

traveling exhibit. We are determined that these trees upon which so much loving care has been lavished over the years will not have fallen unheard in this paradise garden; these trees are now entering their second life or in the words of Jack Fisher, "their tertiary growth forms."

While the *Phoenix reclinata* continues to recline, we know that this *Phoenix* too will rise again. With so much good will and assistance we are managing to harvest a wind named Andrew and we can all believe there will be a new flowering of the Fairchild Garden. It is my most urgent hope

and fervent prayer that in the wake of hurricane Andrew the art of the landscape Garden and the botanical sciences will resonate in a new harmony that will truly lead this wonderful place to become the Premier Tropical Botanical Garden.

All contributions to the Restoration Fund will be gratefully received.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM MCK. KLEIN, JR.
Director

Principes, 36(4), 1992, 227-228

Bill Gunther 1920-1992

The International Palm Society recently lost a longtime friend and supporter with the passage of William (Bill) Gunther, who died of cancer at his home in Del Mar, California. As a life member and former director of the IPS, Bill was active in affairs of the organization worldwide. As a resident of California, he played a vital role in the early development and guidance of both the southern and the northern California chapters. And on an international scale, from Costa Rica to Canada, his philanthropic work with palms was known by many and will be missed by all.

Bill Gunther was born in the Seattle area and moved to California at an early age. He enjoyed growing irises and later, true geraniums. These experiences formed the basis for his future interest in tropical plants. Gifted with a talent for melody, Bill became proficient on several instruments, with a special fondness for the cello. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley, he traveled much of the world as a career U.S. Navy officer. While stationed in South America during World War II, he became interested in tropical flora, particularly the palms. "We were

living next to the jungle, with no town around. Nothing to do. I would look around for some sort of distraction. And I kept seeing palms." Soon container palms began appearing in his quarters. The palms took center stage, while the musical instruments took a back seat. As Bill later explained, "Where I was living, cellos rotted, while palms grew well. It seemed like the right hobby."

He took the hobby with him after leaving the Navy and moving to the San Diego, California, suburb of Del Mar. Bill developed an outstanding garden on the grounds of his Spanish-styled hacienda. He terraced much of the property, using large rocks which he personally hauled north from Baja California, Mexico. He landscaped the property with palms, collecting a great number of species at a time when unusual palms in California were extremely difficult to acquire. Today, most of the palms Bill planted are mature. The many *Rhopalostylis* and *Archontophoenix* specimens, together with the dozens of *Chamaedorea* and *Brahea* species, stand and wave in silent splendor, facing the Pacific Ocean.

A gentle and humble soul, Bill shunned the publicity which often necessarily accompanies the promotion of palms. He preferred to work behind the scenes, like

a film producer: networking, coordinating, and often personally funding projects which furthered the Society's primary goal of dissemination of palm knowledge. His energy level was incredible, his enthusiasm contagious. Volunteering for countless assignments, he always delighted in spreading the word on palms. It became almost like a crusade.

During his work in the Navy, and later in state and county civil service positions, Bill refined his skills as a writer and journalist. He authored a number of articles for *Principes* and *San Diego Home and Garden*. He spent many years organizing and editing the western United States' earliest palm periodical: a typed, mimeographed bulletin called *Western Chapter Newsletter*, which has evolved over the past 25 years into the *Palm Journal*, an excellent palm periodical which primarily serves western America.

Bill lobbied hard for a more balanced mixture of material in *Principes*. He reasoned that by appealing to a greater vari-

ety of palm lovers, the overall support for the Society would increase. He was right. Bill supported a large number of projects involving the planting of palms in public gardens, including the world-famous San Diego Zoo. "It needs to be done," he would say. "Palms need to be seen and they need to be protected. We can enjoy them now, but who will enjoy them later if they're gone?" Conservation and preservation were high on his list of priorities, as is evidenced by his work with Quail Botanical Gardens near San Diego and Isla Guadalupe in Mexico. His contributions towards the publication of several fine and well-known palm books are largely unknown but deeply appreciated. And his political skills were a key factor in the selection of southern California as the location for the 1986 biennial. He truly loved palms.

Bill Gunther passed away on Palm Sunday, 1992.

MIKE VITKIEVICZ

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James L. Degen, Long-Time Palm Society Member

James L. Degen, a long-time member of the International Palm Society and recently retired professor of ornamental horticulture at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, died March 22, 1992 after a lengthy battle with cancer. Jim, as he was known affectionately by his numerous friends and students, taught at Cal Poly for nearly 33 years and his students have made successful careers in every segment of the horticulture industry in California and elsewhere.

A loyal member of the International Palm Society for over 25 years, Jim was especially fond of palms and companion plants such as cycads. Among the many courses that he taught at Cal Poly was one

about subtropical plant material which included identification, growth habits, and cultural needs of nearly 200 species of palms and cycads suitable for the landscape in Southern California. Jim extended his enthusiasm for palms to his students by taking them to local Palm Society meetings, nurseries, and botanic gardens and arboreta which specialized in palms, cycads, and other tropical plant material. Many of these students became faithful members of the Palm Society.

During my first year of college at Cal Poly in 1971, I was one such student with whom Jim shared his enthusiasm while taking his class in palms and subtropicals. I remember distinctly Jim pointing to a fine specimen of *Brahea edulis* in full fruit during one of our on-campus walking labs to view plant material. He gave the name of this magnificent plant, and while