

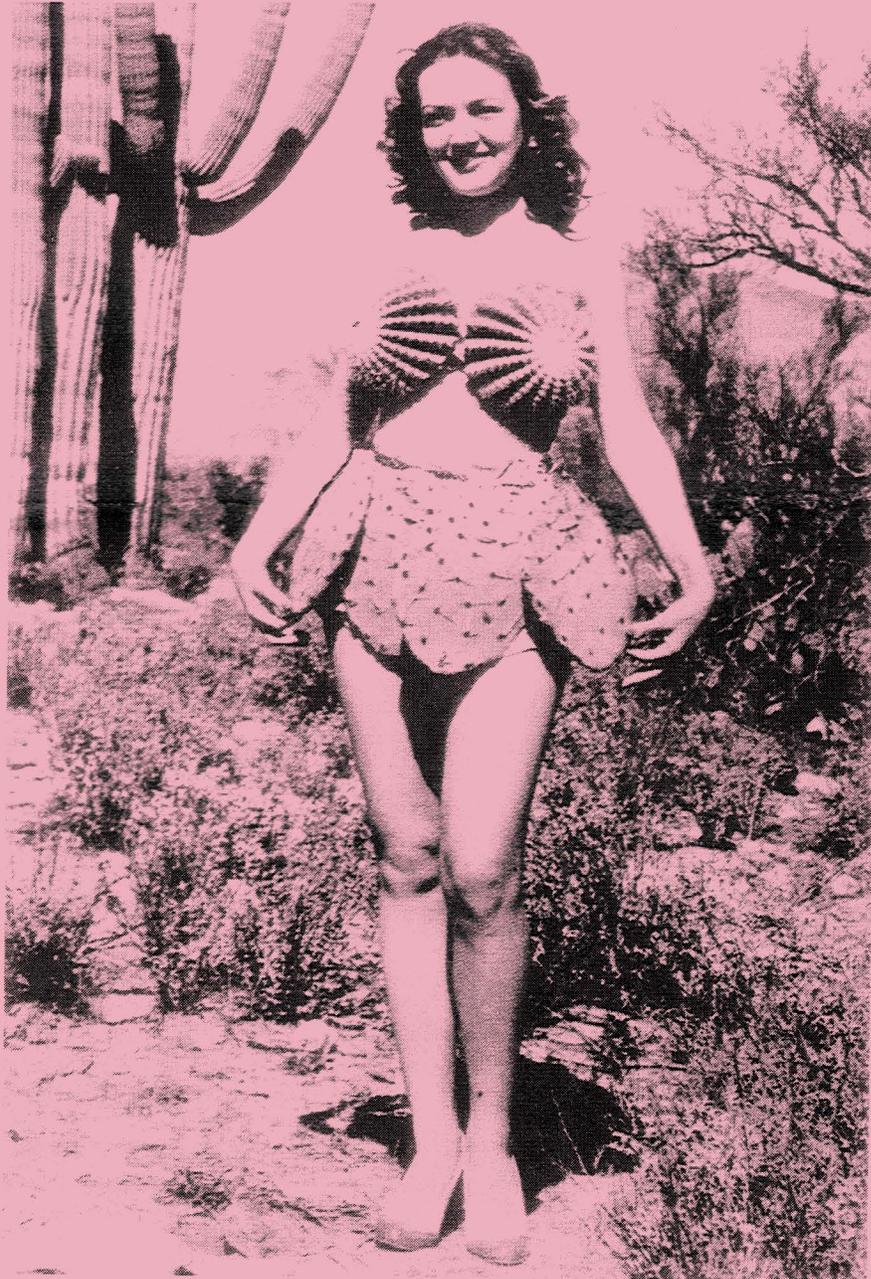
MAMMILLARIA THORNERI

Espinas y Flores

NEWSLETTER of the SAN DIEGO CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY, INC.

A Non-Profit Public Benefit California Corporation

VOLUME XXXII NUMBER TWELVE, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1997 @ 1:00PM



Season's Greetings

December Meeting: Holiday Banquet Begins at Noon!

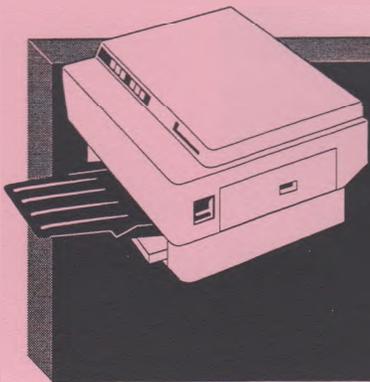
In addition to installation of new SDC&SS Officers and Board Members, we will have a wonderful banquet with POT LUCK DESSERTS*, a gift plant which is purchased by the club will be given to each member, and we will have our Holiday Gift Exchange — this is how the plant exchange works:

Any member, or guest of member, may participate; all you do is bring in a healthy, happy, desirable cactus or succulent. (*Occasionally, someone brings in a creative succulent related item - I am the proud owner of a Virginia Innis "No Water Ever Necessary Cloth Cactus" that I obtained at one of these exchanges many years ago.*) GIFT SHOULD HAVE A LABEL THAT IDENTIFIES THE PLANT AND HAS YOUR NAME ON THE BACK OF IT. The first plant to selected will be auctioned off at the end of the meeting, and the person who brought in that plant gets first choice of all the gifts on the table. Whenever a plant is selected, the person who brought it gets the next choice. The more appealing the gift that you bring in, the earlier you will get your chance at the many fine specimens our members have brought in. This is a terrific way to give, receive, and broaden your plant collection. It is fun to participate, so go check your collection — there's bound to be something terrific that needs a new home, and you will be pleased with what you bring home in exchange!

* *Good News!! Virginia Buckner will be bringing her awesome Peanut Butter Cookies!*

Our cover: This daring young lady appears totally comfortable in her Opuntia mini-skirt and saguaro brassiere. We would like to think she is wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. The photo was given to the editors by friend and [former] SDC&SS member, John Mavis, in the form of a birthday card — we thank you! John! You were right, we do love it! Card was printed by the Marcel Schurman Company in Holland.

Please send your letters, artwork, poetry, Cactus or Succulent-of-the-Month articles, puzzles, comments, or criticisms, etc. to:



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PUBLICATION DEADLINE IS THE 20th of the prior month.

Espinas y Flores, the newsletter of the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society, Incorporated, P. O. Box 33181, San Diego, CA 92163-3181, is published monthly with the exception of a combined May-June issue (*11 issues per year*). Newsletter circulation is approximately 350 with about 300 issues going to members (*one issue per household*) and an additional 40-50 issues going to educational institutions, botanical societies, cactus & succulent nurseries, local publications, related natural history events & exhibits, and other interested groups or individuals upon request. Subscriptions (*membership dues for an individual*) are \$10 per year for bulk mail within the USA.

Opinions stated in the articles and editorials of *Espinas y Flores* are solely the opinions of the authors or editors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of other SDC&SS members, the Board of Directors, or the organization in general. All materials submitted to *Espinas y Flores* for possible publication may be edited for form and content. All material in the *Espinas y Flores* may be reprinted by non-profit organizations (unless such permission is expressly denied in a note accompanying the material) provided that proper credit is given to the SDC&SS *Espinas y Flores* and the author, and one copy of the publication containing the reprinted material be sent to the editors. Reproduction in whole or part by any other organization or publication without the permission of the editors is prohibited.

The editors have just returned from a fantastic camping trip in Baja - more details on our adventures to be published in the January issue. On the way home we stopped at **Mama Espinoza's Restaurant** in El Rosario for some of her fabulous lobster burritos. **Dona Anita Espinoza**, who was busy putting together El Nino survival baskets of rice, beans, & canned goods for distribution to the more isolated areas of Baja, gave me a big hug and a kiss which I am to give to **Bob Taylor**. I think she really misses seeing you Bob, because she gave me quite a hug and kiss!!

Joan Fleeer called us the other day to sadly let us know of the passing of long time SDC&SS member **Alberta Klinert**. We are hoping that someone close to this kind, plant-loving woman will write up a short obituary about her, similar to one done on **Charles Holtzer**, for the January issue.

During our stay in Baja we observed many plants in bloom, including many agaves. So, I found myself every night looking for bats — in particular the Mexican Long-Tongued Bat (*Choeronycteris mexicana*), but disappointedly I have nothing to report as my sightings of mammals was limited to coyotes, pack rats, burros & other livestock. In San Diego, the Mexican long-tongued bat is known from only a few records. Early records are primarily from an "invasion" during 1947. However, more recently they have been observed in scattered sightings throughout the county, including feeding in a cactus garden in El Cajon. All sightings have occurred between September and January, indicating that they migrate here for the winter. If you have a currently blooming agave or columnar cactus, bats may be observed feeding on it during the night starting about one hour after sunset. The **San Diego Bat Conservation League is VERY INTERESTED** in hearing about bats in your garden. Please contact: **Karen @ (619) 698-5784 or Drew @ (619) 464-7567** to report bat observations or for more information about bats.

Herman Schwartz of Strawberry Press has informed us that **Werner Rauh** has been hospitalized recently, again, and that he is very, very ill. We wish him well and are looking forward to his publication of **SUCCULENT AND XEROPHYTIC PLANTS OF MADAGASCAR VOLUME TWO**, which Herman has indefatigably been working on with Werner for the past 30 years. Herman tells us that volume two will be 30 to 40% larger than volume one and will have 200 more color photographs than volume one. Dr. Werner Rauh has published over 320 scientific articles on succulents, bromeliads, orchids, peperomias, etc. And he has authored 13 books. He has traveled to Madagascar 14 times—his first exploration was 35 years ago. Werner has done more for the study and popularity of succulent plants throughout the world—Africa, South America, Mexico, Baja California— than probably any other single individual, that we consider him the botanical "Da Vinci" of our modern era! He has indulged our hobby with a wealth of information and for that we thank him immensely!

The January/February 1998 issue of the **Cactus & Succulent Journal** will be devoted to the subject of potting soils, a sort of dirt alchemy special edition! Don't miss out on this terrific publication - join the CSSA today! Dues are \$35 for individuals; send to: CSSA c/o Mindy Fusaro, Treasurer - P.O.Box 35034, Des Moines, IA 50315.

Chuck Hanson of Arid Lands Nursery reported on the internet that his nursery, Arid Lands East, in Ohio—where a lot of their rarest succulents are propagated—was burgled of rare plants to the value of \$52,000 sometime between November 19 and the 22. Among plants stolen were: *Pachypodium inopinatum*, *Pachypodium ebumeum*, *Dorstenia gigas*, *Euphorbia horwoodii*, *Euphorbia piscidermis*, *Euphorbia turbiniformis*, and many other rare and hard-to-propagate species. **A REWARD OF \$1,000 IS OFFERED TO ANYONE WHO PROVIDES INFORMATION THAT LEADS TO THE ARREST & CONVICTION OF THE THIEF OR THIEVES.** Contact Mike Masara at (614)625-5790 or Chuck Hanson at (712)527-4929 or email address: chanson@aridlands.com.

Re: Anza-Borrego Land Acquisition: Our treasurer did not get a donation list to the editors in time for this issue. A complete list of all contributors and contribution amounts will, hopefully, be published in January. Also in January: our 1998 plants of the month schedule compiled and arranged for by **Beverly Kirkegaard** and a programs/speaker schedule compiled by new programs chairperson, **Kelly Griffin**.

Quail Botanical Garden of Lights - December 7, 12-14, 19-23, 26-28 - each night from 5pm to 9pm. Gardens are decorated with tens of thousands of holiday lights; strolling carolers, children's activities & storytelling, roast marshmallows, make holiday crafts, enjoy a family supper, go on a horse-drawn carriage ride; get pictures taken with Santa in the garden December 20-23. Entrance fee: \$3/adults; \$1.50 children. Info: (760)436-3036.

December 13 - 14: Pottery Sale - David Cuzick, Mary Cuzick, and Ed Thompson - 9am to 4pm, 9204 Campo Road, Spring Valley, CA 91977.

January 10: SDC&SS First Annual Mini-Winter Show with Steven Hammer @ 1:00pm. For information check flier in this issue or contact: Winter Show Co-Chairmen: **Ed DeLollis (760) 945-7892; Ed Nolan (619) 226-1413.**

April 24 - 27: The Desert Research Symposium and Field Trip - We have just received the first notice for this symposium combining the 12th Annual Mojave Desert Quaternary Research Symposium and the CSU Desert Studies Symposium. Advanced registration for two day symposium and Museum general admission is \$20; Field Trip to the left-lateral Garlock Fault Zone of the northern border of the Mojave Desert begins Saturday evening, April 25, with camp out Saturday & Sunday night. Estimate cost of field trip in \$50 (meals included). Because part of the route is within restricted areas, car pools and paperwork will be required; four-wheel drive is mandatory. For details and registration form contact: Jennifer Reynolds, MDQRC, Dept. of Community & Cultural Resources, 777 E. Rialto Avenue, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0763 or phone (909) 387-2582; fax (909) 387-2052.

Are you looking for that perfect gift for your favorite cactophile? Well, so was I! Thought I would share some of my findings with all of you. Wish I could afford every item on this list — if I could, they would most certainly all be under our Christmas Cactus. And the best part, I would not have to set foot in even one store!!

FYI'S 1st ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PRESENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

A HISTORY OF SUCCULENT PLANTS by Gordon Rowley - Forty years in preparation - five years in the press - this book is an absolute must for any well-rounded botanical library. It is the story of lone explorers, patient gardeners, museum botanists, amateur experimenters, clubs, societies, and major research projects - a biofile of nearly 400 names never before attempted. Sumptuously illustrated in Strawberry Press style! Cost approximately \$120. Available directly from Strawberry Press, 227 Strawberry Drive, Mill Valley, CA 94941 phone (415)388-5017 or fax (415)380-9628 or locally from **Rainbow Gardens Bookshop/Nursery - Jerry Williams & Chuck Everson,** 1444 E. Taylor Street, Vista, CA - open Tues thru Sat BY APPOINTMENT - call first please (760) 758-4290.

Rainbow Gardens Bookshop also has new Catalogue for 1998, as well as, an Out of Print - Old, Rare and Unusual Books, Magazines and Journals on Cacti and Other Works of General Catalogue. Make sure you get a copy of both these when you are up there! Additionally Rainbow Gardens publishes a wonderful Epiphyllum Catalogue filled with wonderful color photographs, taken by **Chuck Everson,** of some of the most fantastic and exotic epi blooms you will ever see. I believe there is a charge for this catalogue - \$2 or \$3 - whatever it may be, it is well worth it. We have a collection of these colorful catalogues dating back many years, and providing us with a very accurate history of epiphyllum hybrids and such. They also have an EMAIL address: RBGdns@aol.com.

Now for Memberships — besides a one year membership (a *membership application is included in this issue*) to the **San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society** which provides the recipient with eleven issues of *Espinas y Flores* - at just \$10 per year, this would be a bargain at twice the price!! **Melba Batchelor** wrote to us this month, "On a scale of 1 to 10, the newsletter would be a 10+. Thank you Joyce and Michael for all your hard work and expertise. .

. Many members appreciate you both and the newsletter, but they probably don't tell you. They do tell each other. We voice our opinions to each other." (*editor's note: Thanks Melba, we needed that!*) Other memberships:

The Anza-Borrego Foundation - P.O.Box 2001, Borrego Springs, CA 92004; individual memberships are \$25, family/dual \$35; phone (760) 767-0446, fax (760) 767-0465.

The San Diego Horticultural Society - 1781 Sunrise Drive, Vista, CA 92084-6424; yearly membership which runs from August to August is \$25 - call (760) 630-7307 for Dec - Aug prorated rates. Meetings held @ 6:30pm on the second Monday of each month at the Satellite Wagering Facility at the Del Mar Fairgrounds. This is a very active, growing society. They also are producing (*Susi Torre-Bueno, editor*) a very good monthly newsletter: **Horticopia.**

The Palomar Cactus & Succulent Society, Inc - P.O.Box 840, Escondido, CA 92033; single membership \$12, dual \$15; phone **Paul Steward,** President @ (619) 486-0535. This club is to be congratulated - they just had their 40th Anniversary — founded on September 29, 1957 this was San Diego's first Cactus & Succulent Society!

Look for additionally listings of catalogues, books, and memberships to various botanical societies in January's FYI. I have run out of room and time for now! Happy Holidays. *Joyce Buckner* Page 4

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

I hope those in attendance at the Nov. meeting enjoyed the program. Dylan and I had a fantastic trip to Chile and it was rewarding to share those experiences with you. I hope to bring back more photos, seeds, and stories when Woody, Manuela, and I return to Chile this winter.

I want to thank **Kelly Griffin** and **Greg Wade** for their informative presentations on Haworthia and Pelecyphora. Also, congratulation to the board members of the 1998 - 2000 term and **Joey Betzler** who was made a life time member for his contributions to SDCCS. I also want to thank **Jim Dice** for making our board aware of the **Sentenac land** acquisition project at **Anza-Borrego**. Our members generously contributed **\$1,100** which has been matched by our club funds to bring our total contribution to **\$2,100**. Thank-you all for your donations to this worthwhile cause.

I hope you can celebrate the holidays and the close of our dynamic 1997 year at our holiday dinner Dec 13. Please give notice of your attendance by Dec. 9 and if you wish, bring a favorite dessert to make the meal special.

This year has been full of big events and changes. Our club participated in a very successful **Earth day** event for the first time and we hosted the most financially successful **CSSA convention** ever. We changed the sales policy at our annual sale, included a novice class in our show and revised our bylaws. We made contributions to the **Kate Sessions statue** and **Anza-Borrego Foundation** and have set up what will hopefully be an annual event, a winter succulent show in Jan. To all the people who made these changes possible and gave of their time and energy, Thank-you!! You have made the club stronger and better. Improvement is a never ending job though, we could always use more help in the established activities of our club or new projects like field trips, youth programs, renovating our meeting room, etc.. Get involved any way you can in this great club!

At the Nov. meeting I announced I will be stepping down as president for personal reasons. **Tom DeMerritt** will be taking over in Jan. as your leader. I want to give a special thanks to the officers, directors, and editors for their dedication to our club. Those late night meetings and hours of time make the SDCSS what it is today, the best club of its kind! Thanks for a productive year. Tom Knapik

- * HOW ARE WE DOING? DID WE GET IT RIGHT?
- * IF THERE IS ANYTHING INCORRECT ON YOUR MAILING LABEL,
- * OR IF YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR ADDRESS
- * PLEASE LET US KNOW!
- * MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION SHOULD APPEAR ON YOUR MAILING LABEL
- * PLEASE MAKE ANY RECTIFICATIONS BY CONTACTING:

JOEY BETZLER @(619) 569-8510

* * * PLEASE NOTE: THE EDITORS, MAY NEVER SEE YOUR COMMENTS, OR CRITICISMS, UNLESS ADDRESSED DIRECTLY TO MICHAEL & JOYCE BUCKNER @ THE ADDRESS SHOWN ON PAGE TWO.

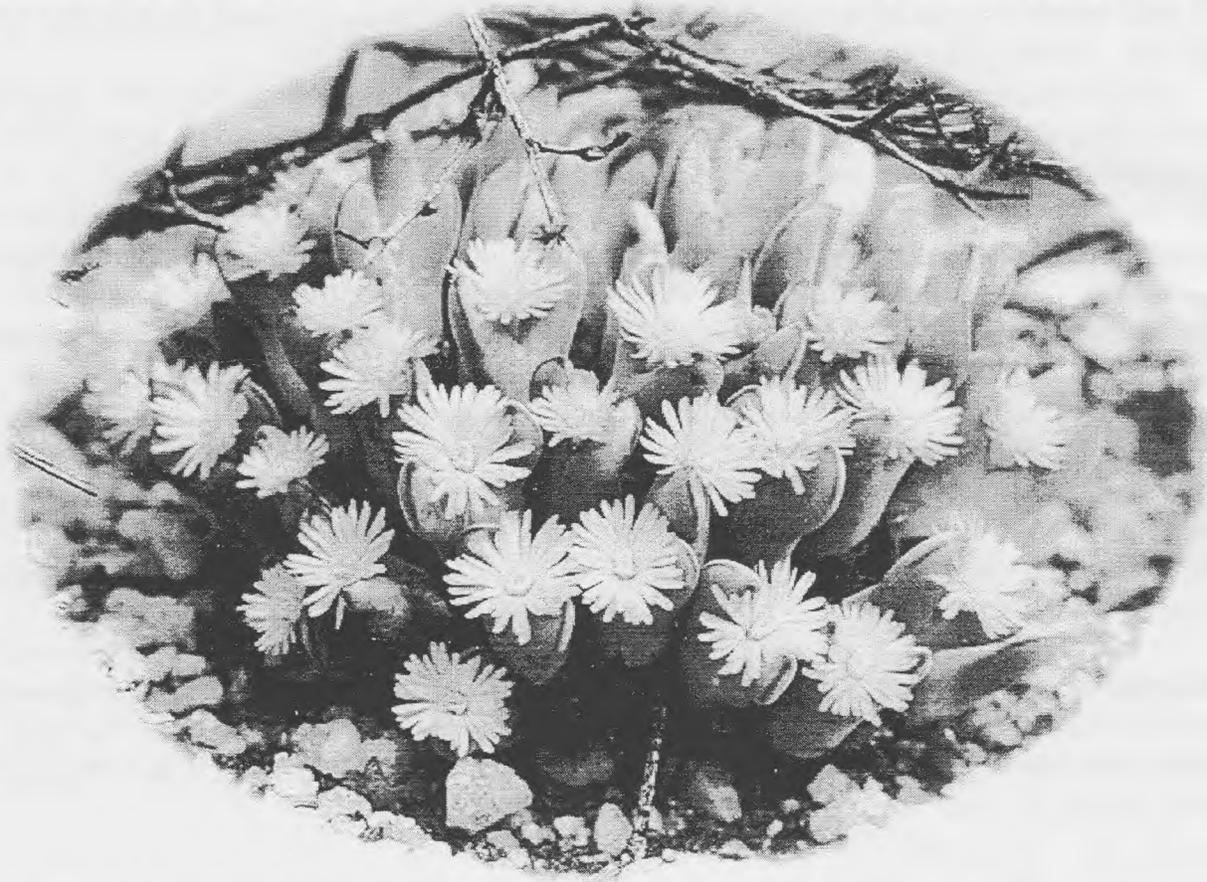
THE SAN DIEGO CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY PRESENTS
A WINTER SUCCULENT AND BLOOMING CACTUS
> > > **SHOW AND SALE** < < <

ONE DAY ONLY - JANUARY 10 1998

SHOW 10 - 5

SALES 9 - 5

ROOM 101 - CASA DEL PRADO, BALBOA PARK, SAN DIEGO, CA



J. A. Batzler

A photo of *Conophytum umdausense* at Undaus, near Steinkopf in Namaqualand. This winter flowering succulent is just one of many plant examples that you will be able to see at the SDCSS January show.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL:

ED DeLOLLIS 760 945-7892

OR

ED NOLAN 619 226-1413

A SPECIAL PRESENTATION BY PREEMINENT SOUTH AFRICA EXPERT

STEVEN HAMMER WILL START AT 2:00 P.M.

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- FREE BENEFIT PLANT DRAWING TICKET FOR EVERY FIVE (5) PLANTS DISPLAYED -

As the weather cools off join in the fun at the Wild Animal Park to help with the outdoor plantings. The garden has the largest Baja succulent plant garden that there is. Many of the Boojums (about 100 of them) are growing well and the other plants are in good shape. Your assistance is needed to help with planting, replanting, erosion control and of course weeding.

Many of the volunteers are from the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society and the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society. All of you should be proud of the garden, it was a big hit with the CSSA Conventioneers. A 'field trip' behind the scenes was enjoyed by all. The CSSA was so impressed with it that they gave a grant for \$1000.00 towards the Baja Garden and Old World Succulent Garden.

To help with the garden on Saturday, December 6 at 8:00 a.m., please call Joey Betzler at 619 569-8510. Work will end at about 11:00 a.m., if it looks like rain or is raining we will have to reschedule for another time. Please call by Friday Dec. 5 to confirm with Joey.

Charles E. Holtzer 1906 - 1997

Graveside services were held on Wednesday August 20, 1997 at Evergreen Cemetery in El Centro for Charles E. "Chuck" Holtzer, 91, of Imperial, who died Friday in his home. The Rev. Lewis Busch of Grace Lutheran Church in El Centro lead the services.

Mr. Holtzer was born May 13, 1906, in Madison, Pennsylvania. He was a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and a resident of the Imperial Valley since 1930. Chuck worked at Imperial Bakery and Webb's Grocery as a young man. He was working for the Imperial County road department when Andy Preble, the road department's supervisor, suggested he go to work at the initial building of the Navy base in Seeley, where he worked for 15 years as superintendent of public works. He then worked for the city of Imperial for 15 years in the same capacity.

Mr. Holtzer traveled all over the world. He was a former member of the El Centro Elks Lodge 1325, first president of the Imperial Valley Cactus and Succulent Society, belonged to the San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society and was a 30-year member of the Palomar Cactus and Succulent Society in Escondido.

He and his wife, Olga, were married for 65 years. Survivors include his wife, Olga Neckel Holtzer of Imperial; son, Dr. Robert L. Holtzer of Sacramento; daughter, Marie Blakeley of Oregon; six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

The Holtzer's were members of SDCSS for about 12 years and supported the CSSA education and color funds. They traveled to South America and went to South Africa for a succulent conference. Both were a welcome fixture at the CSSA conventions from 1965 to 1995 [That's 15 conventions].

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Please send your condolences to Olga at 317 S. H Street, Imperial, California, 92251. This memorial article is based on an article in the Imperial Valley Press and conversations with Olga Holtzer and Kathe Roberts.

THE BLUE AGAVE

PULQUE, TEQUILA AND MARGARITAS

BY VIRGINIA INNIS

San Diego County Indians and Native Americans of the Southwest and Mexico roasted several different agave species for food. Roasted agave is said to taste like a pumpkin or squash that is cooked with molasses. Not only tasty, it provided good nutrition. The juice of this same plant is used to make an alcoholic drink, pulque. When this fermented mash is distilled, the refined pulque becomes tequila.

It is thought that these same Indians that have roasted the agave for food for over a thousand years have also been making pulque. They extracted the sap, and fermented it, getting about the same alcoholic content as beer. Early Mexico did not have beer joints — they had "*pulquerias*" where pulque was served exclusively. The first American tourists visiting Mexico were warned about these pulquerias. To this day, visitors are cautioned to steer clear of these generally "men only" saloons.

The potent liquid was described as having the ability "to creep upon the innards." The Spanish invaders were not content with pulque. They brought with them the knowledge of distilling, and soon learned that pulque distilled made a more potent drink which they called *mezcal*. The cheaper and less refined versions of tequila which are presently available at Mexican liquor and grocery stores are referred to as "*Mescal*".

Jose Cuervo is Mexico's largest and oldest manufacturer of tequila. They were established in 1795 by a royal decree of Spanish King Charles IV. Their trade mark is a black crow. One of the finest agaves to produce tequila grows in the mile-high Sierra Madre foothills in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. Thirty-five miles north of Guadalajara is the epicenter of Mexico's tequila producers, a town called *Tequila*, what else! There are about a dozen distilleries in this town — Mexico's largest three tequila producers, Cuervo, Sauza, and Herradura, among them. Approximately 75% of Mexico's tequila is distilled in the town of Tequila. The agave plants used for all this production comes from the outlying field in the state of Jalisco. Today agave is grown in fields as a commercial crop in at least four or five of the Northwestern states of Mexico.

It takes eight to ten years for an agave to reach harvesting maturity. To harvest the agave, a sharp long handled tool is used to uproot the plant at its base. The sharp swordlike blade leaves are removed. The core of the plant then resembles a giant pinecone or pineapple; *Pinas*, Spanish for pineapples, is what the workers call them. These pinas weigh around one hundred pounds. As the pinas enter the distillery, one piña from each truck load is selected and tested to ascertain its sugar content. The load is then crushed and shredded. Next they are roasted 12 to 24 hours in large ovens.

The cooked agave produces a brown sugar, *aguamiel* which is Spanish for honey or molasses water. This sweet brown syrup goes into a steel vat. At this point, distillers are allowed to add up to 49% sugar into the mix — 51% of the solution must come from the agave. The mix is fermented 30 - 50 hours reaching an alcohol content of 6.7; this mix is then twice distilled to make tequila which can range from 70 PROOF (35% alcohol volume) to 110 PROOF (55% alcohol).

Next the tequila is aged in stainless steel or wooden casts to produce tequila oro, gold, which is the preferred export. Today most gold tequilas are produced by blending a dark tequila which has been aged in a wooden keg with the clear tequila aged in stainless steel vats. Other than clear and gold tequila Mexico now produces a rather large selection of premium "designer" tequilas. There are several new special brands which proclaim to be made from 100% blue agave, produced with no added sugars, and aged in wood. These sipping liquors, each with its own nuance, are referred to as "*anejos*" or "*tequila reposado*" which literally translates as "settled or peaceful tequila".

Most Mexican's drink their tequila from a shot glass — straight up. They put a little salt on the back of their hand or forefinger, take a lick of the salt, a swallow of tequila, and then suck a lime wedge. Most Americans prefer to drink their tequila in the form of "*Margarita's*." Here is the best margarita recipe that I have ever found:

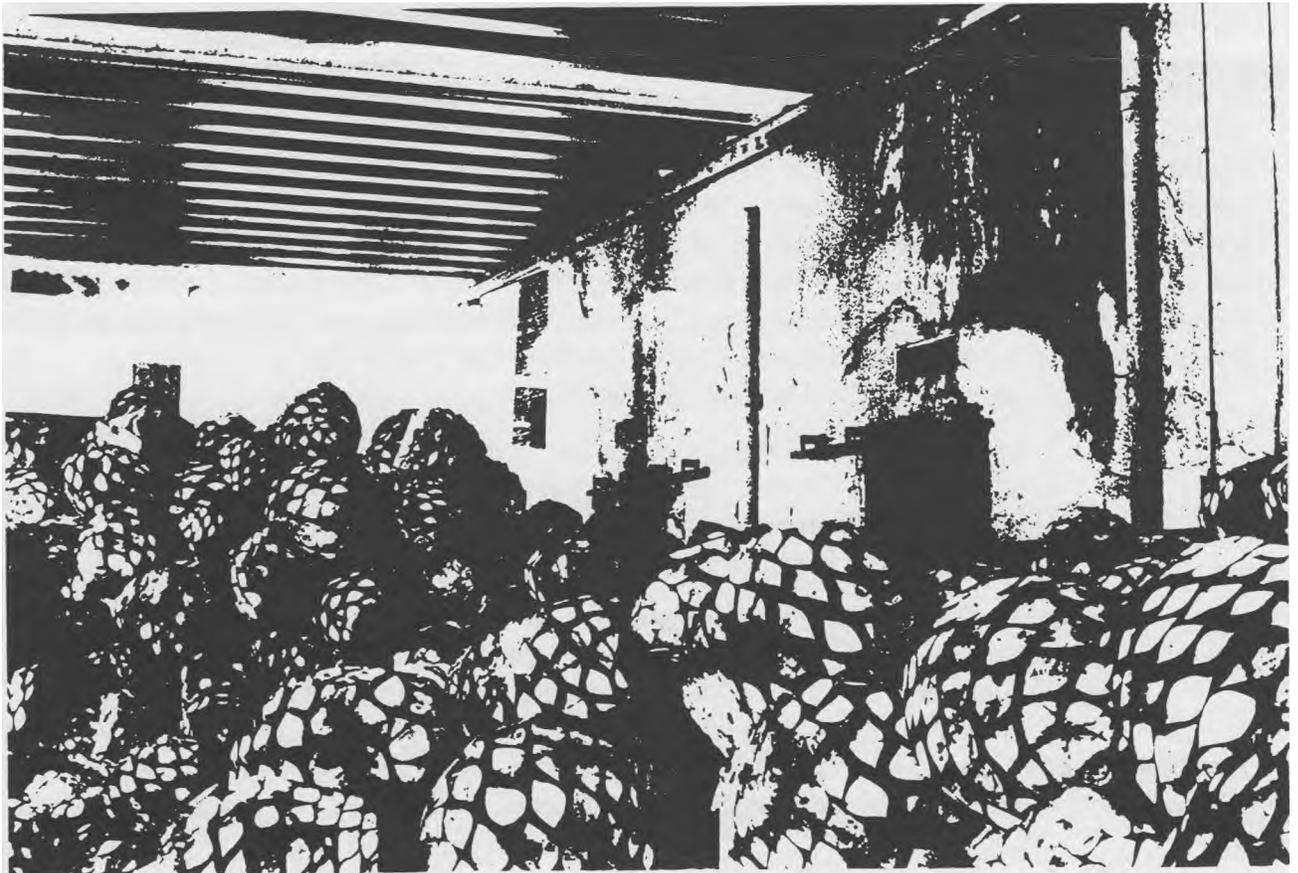
Lonnie's* Margarita

3 ounces white Tequila
2 ounces Cointreau® or Triple Sec
1 ounce fresh squeezed lime juice
2 shots of ice water or shaved ice
ice cubes

Mix all together, hand shake, and pour over into prechilled glasses which have had their edges dipped into coarse Kosher style salt. The ice water dilutes the potency and makes for a better tasting smoother drink. And it also keeps this tasty drink from knocking your socks off!

Salud!!

* Lonnie Lynch's recipe was collected Don & Virginia Innis at the San Diego Yacht Club 1996. Lonnie has made his famous margaritas for years.



*Agave hearts from which most of the leaf material has been removed are referred to as cabezas of pinas. In this photo they are stacked in front of the hornos (ovens) just prior to heating. The treatment in the ovens converts complex polysaccharides to simple sugars: fructose and glucose. Taken from **Desert Plants - special issue - Symposium on the Genus Agave.**, volume 7, number 2, 1985; edited & organized by Donald J. Pinkava - Arizona State University and Howard Scott Gentry - Desert Botanical Garden.*

KILLER MARG'S

BY JOYCE BUCKNER

After extensive research in this area, I have come to the conclusion that tequilas made from 100% agave have a much better taste, along with the added benefit of leaving less of a residual hangover caused by the cane sugar alcohol! *Hornitos* Tequila Sauza is my favorite of the mid-priced premiums. It costs approximately \$18 for 750 ml in the U.S.A., however we just recently paid slightly over \$10 for a 940 ml (*almost a liter*) bottle at the Tijuana CaliMex supermarket — this was an advertised special sale price.

The *Hornitos* bottle states that it is a traditionally produced tequila made from "*100% de agave Azul Tequilana Weber*" — that is 100% from the blue agave, which is, as near as we can gather, *Agave tequilana* Weber. Since the large agave "*cabezas*" or heads (referred to as *pinas* in Virginia's article) serve as a cash crop for many farmers throughout northern Mexico it is highly likely that a lot of tequila is produced from the juice of more than one agave species, and most certainly from several different varieties. According to Gentry's *AGAVES OF CONTINENTAL NORTH AMERICA*, 1982, there were already seven varieties of *Agave tequilana* cultivated for tequila production and listed by Diguët in 1902; certainly by 1997 there are twenty plus varieties! Additionally Gentry notes that *Agave angustifolia* dominates the agave fields of Oaxaca "displacing other species previously cultivated for mescal and pulque."

Another very excellent brand of tequila that we have recently discovered, a recommendation by Sr. Jorge Espinoza, is *Tequila Corralejo*. We paid \$20.50 for a liter of this remarkable sipping tequila with a highly unusual and very pleasant aftertaste. *Tequila Corralejo* states that is "*100% puro Agave Azul*", or 100% made from the blue agave; this special tequila is produced in Penjamo, Guanajuato. Both this tequila and the *Hornitos* are 38% alcohol, or 76 PROOF.

Now for the mixers: Cointreau is a very expensive orange liquor from France. Triple Sec is an orange flavored liquor made in the USA and available for under \$10 at most super markets. In Mexico there is a very popular brand of triple sec called "Controy." It comes in a rectangular shaped green bottle which bears a remarkable resemblance to the French Cointreau brown bottle! I purchased a liter (1,000 ml) bottle of Mexican Controy for about \$4.50 last week in a Tijuana supermarket, CaliMex. After numerous polls and taste tests we have come to the conclusion that a majority of our friends prefer the taste of a margarita that is made with a good gold tequila and the cheap Mexican Controy. We have done comparison tasting using French Cointreau, French Grand Marnier (*even more expensive than Cointreau!*), several brands of triple sec, and an Italian lemon liqueur called Sorrentos Liquore Limoni (*available at Trader Joe's*).

Here's Joyce's recipe for a perfect Margarita:

- 2 ounces of *Hornitos* tequila or another brand of premium gold tequila
- V2 to 1 ounce of Controy, depending on how sweet you want it
- 1 ounce of fresh squeezed lime juice
- 1 to 2 ounces of orange juice, depending on how strong you want it!

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Take an eighth section of fresh lime and squeeze the juice around the rim of a glass, then dip that glass in Margarita salt; fill glass with small cubes or chipped ice. Mix all above ingredients in a martini mixer or juice jar, shake well and pour over the ice. Cheers!!

Here's Michael's recipe for a "Gringo Margarita" that is loved by people who do not enjoy the taste of alcohol — tequila in particular, but love the smell and taste of coconut (*not for Monte!*):

Empty a 6 ounce can of Minute Maid Limeade (*available next to frozen orange juice*) into a blender, fill the empty 6 ounce container with Cuervo Gold Tequila and add it to blender, add one tablespoon of Coconut Snow (*available in any liquor store*), now fill the blender with ice and blend! Pour into salted edged glasses and squeeze in one slice of fresh lime. Take automobile keys away from all house guests - now drink up!!

The Taste of Agave

by Alex C. Murphy

The food source within Agaves is mainly the soft starchy-white meristem in the short stem and leaf bases, excluding the green portion. The young, turgid and tender flowering shoots and the flowers of most species are also edible • Indians cook the softer parts by direct fire or with hot water. The charring of Agave flowering shoots by laying them in a fire or in hot coals or ashes overnight was practiced by backcountry Mexicans in the 1970s, particularly to appease hunger on long journeys. With the availability of pots in modern times, flowering shoots were commonly boiled in Mexican homes.

Pit baking, a more sophisticated and communal cooking method, arose north of mesoamerica. This was generally a family or group effort. Men and boys collected wild mescal heads (cabezas); women and girls collected fire wood and did the cooking. A pit large enough to hold many cabezas was dug and lined sides and bottom with stones. A large fire in the pit heated the rocks and formed coals. After the fire burned down, the cabezas were pitched in either directly on the stones or on an intervening layer of green such as leaves, palm fronds, or grass. The heads were covered with greenery and sufficient earth on top to prevent steam from escaping. The necessary cooking time was one or two days, depending on the amount to be cooked, cabeza size, and associated tribal customs and ceremonies. The cooked heads were separated from the leaf butts and cut into chunks. Both could be eaten at once, stored indefinitely for future use, or turned into many other products.

The cooked cabezas could be pressed into easily carried flat cakes that were often bartered between tribes. The expressed juice from the cooked chunks was rendered into syrup. Candies were prepared from this syrup.

Boiled flowers, often eaten with scrambled eggs, is a dish favored in Tehuacan. The Mixe Indians in the mountains of Oaxaca have a singular culinary use for the cuticle from the leaf of agaves such as *Agave atrovirens*. The peeled cuticle is used as a wrapper for tortilla sandwiches and as a lunch bag for other foods carried to the field. It is translucent, resembling an archaic form of polyethylene. In Saltillo, Coahuila, bread is still made with pulque, giving it a distinctive flavor. Vinegar is made from the aquamiel and alcohol can be distilled from the pulque ferment.

In San Luis Potosi, *Agave salmiana* is an important animal food. In Baja California, the flowering panicles of *Agave shawii* and *A. shawii galmaniana* are cut and trucked to range cattle (Boo!). On open cattle ranges, the flowering shoots of all species of the smaller agaves are commonly cropped by the animals. However, the sharp terminal spines of larger agaves are effective at distancing the cattle from the flowering shoots. Agave as cattle forage is a recent development, reflecting the pressure of human population on plant resources. The exploitation of endemic agaves by local industry is extending milk production into desert regions.

We found this clever poem along with these other two news items in the October 1997 issue of OPEN GATES, the newsletter of the Gates Cactus & Succulent Society (San Bernardino). Thank you Joe Casey, editor, for allowing us to reproduce them.

My Club

What kind of a club would my club be
If all the members were just like me?

You can thoughtfully ask yourself that question
If not, perhaps it's a swell suggestion.

You can sit by the sidelines, holding your trowel,
Find fault with the officers, censure and growl.

Or you can be the one who is always on call
Both ready and willing to carry the ball.

To your fellow members you will soon be known
As a true loyal worker, or else as a drone.

You can welcome new members, or you can refuse
To take any part beyond paying your dues.

You can stand on the sidelines, or jump in and play
Attend every meeting or just stay away.

You can visit the home when a member is ill
Or leave all the calling to Jane or to Jill.

Whatever your talent, some job you can do
So say to yourself as you pass in review,

What kind of a club would my club be
If all the members were just like me?

Page 12

Submitted (and authored??) by Frances Quigley, Sherman Oaks Garden Club.

When I wrote about the [CSSA] Convention, I didn't mention the auction. At every convention there is an auction to raise money for the Research Fund. This year it included money for the Journal Color Fund as well. All the plants, books, related items and paintings are donated and all the money raised is for the above mentioned funds. Dorothy Byer is an artist who has painted many aloes in flower, as well as other plants. She is also an excellent grower of succulents. However, it is her paintings that have made her well known and respected in the hobby. Anyway, Dorothy donated three paintings for the auction. One was of an aloe in flower. The painting was approximately 18" X 24". It ended up with two people really wanting that painting. The person who had told someone that he was going to get it regardless of the cost got it at a final bid of \$1,000. That was the highlight of the auction. Even Dorothy Byer was amazed.

The Inter-City Show has come and gone. Quite a number of the Gates' members came to the show. It was an unbelievable display of cacti and succulents. A PBS crew was there to record the judging and other aspects of the show. They were supposed to record eight hours and the condense it to a thirty minute program for PBS stations. I do not think there will ever be a show to equal this one. PBS was an incentive never to be repeated. No one will make this great an effort again. You should have been there.

From THIS and THAT a column by Leo Pickoff, OPEN GATES.

CONDENSED MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING OF SAN DIEGO CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SOCIETY
NOVEMBER 8, 1997

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m. in Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park by Tom Knapik, President.

Tom thanked those who assisted Steve Hammer with his move to Vista, and advised that Steve will be doing a program for us in January in conjunction with our Winter Show. Tom urged the members to bring in plants for this show, which will feature winter growing succulents and flowering cacti.

ANNOUNCEMENTS The Club still has left-over merchandise that was purchased for the Convention and is offering it to the general membership at reduced prices. Pins are available for \$3.00, posters can be purchased for \$1.00 and T-shirts are available at \$15.00. Herman Schwartz prints are also available at \$20.00 each.

Tom advised that a donation of \$150.00 towards the Kate Sessions statue which is to be erected in Balboa Park was approved at the last Executive Board meeting. Donations toward the statue are also being made by several other plant societies.

Tom announced that today is the deadline for the Anza-Borrego Sentenac Project matching funds donations. He introduced Jim Dice who gave a detailed presentation on the Anza-Borrego Foundation and the Sentenac Canyon Project which they are currently sponsoring. On November 22 a reception will be held at the Anza-Borrego Visitors Center at which time our check will be presented to the Foundation. All those interested in attending the reception are welcomed.

The Holiday Party will be a catered affair with potluck desert. No one is obligated to bring a desert, however those who would like to bring something were asked to sign the sheet that was being circulated. The activities of the day were explained and everyone was encouraged to attend.

Tom advised that eight individuals were running for Board positions. After the introduction of the candidates, he advised that ballots could be picked up at the back of the room and that voting must take place by the end of the break.

Three more speakers are needed to complete the Plants of the Month schedule for next year. Anyone interested in assisting with this should see Beverly Kirkegaard. Beverly will be vacating this chairmanship the end of the year; if anyone would like to fill this position, they should contact her.

Kelly Griffin will be the Program Chairman for next year. He is intensely involved with the inter-net and will be using this means to make his contacts. Anyone who has any suggestions for next year's programs should talk with Kelly.

Joey Betzler will be resigning as chairman of the Mailing Committee and a volunteer is needed to fill this vacancy. Those interested in serving on this committee should contact Joey.

Stan Yalof announced that the Palomar Club's featured speaker at their November 23 meeting will be Elizabeth Slauson, who specializes in Agaves. All those interested in attending this meeting will be welcomed.

Tom Knapik advised that he will step down as President at the end of the year. This decision was made because of time constraints. Tom DeMerritt, Vice President, will take the presidency and the Executive Board will appoint a new vice president to complete the term.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP At the November meeting of the Executive Board, Joey Betzler was recommended for life membership. It was moved by Shirley Berry that Joey Betzler be given a life membership. Motion was seconded, and a show of hands approved Joey as a new life member.

PLANTS OF THE MONTH / BRAG TABLE The Succulent of the Month, Haworthia, was presented by Kelly Griffin, and Greg Wade discussed The Genus Pelecyphora, the Cactus of the Month. The Bragging Table was conducted by Dylan Hannon

Following the refreshment break, tickets were called for the Benefit Drawing.

PROGRAM Tom Knapik gave some background information on his trip with Dylan Hannon to Chile last August, and presented a slide show on the many beautiful plants in the Atacama desert, particularly Copiapoa.

The election results were announced, and the following individuals will be serving as Board members for the next two—year term: Betty Athy, Pamela Badger, Tom Birt, Michael Buckner, Ed DeLollis and Stan Yalof.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4 p.m.

Beverly Kirkegaard, Recording Secretary

I learned that I have need to start calling members up to get enough "I learned that's" for a whole page! Please send them in or you will be hearing from me!

The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society, Inc. invites commercial advertising for publication in *Espinasy Flores*. In order to conform with Postal regulations regarding non-profit bulk mailing, all advertising must be related to the functions of this Society - specifically plants, propagational supplies, or educational items about cactus & succulents. Whenever possible, copies are made available to the general public should they attend a SDC&SS meeting, and extra copies of old issues are made available to interested parties at numerous botanical events and succulent shows throughout southern California.

The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society encourages the propagation and culture of succulent plants and their conservation. In order to promote these goals, the society will not allow the sale of field collected plants at our general meetings, nor at the June sale; all advertisers are expected to follow this policy. Education is one of the society's most important goals. The SDC&SS has a very extensive and outstanding library. A majority of our members regularly invest in botanical books to increase their knowledge and enjoyment of this hobby.

The deadline for all submissions is the 20th of the month prior to issue. Ads should be camera-ready. We invite your inquiry for advertising rates, which are based on size and number of insertions. Please contact advertising committee members: Michael Buckner at (619) 222-3216 or Tom Knapik at (619) 462-1805.

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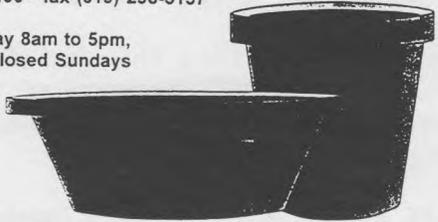
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THE CHRISTMAS CACTUS

BY RONALD BURNIGHT

When I did it, I knew I shouldn't. But it was Christmas, the season to be jolly, and nothing made me jollier than zapping Joan the Ripper, my mother-in-law. So, I did.

Anyway, it was my wife's fault. She suggested that I give ol' JR a Christmas gift to sort of smooth troubled waters. I immediately suggested a muzzle, or a one-way ticket to Iraq. She said, "Be serious." I was. But then I did give it some really serious thought.

The relationship between ol' Joan and me went back to the first date I had with my wife. As I had lecherous designs on her daughter's body, I was being super polite and "yes mamming" her all over the place. She remarked, "You certainly are polite."

"Yes mam," I replied, "My folks always taught me to be polite to old people." I should have know from her mini-skirt that she thought of herself as a slightly over-the-hill Lolita.

Her eyes narrowed real meanlike. "Have you got any insurance?"

That threw me for a minute. "I got triple A on the car."

She pointed a purple fingernail at me. "No walking sperm bank is going to knock my baby up and leave her in the lurch."

I turned beet red. It's embarrassing to have your date's mother read your mind like that. It's even more embarrassing to have your date stand there watching as her mother hands you a condom. There was only one thing to do: lie. "We're only going to a movie! And besides, I don't even know what a lurch is!"

Later, when we told her we were getting married, she said, "Finally knocked her up, huh?" I swear that woman was part gypsy.

So, after serious thought I got her a Christmas gift. "What did you get her?" my wife asked.

"A plant."

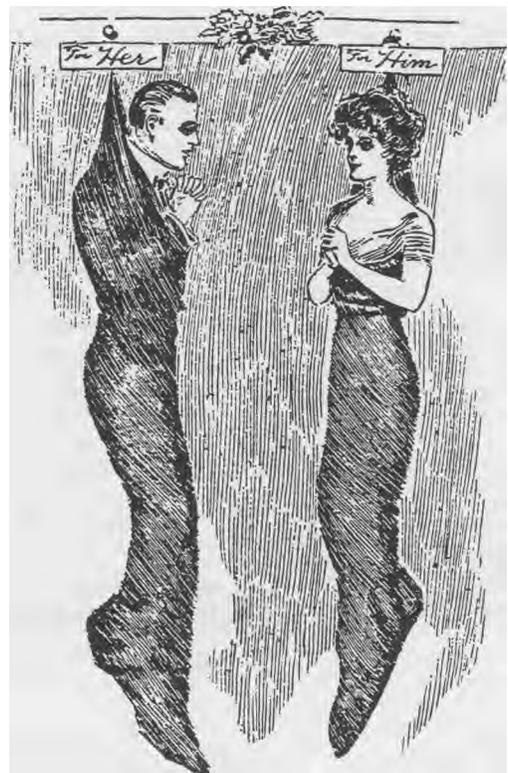
"A plant! You know she's terrible with plants. She's already killed six philodendrons, three spider plants, and a wandering Jew. You get her an African Violet?"

"No. I got her a cactus."

"A cactus! A Christmas cactus?"

"Not exactly."

"One of those cute, hairy things with no spines?"



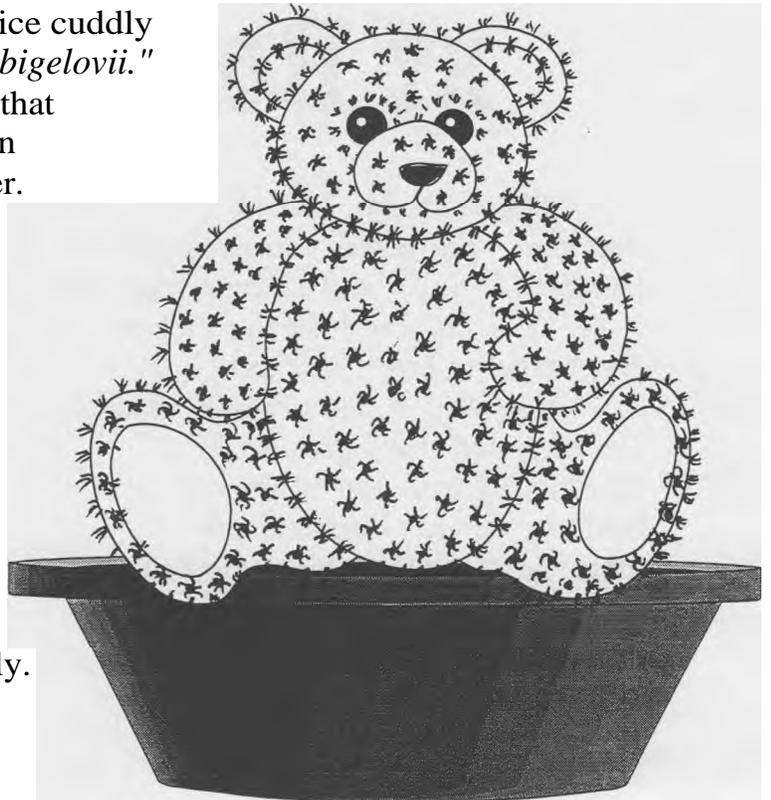
The Christmas Cactus by Ron Burnight continued . . .

"Not exactly." She gave me that mean look she'd inherited from her mother. "I got her a nice cuddly cactus, a Teddy Bear Cactus, an *Opuntia bigelovii*." Yeah, I could hardly wait till she cuddled that baby! That would be the biggest explosion since King Kong tackled the Smog Monster.

01' Joan the Ripper was scheduled to stay with us the latter part of June to help with the baby, and the shorter the time got, the more nervous I became. What had I done? Would she be violent? I hadn't the slightest idea what she would do, but I was certain of one thing: she would get even.

At last, as all unpleasant things are wont to, the fatal day arrived. As her car pulled into the driveway, I considered hiding in the closet, but deemed it unmanly. She burst through the door, dropped her suitcase, and made a beeline for me. My knees shook, but I held my ground. She grabbed me and giving me a big hug, slobbered all over my cheek. "You darling boy, you!" She squeezed me again. "What a wonderful Christmas gift!" She turned to my wife. "I know he must have given it a lot of thought. It's the first plant I never killed!"

She not only loved her "teddy bear" but she bought several more cacti, and even joined the local club. The next thing you know, we're going to meetings together, and I'm her favorite son-in-law. As near as I can figure, she and the teddy bear had a lot in common. She even named it after me — "The Sperm Thing." Life is strange.



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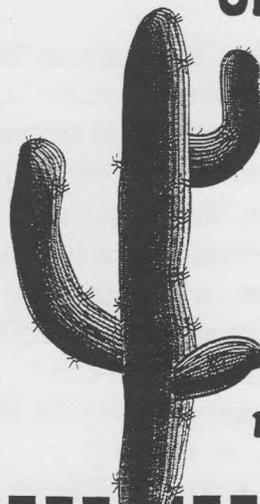
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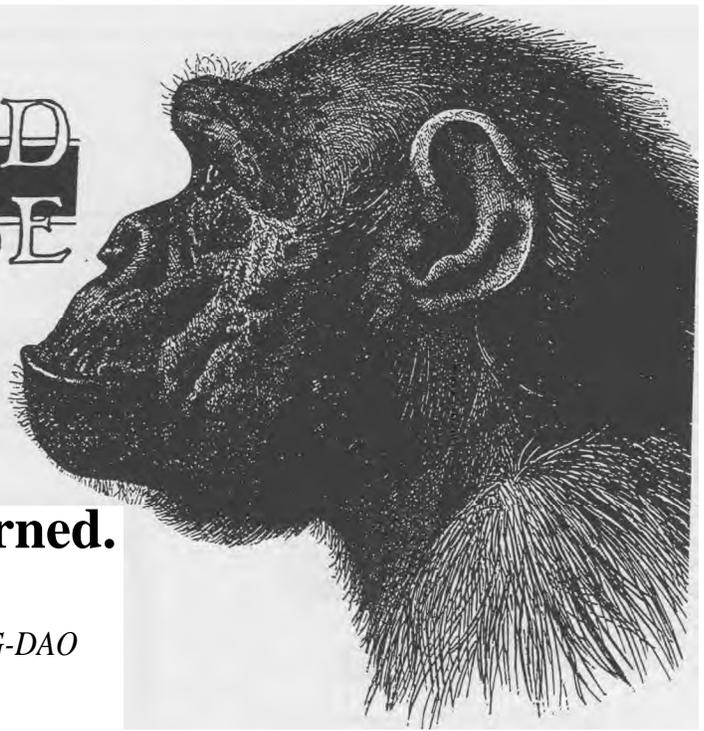


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DENG MING-DAO

The aesthetic nature of man has conserved agave as ornamentals, while his intellectual character is devising uses has fostered its evolution, but his hunger and greed have also destroyed agaves. Since both the aesthetic and intellectual character of man are dependent upon the satisfaction of his hunger, the man-agave relationship may continue for as long as mankind is not too hungry or too crowded for space.

AGAVES OF CONTINENTAL NORTH AMERICA by Howard Scott Gentry, 1982, University of AZ Press.

One of the more famous mescals of Mexico is "mescal baconora" of Sonora, which takes its name from the locality where it is produced. Bacanora is no more than a rancho in eastern Sonora, not far from Sahuaripa. The principal species employed by the earthy still there is a wild variety of *Agave angustifolia*, earlier accounted as *Agave pacifica* Trel. Most of the heads are still carried in from the surrounding mountainous slopes by mules and burros. Whether owing to this particular variety, or to the minerals in the soil in which it grows, or to the particular bacteria of fermentation, or to other unknown factors, this mescal has an outstanding flavor, even when tasted fresh from the still.

AGAVES OF CONTINENTAL NORTH AMERICA by Howard Scott Gentry, 1982, University of AZ Press.

President Clinton likes to assure us that he is ecology friendly. His trip last spring to Costa Rica included a stop at the Braulio Carrillo National Park government-protected rain forest where the president was to deliver a pro-environment speech that included the line, "We destroy these resources at our own peril." Unfortunately, according to a report in *The American Spectator*, the president's staff determined that the site of the speaking platform was too remote more than 100 yards from an access road the terrain was too challenging for the president, who at the time was walking on crutches. Consequently, part of the rain forest was bulldozed and a 350-foot strip of asphalt was put down to help accommodate the environmentalist-in-chief. Explained a White House staffer: "The Costa Ricans were eager to pave the walkway for the president. They seemed to understand how important a photo op this was for us."

Taken from *PLAYBOY AFTER HOURS*, PLAYBOY MAGAZINE November 1997.

Cooperation with others.
Perception, experience, tenacity.
Know when to lead and when to follow.

DENG MING-DAO



Some plants — such as certain agaves — have devised a means of surviving such sudden fluctuations in pollinator numbers. Agaves with umbrella-shaped inflorescence may have been originally shaped by bat visitation behavior, yet their flowers remain generalized enough that bees and even hummingbirds will transfer pollen from one flower stalk to the next. Even when other pollinators are scarce, some agaves have another fallback strategy.

Once the unvisited, unfertilized flowers wither, they produce small plantlets called *bulbils* in their stead. These bulbils are essentially parasitic on the mother plant and genetically identical to mom — they lack the genetic diversity associated with sexual recombination. But they allow mom's genetic legacy to persist until a pollinator returns to enable outcrossing.

THE FORGOTTEN POLLINATORS by Stephen L. Buchmann & Gary Paul Nabhan, 1996, Island Press / Shearwater Books, Washington D.C.

Ethanol production is a well-documented attribute of many agave species, and the literature of agave abounds with descriptions of the fermentative products of this plant. Consequently one of the physiological traits of interest was the production of sugars by agaves under cultivation. Refractometry provides a rapid, accurate, in the field analysis of agave sugar content, even though steroidal glycosides make a contribution to the reading. When compared to actual sugar percentages determined colorimetrically, the refractometer reading for *Agave americana* specimens fall within about 2 to 3% of actual sugar content. A sugar content of 50% on a dry weight basis is extremely high, and commends agave as an alternative source of ethanol in a suitable economic situation.

Agaves represent a world-wide source of steroids which find a market in the pharmaceutical industry. As byproducts of sisal fiber production, agave steroid sapogenins account for about 6% of the world supply of precursors for corticosteroid synthesis. These chemicals also find use as animal feed supplements; and even show promise as anti-cancer agents. A domestic industry presently exists whereby steroids extracted from native yucca stands in the Mohave desert supply a commercial steroidal sapogenin extract. Industrial tests of agave steroids indicate that they have considerable promise as a substitute for yuccas harvested from the wild. As a minimal input crop on marginal farmland in the mid-elevation areas, with limited or poor quality water, agave looks opportune.

Field Evaluations of Agave in Arizona by Robert G. McDaniel, DESERT PLANTS - SPECIAL ISSUE - SYMPOSIUM ON THE GENUS AGAVE, vol. 7, no. 2, 1985.

Como dijo la mosca, "Andamos arando!"

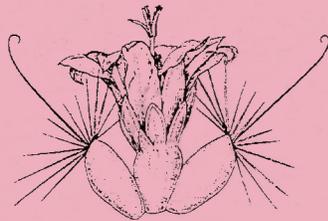
The fly atop the ox declares: "We are plowing this field!"

From Folk Wisdom of Mexico by Jeff M. Sellers, 1994, Chronicle Books, San Francisco.

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The San Diego Cactus and Succulent Society, Inc. is open to all persons interested in growing cacti and other succulent plants. Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month (except June, Sept. and Dec.) at 1:00 PM in room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park. Executive Board meetings are open to all members; call any officer or director for the time and location. Annual dues are \$10.00 per single member per year, \$5.00 for each additional member within the same household. Single copies of *Espinas y Flores* are \$1.00 per copy sent within the USA; foreign subscriptions are \$25.00. Affiliated with the Cactus and Succulent Society of America, Inc. Editors, (619) 222-3216 Fax or Phone.

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The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society is a nonprofit, hobby organization created to stimulate interest in succulent plants. This society brings together people with a common interest for the purpose of educating the public about the beauty and uniqueness of these remarkable plants, encouraging proper collecting and maintenance of the plants through preservation of native habitats and horticultural propagation, and to foster good fellowship. You are invited to join our society, whether you are an expert, amateur, or a beginner with an interest in unusual plants and flowers.

You will receive our publication *Espinas y Flores*, one of the best cacti and succulent newsletters. We produce 11 issues a year. You will get great articles and keep up with club news for the next year.

Our meetings are on the second Saturday of the month (except June and September) and newsletters are received the week of the meeting. We offer knowledgeable speakers who present educational & entertaining programs; many are world renowned scholars, botanists, explorers and authors. The San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society's Annual Show and Plant Sale occurs the first weekend of June in Room 101, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, San Diego. A wide range of succulent plants, ceramic pots, and growing supplies are available during most meetings. There is also a plant exchange table and a library. For more information regarding membership, please call Joey Betzler, Membership Chair, at (619) 569-8510.

Yes, I/We wish JOIN or REJOIN the San Diego Cactus & Succulent Society.

NAME (S) _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, COUNTRY & ZIP+4: _____

PHONE/FAX/E-MAIL: _____

Do you know that for an additional \$5.00 paid on your membership dues - you can have *Espinas y Flores* delivered by first class mail, instead of bulk mail? Check here O and add \$5.00 to your dues payment, if you are far away you will receive our newsletter faster.

Dues are \$10.00 per person, \$5.00 for each additional person in the same household for (bulk rate USA), add \$5.00 for First Class Delivery (optional). International dues, including Mexico and Canada, are \$25.00 (US funds), additional members as above.

◆ Amount enclosed _____

Thank you for joining the SDCSS

SEND THIS FORM TO:

SDCSS - Treasurer/Membership, P. O. Box 33181, San Diego, CA 92163-3181