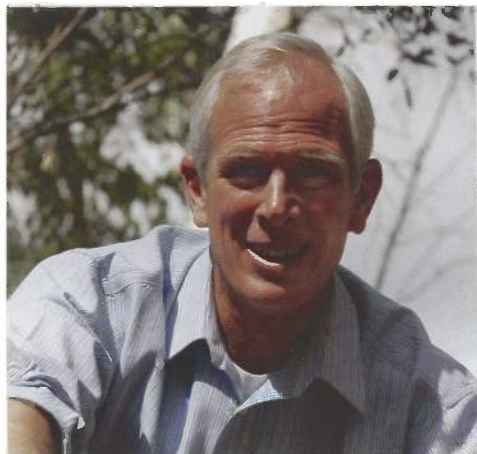


## Note from the Director

**Mark Siegwarth**

Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum  
37615 E Hwy 60  
Superior AZ 85273



In reviewing prior issues of Desert Plants, I noticed that traditionally the Director provides an update on the Arboretum. I would like to continue this tradition. Before I do so, I would first like to urge you to read the two speeches in this issue given at

the dedication of the Arboretum on April 6, 1929. In reading them myself, I was struck by several things. First, I was struck by the size of the problems the Arboretum staff and supporters were attacking and their optimism in attacking them. World hunger was on the agenda, specifically how almost 50% of the land surface of our planet could be more productive.

On a more local level, their foresight is also remarkable. They realized that Arizona's economy could not just depend upon mining and cattle but needed to diversify. There was concern that this diversification focus on industries that were sustainable and did not adversely impact the land. Agriculture was to become a force but also tourism and recreation were seen as part of the future economy. Plants were needed not only as an economic crop but also to provide beauty to attract the tourist and recreational user as well as improve the quality of life for the residents of Arizona.

As Governor John C. Phillips said at the dedication "It is impossible to measure the real value which will come from this institution, Colonel Thompson is showing us in a magnificent way that this is indeed the land of opportunity". Their conviction that the location of the Arboretum was the right place to begin the work to find a solution to the issues facing them and the ones the state and nation would face in the future is inspiring and a legacy to us. We are evidently not only the first non-profit in Arizona but the first institution to address the issues facing people in the arid and semi-arid areas of the world.

Often when we think of arboretums or other institutions, we focus on ourselves and what we enjoy such as a nice place to walk or to view wildlife and flowers. Their focus, on the other hand, was on what could be accomplished in such a place, including research, education and conservation. They marveled at the opportunity before them to address the serious issues of the day. Sadly, the problems of world hunger and the need for our economy to diversify still remain. Yes, the Arboretum still has much work to do.

Before we undertake or renew our efforts to address challenges originally envisioned to be worked on at the Arboretum, I have spent the last year making sure we were ready to embark upon any new initiative. As with any 80 year old institution, there was a need to catch up on maintenance and finish some projects that had been started. With your help, we have accomplished a great deal this year. The Australian Pavilion/Ethno-botanical Garden, the Australian Aboriginal Seep and what we are now calling Papuana Pass have been completed. In addition, a major planting to provide a framework for the South American Exhibit has been completed as a result of last year's Research, Collections and Exhibits Appeal. Additionally, the Smith Building Interpretive Area has been completely redone.

I also wanted to ensure our foundation was strong. Our foundation is our membership. Visitors can come and go, as evidently can state funding. It is our membership that allows us to continue year after year. With the addition of our Membership Coordinator and our Member Services person, we can finally provide the service and value needed to maintain a strong and engaged membership. In addition, we would like to freshen up the picnic area and facilities that are used by our members. The foundation of any institution must be maintained or it will flounder.

There are two projects that are critical before we move forward. Efforts to restore the display greenhouses in the Smith building have been attempted for over 10 years. The majority of the wood is still the original bald cypress used back in 1926. In the near future, I hope to announce we have a stunning opportunity for these greenhouses and the Arboretum needs to be ready. For staff, it is a constant reminder that we need to protect and care for what we have first. Although a portion of the funds has been raised, we are still short of the amount required to commence the restoration.

The other project is our water supply and distribution system. Director Gibson wrote in his report to the Board on April 3, 1950, "This question of an adequate water supply has been one of the most vexing problems in the 26 years that we have been here." This issue has never been resolved. Sufficient water is necessary to protect our priceless plant collection. A water supply system that maximizes its use and allows for conservation of this valuable resource is critical. To quote Mr. Gibson again in the November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1935 Board Report, "For several years, the question of increasing our water supply has been referred to in these reports and the reason for repetition in on account of its urgency". For the Arboretum to embrace new projects, it is critical that we are on sound footing and have the infrastructure in place to seize the opportunities in front of us. Several solutions to the water supply problem are still being evaluated.

With these projects completed, we will be able to focus more directly on our mission of research, conservation, education and recreation. Over the coming years, we will be able to create the research collections, facilities and staffing necessary to address the challenges that faced us in the past and are still facing us today. With your help, I am confident the Arboretum will be part of the solution.