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Our Humble Beginnings

DENNIS HUNDSCHIEDT

173 Young Street, Sunnybank, 4109, Queensland, Australia

This year, 1994, will mark the 20th anniversary of the Palm and Cycad Society of Australia. However, while reflecting on our humble beginnings mention should also be made of the Australia Palm Society and the man who was instrumental in its foundation, Geoff Little.

In 1974 Geoff, who was a journalist and also ran a nursery in Airlie Beach, arranged several meetings of interested palm growers at Bill Williams Alma Park Zoo and Tropical Palm Garden. These informal meetings were to lay the ground work for a national palm society with a membership fee of \$30, and be made up of mainly professional nursery-men, specializing in the wholesale production of palms. People such as Len Dellow, Dennis Andreasen, Bill Williams, Geoff Little and Harry Wilschefski.

It was decided that the inaugural meeting should be held in Rockhampton and the election of office bearers should take place at that time. Noted botanists Tony Irvine and, from Sydney, Tony Rodd who was revising the genus *Livistona* at the time were invited to attend. Dennis Andreasen was elected President, Geoff Little as Secretary and Harry Wilschefski as Treasurer.

Tragically Geoff Little passed away later that year. His dreams of the Australian Palm society died with him and the Society was disbanded before it really ever got off the ground.

The challenge to finish off what Geoff Little had started was taken up by Len Butt and myself. After the hopes of an Australian Palm Society had faded, there was increasing pressure on both of us to form our own society which would be made up of mainly dedicated palm enthusiasts with no financial interest in palm growing.

Several informal meetings were held in the grounds of the Oasis Tourist Garden to discuss the formation of a society dedicated to the growing and preservation of palms and cycads. Some fifteen interested people from all walks of life attended those first few outings.

As the group was initially quite small we met for the first few months on a regular basis in the lounge room of my house at the Oasis. However, as numbers began to grow along with the popularity of palms it was decided we should look for an alternative venue.

We did not have to look far as the reception rooms of the Oasis provided the ideal answer. It was here that we had our first Annual General Meeting and election of office bearers. I was elected President; a position I was to hold until January 1980 and Len Butt as Secretary-Treasurer. Joanne and Ben Myers took over this responsibility in 1975 while Len was on the committee along with Steve Flood and John Docherty.

Len was also the editor of our newsletter called APACS. Harold Caulfield was invited to be patron which he humbly accepted.

Membership in those early days was \$3 single and \$5 double with a \$1 joining fee.

The upstairs lecture room of the Mt. Coottha botanical garden was to be our home for the next few years.

The Palm and Cycad Society of Australia has continued to grow over the last 20 years to a degree which I had never anticipated in those early days when some fifteen dedicated palm enthusiasts all from Brisbane pushed for a society to be formed the results of which we have today as the Palm and Cycad Societies of Australia Ltd.