

HISTORY OF GATES CACTUS & SUCCULENT SOCIETY

By: Joyce Tate

Part I:

Although there had been a very active Cactus Society in Riverside during the 1930's, the war years had made it impossible for the group to continue to hold regular meetings, great interest in succulents remained, however. Then after the war, Howard E. Gates brought his world famous Nursery from Anaheim to Norco. Later several other nurseries also established in the Inland Empire, including Rosso's in Redlands, Buttner in Norco and the Desert Nursery in Riverside. Interest in cacti and other succulents revived.

In July 1959, Col. & Mrs. C. Hughes invited succulent enthusiasts to meet at their home in Rialto to discuss the forming of a Cactus & Succulent Society. There was enough interest to do so, and with newspaper publicity, a second meeting was held in September at the home and gardens of Col & Mrs. Herman G. Halverson in Riverside. Both amateur and professional growers attended and a Society was organized. Officers elected were: President, Bill Bently, San Bernardino; Vice-President, Patricia Moorten, Palm Springs; Secretary, Jessie Halverson, Riverside; and Treasurer, Harry Tate, Sunnymead. At this first meeting, Mrs. J. Engberg of Redlands discussed the Plant-of-the-Month, "Kalanchoes". Lynn Brown showed his lapse-in-time color movies, "Blossoming and Fading of Cactus Flowers". It was a good beginning.

The next meeting was held in Redlands, in October, and the most important item on the agenda was appointing a By-Law Committee. Also, equally important, a name was selected – "The Howard E. Gates Memorial Cactus & Succulent Society". The name was chosen in memory of one of the most important plant hunters in Baja California and the Mexican mainland in the 30's and 40's – Howard E. Gates!

In November, we met at the Gates Nursery at the invitation of Mrs. Gates and Harold Tapia, Nursery Manager. In December, we met at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Seymour D. Van Gundy. Mr. Van gave us our first program, "Plant Pests – Nematodes". We ended our year 1959 with the second reading of the By-Laws. Nineteen sixty saw us becoming 'busier'. Bill Bentley moved to La Puente and consequently resigned as President. Pat Moorten was elected to take his place. The By-Laws were accepted and we now had a purpose: TO STIMULATE AN EDUCATIONAL AND SCIENTIFIC INTEREST IN CACTI AND OTHER SUCCULENT PLANTS". Our first Garden Tour of the year was in the Spring. We all trooped out to Palm Springs to the Moorten's 'Desertland Gardens". It was a memorable day. It was raining outside and cold, but we enjoyed ourselves around the big fireplace in the Moorten's living room. For some of us, it had a deeper meaning as we recalled it later; because it was the last time we met with our society Founders.

It was later in June that Bill and Eleanor Hughes lost their lives in the Arizona Desert south of Kingman, a needless tragedy. Soon after that, at one of our meetings, Charley Austin, a member of the Victorville Sheriff's Department, who went with one of the search parties, teamed up with Slim Moorten and John Buttner to give us all a Survival Program. All three were well versed in desert conditions, and we were grateful for the information they gave us.

At a later meeting that year, we became a CSSA Affiliate and we entered an exhibit for the first time. At the San Bernardino County Fair at Victorville, and won a First! Charter membership closed with 48 members. (NOTE: Ten are still members, but only seven attend regularly.) Our Lending Library was started at that time and has always been successful. We voted in our First Life Member-Madame Ganna Walska of Montecito, and we ended the year with 63 members.

Nineteen sixty-one began with Dr. Seymour D. Van Gundy as President. Dr. Edmund C. Jaeger presented his beloved "California Deserts", John Buttner showed us how to "Plant Seed", and gave each one of us a seed kit – soil and all. At the end of this year, certificates were awarded for the best plants from those very seeds.

The most popular speaker of the year was Gil Tagelberg, Sr., who taught us to be "Grafters". We also had Don Skinner for "Crassulas", Harry Johnson, Sr., for "South American Cacti", Dr. Charles Swingle for "Madagascar Succulents", and Virginia Dennison who demonstrated "Use of Succulents in Arrangements". Some of the other members who gave outstanding programs were: Netta Johnson, Dan Gould and Dr. Van Gundy. We chartered a bus and had our first trip to the home and gardens of Madame Ganna Walska, "Lotusland" in Montecito. So marvelous.

We had our tours to Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Mojave Desert. We had our first exhibition in the National Orange Show in San Bernardino and won First award, which gave us the princely sum of \$100.

We were Sponsors for the Cactus and Succulents Division of the Riverside Community Flower Show, and gave all those who attended a succulent cutting to take home with them. We were certainly popular.

In July, Slim Moorten was our Delegate to the CSSA Convention held in Mexico City. In September, we attended our first CSSA Annual Meeting at the Tagelbergs in Lucerne Valley. For the first time, we heard about Conservation, and took an active part in it. Bill Keyes who owned in-holdings in the Joshua Tree National Monument wanted to build a sub-division on his property. Conservation groups were against it, and immediately took up the challenge, and won. Virginia Dennison represented our Gates Society at the hearings in San Bernardino.

I, Joyce Tate, became the first member of our Society to be on the CSSA Board of Directors and I still remain on it. Later, Ted Hutchison and Art Montague served, and Leo Pickoff is not only a member of the present Board, but he is a Past-President of that body as well. In October, we won the "Award of Merit" at the Riverside Hobby Show, with our "Show Within a Show".