

Arboretum Progress

Robert T. McKittrick

Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum



Two or three months will elapse between the writing of this article and its publication. During those months the Arboretum will have published its annual report for fiscal 1980-81 in the form of the "Director's Report" to the interested administrators of the three sponsors. Highlights of that report are shared here with the readers of *Desert Plants*.

It was a year of many pluses and a few minuses. The biggest plus was the construction of a new parking lot. The lot is located just inside the entrance gate. It will replace three existing, smaller, dispersed and unorganized lots. Construction is underway on a pedestrian walk from the new lot to the Visitor Center. The existing entrance road and the small lot adjacent to the Visitor Center were upgraded by a one-inch overlay of asphaltic concrete during the surfacing of the new parking lot.

The minuses were all related to the loss of trained staff with a combined total of 20 years of service. Leslie Ely, assistant to the Director and supervisor of physical plant maintenance, and Mary Ely, lead secretary, chose "semi-retirement" effective May 1. Reduction in funding of the federally supported Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) resulted in the elimination in April of

the work supervisor position filled by Joe Rodriguez. These reductions followed the resignation in February of Keith Teater who worked as a laborer but who volunteered many other skills.

The loss of key people so well trained in the operation of the Arboretum created considerable disruption from which the staff is not fully recovered, but the success in recruiting replacements is one of the bright spots of the year. We have added to our staff this spring both Jeff Clark and Barbara Mulford, two recent graduates at the Bachelor of Science level who have been willing to share some of the labor needs of the Arboretum, but who more importantly are enhancing both the horticultural and interpretive programs in the way that Kent Newland has contributed so much over the years. The lead secretary is now Jane Rua, who has a biology background in undergraduate study and has done substitute teaching while raising a family in the nearby town of Superior. Gary Kuhn replaces Les Ely, having transferred here from Patagonia Lake State Park in southern Arizona. His experience there and education at the Bachelor of Science level in natural resources management have both been most helpful in assuming his duties here. With the valuable assistance of the remaining experienced staff and faculty, the work goes forward in a commendable manner.

Despite the loss of the work supervisor, the YACC program continues with supervision of the enrollees provided by the Arboretum staff. Through the year these enrollees have contributed a great deal to the daily maintenance and garden work at the Arboretum. In addition, they quarried rock with which to build a seat wall and patio in front of the Visitor Center, a project now scheduled for 1981-82. Much work was accomplished in the construction of a trail through the area designated for development into plant communities representative of various North American deserts. They completed the installation of the primary water delivery lines for the irrigation of this new area. The Arboretum staff completed the installation of pumping and filtering facilities for that irrigation project.

Hours of service to the public at the Arboretum were extended during the year. The facilities are now open to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day of the year except Christmas Day. Admission fees were increased to \$1 per adult. Children under 17 are admitted free if they are accompanied by a responsible adult.

The academic program of the Arboretum continued to grow. Traditionally we have offered lectures and tours arranged in advance for all levels of formal classes and for any interested organized group. In addition, a series of lectures, tours and demonstrations were initiated in mid-June on a regular schedule to serve anyone interested in the announced subjects. These were scheduled through the summer, at 9:00 a.m., to take advantage of the cooler morning temperatures. The Tucson chapter of the Audubon Society held a highly successful Institute of Desert Ecology at the Arboretum for the third consecutive year. The annual Arboretum plant sale this year was attended by more people who took away with them more desert plants for landscaping than any previous sale. Research work continues with ground cover trials and the first steps toward establishing a research collection of desert legumes. The publication of *Desert Plants* speaks for itself.

The Arboretum is moving toward the development of a master plan. Additional work was accomplished this year in the design of a demonstration garden and the parking lot and ingress pattern from it, particularly with regard to its relation to the development of the area in front of the Visitor Center. Implementation of certain elements, already agreed upon, such as the parking lot and the North American desert plant communities, are going forward during its development.

The 1980-81 fiscal year was difficult but very productive. The Arboretum staff and faculty are confident that the Arboretum programs will continue to progress in 1981-82.