

Volume 44 Number 9

October 2009

# *ESPINAS Y FLORES*

The Newsletter of the San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society  
Affiliated with the Cactus & Succulent Society of America



**Annual Club Picnic!!!**  
**Saturday, October 10, 10am to 4pm**  
**San Diego Wild Animal Park**  
**Kapunda Falls Botanical Pavilion**

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

27 September 2009

27 September 2009

It's 100 degrees in Santee again. Some of the cactus are reacting to the warmth with some late summer blooms. I'm cleaning up leaves from this week's freaky winds and enjoying the heat because very soon it will be cooler than I like.

The September meeting was well attended and enjoyable on many levels. There were lots of plants to choose from, the exchange table was overflowing and everyone took something home. Peter spoke on Mexico's fat plants and I think we were all surprised at how many there were. Stan enlightened us on The Essence of Cactitude. I learned that I have my *Buiningia* facing the wrong direction. Kelly took us on a trip to Cedros Island and shared an experience few of us will get to have.

On September 5<sup>th</sup> Peter Walkowiak, Stan Yalof, Janet Svoboda and I attended the Succulent Symposium at the Huntington Gardens. While the program didn't seem too exciting from the flier, it was an excellent day with interesting presentations and great company. There will be a more casual conference at the Huntington in January, the Saturday after our regular meeting. A group of us attended last year and truly enjoyed the day. We are trying to arrange a bus for more of us to go in January 2010.

The following day was the CSSA Board Meeting at the Huntington. Peter went as our representative and one of the Directors on the Board. Janet and I attended the portion of the meeting about the Convention in 2011. We had our questions answered, other things were clarified and I think we have some solid framework to work from. At our September meeting the Convention Volunteers met and selected Chairs for the different sections. We started brainstorming ideas in small groups and feel we have a solid start. If you are interested in getting involved contact Peter and let him know.

The Picnic at the Wild Animal Park is all set and I look forward to seeing those of you who signed up. It will be on October 10<sup>th</sup> from 10 to 4 at the Kapunda Falls Botanical Pavilion, just below the Old World Succulent Garden. Lunch will be catered by the lovely Pam Badger, who informs us that she derives great joy in cooking for us. Since you won't be allowed to bring potluck items through the front gate we will figure something out for dessert as well. There will be a list of names at the

On the cover: "Hiking Palm Canyon" by Elibet Marshal photographed by Bev Grant

gate so you won't have to pay for parking, let them know you are there for the SDCSS Picnic. Tickets will be either mailed to you or at will call. I will contact those who need tickets as soon as I know. The cut off is 1 October, but if you have questions call me.

We found out last Thursday night at the SDCSS Board Meeting that we have the patio in front of Room 101 reserved for the June Show. This is in addition to the patio area we use for the sales. It is our intention to use this area for educational purposes. One of our guiding principles is education. So we are looking for an Education Chair. Duties to include soliciting, organizing and managing booths, displays, and presentations in that area Saturday and Sunday of the show. This is a chance to really step up what we can offer the public and fulfill our charter. If you are interested in serving as a chair or on a committee to do this please contact me.

Those of you who visit the web page regularly may have noticed it was gone—missing. We have somehow lost control of the domain name [sdcss.com](http://sdcss.com). Our web master has paid for a new domain name [sdcss.net](http://sdcss.net) and we will use that one from now on. Be sure to change the address in your 'Favorites.' Also, if you have a website that has a link to us, please change the link.

Enjoy October and watch out for Santa Ana burns on your plants. Strategic shade cloth is always an option.

Chris Miller

## THE BRAG TABLE FOR NOVEMBER!!

The Brag Table at the November meeting will be full of faux cactus and succulent plants **made by members**. This is your chance to get creative and develop plants that are fun and a bit twisted, not unlike the real ones. An example would be *Oreocereus* made of oreo cookies. The ground rules are:

- No obvious plant material used
- Staged
- Pest free
- Plant name must be Latin based
- The more unlikely the materials the better
- Artistic license is encouraged

Please participate, who knows, if you win your special plant could make the cover of the newsletter, almost as good as making the cover of the Rolling Stone!

# “MAKTOUB...IT IS WRITTEN”

## A Biographical Sketch of Elibet Marshall SDCSS Member Since 1985

by Bev Grant

Friendly flirting was where it began...Art Cooley discovered her first. If he suddenly disappeared at a meeting, all I had to do was search for Elibet Marshall. Art was captivated by her energy, spirit, sense of humor and brainy wisdom. Being “smitten” with Elibet, I



Elibet Marshal by Bev Grant

discovered, comes easily. Morsels of wisdom and “folkloric fantasy” unexpectedly explode onto the scene. Conversing with Elibet is like plunging into the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Magically realistic, fascinating verbal puzzles of life, love, loss...and survival. Complex, rewarding, and strong stories of a life well-lived.

So, what better way to “having her all to myself” than interviewing her for the newsletter? Question one: details about birthplace. What was I thinking? Forget the linear approach and let the lady speak! So much for this rookie interviewer

and attempting to be organized. Dump the questions and get on with the “free-wheeling” conversation. So began the woven and braided tapestry of Elibet’s life. The surprises were constant, charming! Ah, the things I can’t tell you.... But, do let me introduce you to one brainy, independent, thoughtful, funny and unpretentious woman. Here’s Elibet.

A few facts first...though she’d lament this approach:

**Born:** Elizabeth Verena Kuenzler in 1917 in Urfa, Turkey, during the Armenian Holocaust.

**Parents:** Father-Dr. Jakub Kuenzler, a Swiss missionary and family physician for 23 years in Urfa. Dr. Kuenzler wrote *In the Land of Blood and Tears: Experiences in Mesopotamia during the World*

*War (1914-1918)* published in 1921 in Germany, and published in 2007 in English by the Armenian Cultural Foundation.

Mother-Elizabeth Bender Kuenzler, missionary nurse.

**Royalty:** Elibet may respond to “Princess,” if so-called. She’s descended from Princess Yeshimmabet, sister of Emperor Iohannes the IV, of Mangasha, Ethiopia. Her great grandfather, Schimper married Yeshimmabet. Then her grandfather, Missionary Christian Bender married Schimper’s daughter, also a Princess Yeshimmabet; their youngest daughter was Elibet’s mother, Elisabeth Bender.)

**Raised:** Beirut, Lebanon. Feels more Arab than any other nationality, hence her “no worry” outlook.

**Schooling:** Early schooling in Palestine at The American Community School, Beirut. (Note: Allen Clark attended the same school.) Almost a Vassar girl, but a Mufti’s daughter failed her junior year and needed to repeat it taking Elibet’s place! However, with a \$400 scholarship to Goucher College in Baltimore, Md., Elibet traveled to the USA!

**Vocation:** Teacher. Returns to Beirut to teach at an all girl’s school.

**Love life:** Dear, sweet “Hans” of Switzerland, to whom she was “promised,” lost out to the “brash” American medical student interning in Beirut, Adrian Marshall!! Hooray! Elibet is adamant that Adrian was “naughty.” I have a different impression. Seems that he “crashed” a dance at the Beirut school where she was teaching... just to meet her! But, she professed not wanting to dance with him, but succumbed to “his insistence.” OK, I believe that. But, then with a pout, Elibet also professes that he “never properly proposed to her!!” After this dance, he sent her flowers, daily. “Only because it was Christmas,” she took him homemade cookies. However, the plot thickens when, days later, she asks him to marry her...stating it was “leap year and only done in fun!” Yeah, right. Whoa! Brash American, indeed?? Go Elibet! When Adrian had to return to the USA, he had one week to pack (due to the outbreak of WWII)...and become a husband. Beirut wedding, omelet and champagne luncheon, all within an hour. Tah-dah! Married! Happily married for 65 years, four daughters: Pat, Pam, Prudy and Polly! (Note: Adrian was a clinical professor at UCSD.)

**Plants:** Elibet in the SDCSS is known as the “Queen of Baja Plants.” An upgrade from mere Princess, Elibet again has royal lineage! Her great grandfather, Wilhelm Schimper, who coined the phrase “rain forest,” has scores of plants named after him including: *Astragalus schimperi*, *Euphorbia schimperiana*, *Euclea schimperi*

and *Corallocarpus schimperi*. Elibet acquired her love of plants probably from the first bouquet of red anemones from Adrian...or from her botanist great grandpa...or from the cactus she sat on at age two. After moving to La Jolla she discovered the SDCSS and found her niche...enjoying both plants and members.

**Favorite plant:** “Dudleya!” Many in her collection were “found.” Since the area of La Jolla was being bulldozed for new homes, Elibet thought it only appropriate to save the dying plants. She became the “ambulance chaser” for rescuing possibly rare specimens. When a guard was on duty at a given project, out came the COOK-IES, an “innocent” smile, and access to the local native plants! Ah, bribery will get you everywhere!!

**Advice:** for growing award winning Dudleyas...”NEGLECT!”

**Favorite phrases:** (said in Arabic) “Allah biaref ma biorul.” (God knows, but he won’t say!). “Maktoub” (It is written).

**Qualities/Hobbies:** Brainy. Elibet speaks fluently: Arabic, Armenian, Turkish, German, French, Swiss/patois, Latin...and, oh, English. Avid reader, writer, potter, painter.



An Elibet pot. Photo by  
Bev Grant

Fourteen pages of interview notes...I could have written a book! And thinking about that... one last question for Elibet.

“If you were to write a book, to whom would you dedicate it?” Her quick, precise response: “To my four daughters! They were my avocation; they’re mine.” I should have known Elibet had already written a book: *Loves of Yesteryear*, published in 1995.

And, the dedication states:

“Written for my four daughters, Patricia Elizabeth, Pamela Ann, Prudy Susan, Polly Verena. Without their encouragement this book would not have come to be.”

Elibet is truly a Renaissance woman: a World War II parachute factory worker, school board member, truant officer, teacher, linguist, author, wife and one great mum! So, say “Hello,” or “Merhaba.” Ask a question of Elibet...listen and learn about the magical, the real, the delightfully decadent...and the *one and only* Elibet Marshall, a SDCSS treasure!

“Maktoub...”

## NO TIME FOR TEARS

By Andrew Wilson, June 2009

A while ago I was cleaning up dead branches from a large euphorbia (*Euphorbia tirucalli*) in the garden. It was during the recent hot spell and temperatures were in the nineties. With a long pole-pruner I removed branches and watched as they shed milky latex on the way down. Wasting no time after cleaning the debris and storing tools I moved indoors to relax in cooler conditions. An hour later, while working at the computer, one of my eyes became itchy. Thoughtlessly, I scratched it. There began a period



*Euphorbia tirucalli* in the editors' garden

of trauma that I shall not forget and one that should be a caution to all who of us who grow euphorbias.

Despite blinding pain, a literally accurate description for several hours, it did not take long to realize that the euphorbia latex had caused it. A normal washing of hands after working outdoors had not prevented it. Flushing the eye with either warm or cold water provided no relief; nor did the application of artificial tears. The reputed magic bullet, *Aeonium lindleyi*, recommended for

years by succulent growers was no help. Indeed, stumbling outdoors to find a plant nearly caused a further accident. Only after several hours of torment could I bring myself to make a phone-call. Even a temporary loss of sight is scary and disabling. Navigating computer files to find enlarged numbers finally led me to call Dr. Ron Chisum, who recommended getting in touch with an ophthalmologist. After-hours on Sunday evening is a poor time for such actions. The stand-in, calling back an hour later, had never heard of euphorbia sap and suggested flushing with water and artificial tears, both of which I had already done. I asked for something to reduce swelling and pain. He would not comply unless I went to an emergency room.

Fortunately (if that is appropriate) the pain was slowly subsiding and vision returning. A pack of frozen peas wrapped in a towel provided by my wife was now able to offer relief. Three hours later, I even got to sleep. Next day, using dark shades, daylight was tolerable, but it was not until another day had passed before all pain had gone. Fortunately, there has been no sign of after-effects, such as eye ulcerations.

The moral of the story is obvious — wash your hands thoroughly after working with euphorbias! I have usually used gloves, but never worn goggles when planting, cutting, moving or repotting them. In all my years of growing them this was the only incident. Personal sensitivities vary, but for most, the skin is not sensitive to them. Even the juicy sap does not usually cause inflammation provided, of course, it does not come into contact with a cut or an open wound. Eyes are most sensitive by all accounts. Lips and mouth are sensitive, but less severely so.

Many euphorbia species produce reactions like those described, although some are less intense. In Africa, *E. mauritanica* is used on poison darts to stun fish. *E. tirucalli* is used there as a hedge around dwellings to ward off intruders, human or otherwise. In its multi-colored form 'Sticks of Fire' the species is now being grown by many people. Another large species, *E. cooperi*, is said to cause great pain, but no scale of ten is provided in any accounts I have come across. Some say that *E. venosa* is the most dangerous of all, with *E. tirucalli* not far behind and especially potent in the eyes. You can compare them at <http://www.theamateursdigest.com/epoisons.htm>. Hot weather is said to make the sap more active.

Regarding treatment, accounts from the Internet indicate that there is no wide recognition of the problem by ophthalmologists. To quote from the well-known Euphorbia website:

[http://www.euphorbia.de/gfftarzt\\_e.htm](http://www.euphorbia.de/gfftarzt_e.htm).

"Even doctors cannot know everything, and possibly your doctor is not familiar with the effects of Euphorbia sap. In this case tell him the following:

- Cause of the irritation is the di- and tri-terpenes, not the pH-value.
- These substances are known to cause severe irritation. Some of them have an effect a hundred times the effect of Capsaicin (irritant of Chili peppers)."

Yes, one hundred times!

Except maybe for a 1% cortisone ointment, there does not appear to be an off-the-shelf remedy that has any useful effect. So, if you are lucky enough to experience the condition in regular hours and have an understanding doctor nearby, I'd suggest you get somebody to drive you there right away!

Does this mean I shall give up growing euphorbias? Not at all, but I will be more vigilant. In fact, I have now completed pruning of the tree. As before, this was done from six feet back and with hands in gloves. This time, gloves were not removed until all branches had been gathered and dispatched. Then, hands were carefully washed, especially under fingernails, where the dreaded latex had probably lodged.

(This account first appeared in CACTUS CORNER, the Newsletter of the Palo-

## **SDCSS Annual Picnic**

***YOU MUST ALREADY HAVE SUBMITTED YOUR APPLICATION TO ATTEND! THE DEADLINE WAS OCTOBER 1!***

When: Saturday October 10<sup>th</sup>  
Time: 10am to 4pm  
Location: San Diego Wild Animal Park  
Kapunda Falls Botanical Pavilion

Tours of the Garden will happen before and after lunch. After lunch our speakers for the month, Julia Etter and Martin Kristen who have come up from Mexico, will be doing walking tours through the Baja Garden talking about the plants. See map in centerfold of the September newsletter.

## MEMBERSHIP CONTACT ROSTER

Joe Kraatz

It has been a few years since the membership contact roster was updated so I thought it was about time to complete a new one. At the August meeting I had the attendees sign up for their inclusion in the roster and we had a great response.

This roster is for members only and has the phone number and/or the e-mail addresses. This is strictly on a voluntary basis. If you do not wish to be included that is fine. At the September meeting I will again pass around the sign up for those that weren't there in August. If you wish to be included and cannot attend the meeting please contact me, Joseph Kraatz, phone 760-758-7042 or e-mail [plantnut@cox.net](mailto:plantnut@cox.net). If you decide to use e-mail put in the subject line: Members Roster. Please give me your full name, telephone number and/or e-mail. If you have any questions don't hesitate to give me a phone call.

## ESPINAS Y FLORES GOING ELECTRONIC!

This month's issue of our newsletter will be available for viewing and downloading at the Club website, [www.sdcss.net](http://www.sdcss.net). Take a look! As a cost-savings measure, all members are being urged to accept an e-mailed version of the newsletter – the cost of color printing and mailing far outweigh the annual membership fee. As a trial, if you would like to receive the EyF by e-mail, as well as by mail, for the rest of the year, please send word to your newsletter editors at [pdmaker@roadrunner.com](mailto:pdmaker@roadrunner.com). Beginning in 2010, you will have a choice as to how you wish to receive your copy of the newsletter, either electronically or by regular mail. Beginning in January 2011, if you choose to receive a paper copy your membership will be at the First Class Postage rate (see membership form, inside of front cover.)

The Club wishes to thank Andrew Wilson and Kelly Griffin for contributing their speakers honorariums to the Club Treasury. Thanks again!

The due date for submission of all material to be published in EyF will be the last Saturday of the month preceding the next monthly meeting. All submissions are to be made to the Editors. Please e-mail your articles to Paul & Carol Maker at [PDMaker@roadrunner.com](mailto:PDMaker@roadrunner.com).

Please address correspondence to:  
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## ATTENTION!

### The Club Web-Site Has A New Name!

Beginning in September 2009, go to [www.sdcss.net](http://www.sdcss.net) (not .com!) to get the latest **ESPINAS Y FLORES** and view all the other helpful information available there.

## SEPTEMBER 2009 BRAG TABLE WINNERS

Judged by Kelly Griffin

Succulents

1st Place, Rudy Lime - *Jatropha cuneta*

2nd Place, Rudy Lime - *Euphorbia cylindrifolia* ssp *tuberifera*

2nd Place, Peter Walkowiak - *Adenium swazicum*

3rd Place, Jerry Garner - *Euphorbia gymnocalyciodes*

3rd Place, Tina Zucker - *Whiteslonia crassula*

Submitted by Candy Garner

## 2009 UPCOMING EVENTS

**Oct 10:** SDCSS Annual Picnic 10am to 4pm! At the Wild Animal Park. See announcement on earlier page..

**Nov 7-8:** San Gabriel Valley Cactus and Succulent Society Show and Sale, LA County Arboretum, 301 N. Baldwin Avenue, Arcadia, CA. For information call Manny Rivera at 626-793-6917.

**Dec 4-6:** Orange County CSS Winter Show and Sale, Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Road, Fullerton. For information call 714-870-4887.

**Dec 12:** SDCSS Holiday Party!

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