection of other species of *Areca*, such as *A. triandra*, a large *Pigafetta filaris* (Fig. 1), many licualas and a host of other palms, some very rare. A real cloud-burst somewhat dampened our spirits, but we pressed on until it became so bad that we scuttled for shelter in the warehouse—even the plastic sheets were not entirely adequate to keep us dry. At the

warehouse a delicious cool drink had been prepared by Jules' wife, Soontaree, using coconut and nipa juices. Upon inquiry we were told it is imported from the Philippines! It was refreshing and not too sweet, most enjoyable.

The rain being over, a short walk across the street took us to the huge shade house of Jerry Hunter's Rancho Soledad Nursery. Here palm seedlings were grown in enormous numbers until they are large enough to be shipped to his operation near San Diego.

Those of our group who had not gone to Jules' place met us at the Moanaloa Hotel in downtown Hilo for the caravan trip to Donn Carlsmith's estate. It is located some distance up in the midst of lush high native growth. Interspersed in the vegetation were tall stands of *Archontophoenix alexandrae* that had found a congenial home in this exotic spot. In fact, they have



2. *Phoenixorium borsigianum*, Carlsmith garden.

become naturalized and are often called the Hilo palm. They were very conspicuous and certainly added to the tropical aspect of the landscape. Along the way a stop was made to visit the garden of Toshio Imoto, the caretaker of Donn's estate. Toshi's *Calyptrocalyx spicatus* was in full fruit. He had thoughtfully provided a ladder so those who wished could collect seed. He also had a magnificent tree of *Amherstia nobilis*.

The road to Carlsmith's was narrow, winding through dense vegetation. We passed the Hawaii Tropical Botanical Garden but decided to take it in on the way back, if time permitted, but unfortunately it did not. A bit further on the caravan stopped along a particularly sharp curve to get a view up the ravine at the grove of *Phoenixophorium borsiginum* (Fig. 2) which Donn had established amidst the dense vegetation. It was a magnificent, unbelievable sight.

At Carlsmith's we were met by Donn's wife Jean and Toshi, both of whom greeted us warmly. Unfortunately, Donn was unable

to be present. Toshi led the group on a tour of the property where whole areas are devoted to various kinds of plants, among them large numbers of natives, but palms were much in evidence. How can one describe them all, or even a small part of them, there were so many. It was a bewildering tour, so much to see. A beautiful group of *Clinostigma samoense* (Fig. 3) caught the eye with its triple touch of chartreuse in crown, crownshaft and trunk. Not far were not one or two, but four double coconuts, the largest with five leaves. Many other palms were equally outstanding (Fig. 4) though mostly as single specimens. The garden is a very large area with various elevations and paths; new views appeared as one progressed. Refreshments were served at the patio near the house. From this lovely spot there was a vista across a valley with several stands of the Hilo palm on either side framing the ocean in the distance. It is altogether a marvelous spot and we all thanked our hostess, as well as our host *in absentia*, for letting us enjoy it.



3. *Clinostigma samoense* in Carlsmith collection.

Dinner on our own in Kona gave us time to explore some of the restaurants and shops near our hotel. The streets are lined with a fascinating variety of frangipani (known there as plumeria) in many colors and leaf forms. No wonder the evening air was so fragrant. A few of us wandered into the grounds of the venerable King Kamehameha Hotel with its old plants of coconuts, pritchardias and spindle palms.

The following day, our last on Hawaii, was free until time to take off to Oahu in late afternoon. Some of us made use of the morning to get as near to the volcano as possible, others drove back to the Kealahou area. Continuing along the road, in an area where not a soul was to be seen, we saw a huge planting of white frangipani. Were they being grown for their flowers for "leis," or as landscape plants? Not too many palms were evidence. At the end of the road, down by the shore, was a bay with a monument to the first white man to



4. Large specimens of *Carpentaria acuminata* in the Carlsmith garden.

be buried on the Hawaiian Islands, a sailor with Captain Cook. Nearby was the Kona Coffee Factory offering a free taste of that famed brew.

In mid-afternoon we took our rental cars back to the airport and embarked on the short hop to Oahu where we stayed at a hotel in Waikiki not far from the famous beach. Few of us were interested in that for it was crowded, as were the streets during most of the day. However, we were not there to see city life. We'd come to see palms in great variety. Thursday morning in a caravan in our rented cars we followed Ray Baker to the famous Lyon Arboretum. What a fascinating and beautiful place that is. Upon our arrival ladies of the Friends of the Arboretum provided coffee or a cool drink and delicious cookies. Then we set off, under Ray's guidance, on a tour of the Arboretum. The variety of palms, in fact of all kinds of plants, was overwhelming. I was enchanted by *Phloga nodifera*, from Madagascar, a plant about five feet tall with fronds that looked almost

frilly; it reminded me of a young *Wodyetia bifurcata*, of which there was also a beautiful young plant. Again, *Clinostigma samoense* was eye-catching as was an *Orania palindan* from the Philippines, with its wide base and big growth rings. There was almost too much to see along the various paths, but soon it was time to return to the office where the Ladies' Auxiliary had prepared a delicious lunch. Thus fortified we struck out again along a different path leading to a rather wild area which some of us decided to forego. Everywhere were palms of all kinds, too numerous to mention, as well as many gingers.

Back at the office Ray handed us a list of plants that could be ordered from the Arboretum. These plants were to be mailed, none were to be carried home as they were grown under strict quarantine conditions so there would be no problem with their entering the mainland. It was a rare opportunity to obtain unusual palms at an exceptionally low price. Before leaving we again had cool drinks and discussed the many plants we had seen. It had been a wonderful day and we again thank those responsible including Dr. Sagawa, Bob Hirano, the Ladies of the Arboretum Friends, and most of all Ray.

The next day we were due at Waimea Falls Park, an area that has not too many mature palms, but a big collection of new plantings. It is also an ancient Hawaiian historic site with great sacred importance. It is located in a fertile valley with plenty of water. An open-air bus takes visitors along the floor of the valley up to where the falls tumble into a small but lovely pool. Some of our members came prepared so they enjoyed a cooling swim. Then we were served a delicious lunch under a tent after being greeted by Director Dr. Keith R. Woolliams. Among the palms observed were a number of *Livistona carinensis*, licualas, ptychospermas and near a little pond a group of *Sabal bermudana*. There were many others too, all seemingly happy

in the fertile soil of the valley with its abundant water.

After lunch we were given the choice of visiting the Polynesian Cultural Center or Wahiawa Botanic Gardens, one of the several gardens under the City and County of Honolulu. This is a rustic place with a deep ravine. Old, established plants were everywhere, with a particularly fine stand of pritchardias, some licualas and lots of gingers and heliconias that greatly interested some of our group. At the end we scrambled up a faintly visible trail to the area near the street. Here was a very old *Orbignya*, an astonishing sight, it was so tall. I am glad I was with the group who chose to go to this rather neglected, wild spot. Jim Specht, responsible for making the original plans for the trip to Hawaii, was helpful in identifying as were again Ray Baker and Jaime Lee.

Saturday found us on our way to the Ho'Omaluhia Arboretum, another unit of the Honolulu Parks Department. This area is large, 400 acres, most of it quite open, some still leased out to banana and sugar cane growers, thus bringing income. Nothing here is older than six years, but it has a growing, interesting collection of tropicals, including many palms, especially from the Philippines. Dr. Paul Weissich, Director, welcomed us but had to attend a meeting elsewhere so his able assistants took us on tour. There we found stands of two clumping species of *Ptychosperma*, one large with large black seeds, the other smaller with smaller black seeds. Even the Australian members present were unable to identify them. A nice *Pinanga speciosa* had a handsome trunk. There were quite a few other palms in fruit, among them *Areca concinna*. We were given a free hand to collect seed.

From Ho'Omaluhia we drove in the opposite direction to the home of one of our former Board Members, Dr. Charmin Akina, on Aiea Heights where a Japanese style lunch had been ordered. Thus we had

a sampling of many different foods on our short trip, all of them interesting and most of them delectable. Dr. Akina has a delightful garden sloping down gently from the back of his house, with a huge rain tree shading the terrace near the house and part of the the garden. These tall spreading trees with pale pink blooms create large areas wonderfully suited for growing palms and other tropicals. Dr. Akina has a very select collection of plants, many of them palms. Among his beauties was a large clump of *Areca vestaria*, a very big and vigorous clump of *Chamaedorea cataractarum* and *Licuala paludosa*, to name a few.

The next morning, our last day on the Islands, we went to Foster Botanic Gardens, the old garden located within the city of Honolulu. What a treasure-house of magnificent old specimens—even two mature, blooming *Lodoicea maldivica*! At least one huge flower, as big as a baseball but much harder, was ready to be pollinated, but unfortunately, both mature plants were female. I was enchanted to see the row of *Licuala grandis* that I remembered having seen in a picture in an old issue of *Principes*. Now they were very tall, way over my head. Opposite the *Licuala grandis* along the path were several large, mature plants of *Pelagodoxa henryana* under which we hopefully hunted seed but naturally found none. A huge many-branched doum palm dominated one area. Here too a very old *Orbignya cohune* supposedly brought to Hawaii as a small plant from Spain in 1880–90 by a ship's captain and given to the King of Hawaii, towered over everything else. We were told there was a second one also, planted somewhere in town. I believe I saw it later, lifting its head over the nearby growth. Foster also has a tall, fruiting *Syagrus amara* (formerly *Rhyticocos*) under which Ray Baker had just gathered a sackful of fruit. A *Satakentia liukuensis* looked healthy but showed no sign of fruiting.

Anyone going to Honolulu would do well to get a copy of *Principes* Vol. 12(1) with the article entitled: "Foster Botanical Garden" by Warren Dolby.

That afternoon our foursome drove to the dry side of the Island. What a contrast to the lushness of Lyon Arboretum and the other gardens.

That evening we returned to the mainland. It had been a memorable trip with almost too much to see, but all agreed that it had been a fantastic and enjoyable experience. We felt greatly indebted to Ray Baker for giving us such a large portion of his valuable time. Without him and his patience in answering our many questions we would have missed much. To the others—Jim Specht who had originally planned the trip, to Jaime Lee who accompanied us often and also answered many questions, to Dr. Akina for inviting us to enjoy his garden, and to those who may have contributed without our being aware of it, many heartfelt thanks for assuring that our trip was so successful. I wish that whoever may go on a future palm trip to Hawaii is as fortunate as we.

TEDDIE BUHLER

Note: Photos in this article by Dietrich.

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