President’s Letter

June 2004

You have in your hands one of the best issues of the Central Spine I’ve seen since I became a member. Why? Because it’s all about Agaves, just about my favorite plants! And I didn’t even suggest the topic! I want to thank Gard Roper, Jim Elliott and Sean Dundas for contributing such fine articles, librarian Paul Schueneman for featuring books about Agaves and Nick Diomede for putting it together so well.

I have always thought that the Central Spine could be a really great newsletter but it would take more members of the club to step up and share some of the knowledge they have about their favorite plants. I hope that everyone who reading this newsletter will think seriously about following Gard, Jim and Sean’s example.

I was unable to contribute a letter last month because I was out of the country. So, I will take this opportunity to thank EVERYONE who contributed to the success of this year’s Show and Sale. It was a great success.

The plant entries where wonderful. Congratulations to all of you who entered plants. Whether you won a blue ribbon or not, you’re a winner in my book for participating in the Show. It is the one time of the year that we can share our love of cacti and succulents with the general public. I know that people were dazzled by the plants, most of which had never seen before. In fact, eight people decided to join the CACSS!

The plant sale set a record. The word is out that our sale is the place to buy great, unusual plants. Friday sales were especially strong. This tells me that people will make room in their schedules (even sneak away from work) if the occasion is special enough...and our sale is! Combined with the show, the sale helps us reach out to the public and educate them about these fantastic plants we grow.

Speaking of education, we have two exciting programs scheduled for June and July. This month we have Brian Kemble, botanist at the Ruth Bancroft Garden in California, telling us all about growing Aloe plants. I like aloes for their profusion of blooms beginning in the late winter and continuing throughout the Spring. I have two varieties which are in bloom right now! In July, Chris Monrad, co-chairman of the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society’s Rescue Committee, will be here to tell us all about their plant reclamation efforts. Chris has been one of the prime movers behind this incredibly successful program. Don’t miss this opportunity to see what we would like to get started in the Phoenix area.

As always, I hope to see you at our next meeting.

Agave Fever—Sean Dundas

There has been a rather large ‘bug’ going around the valley that has been causing sudden addiction to agaves and other cacti. Having a very supportive father really helps me out by answering any of my questions about how much I need to water the agaves etc. Since I have joined the CACSS I have met many new friends who support me as well. One great thing about agaves is that they reproduce or ‘pup’ as us agave lovers like to say. These pups are miniature versions of the adult agave, just like baby humans. These little pups fly around as we network with our new CACSS friends.

I am a musician and play the drums, so I have been working really hard mowing lawns and dog sitting to save up for a drum set. However, I got infected badly and my wallet suffers by the agave virus my dad brought in the house with him. I have noticed that I am not the only victim of this nasty bug.

I am making this ‘bug’ sound a lot worse than it really is because if it weren’t for the ‘bug’, I would have never won two blue ribbons and a marble trophy with my name engraved on it! I want to thank all of my supportive friends even though there is no cure for this sickness. I hope you all have a good summer and have good luck keeping all of your cacti alive through the summer heat!

Sean Dundas is the CACSS 2004 Junior Novice Award winner
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Calendar

June 27, 2004 2:00 PM (Sunday)
CACSS: Brian Kemble, botanist at Ruth Bancroft Garden located in
Walnut Creek, CA. Brian’s presentation will be on Aloes and the 80+
species of Aloes in cultivation at the garden.

July 1-3, 2004 All day (Thursday - Sunday)
CACSS: Cactomaniac’s Educational trip to Los Angeles and Visit to
Lotusland. CACSS Members Only.

July 25, 2004 2:00 PM (Sunday)
CACSS: Chris Monrad, co-chairman of the Tucson Cactus and
Succulent Society’s Rescue Program, will describe their efforts to
save native cacti and succulents from the bulldozer blades of land
developers. This is a program we are considering implementing here
in Phoenix.

August 29, 2004 2:00 PM (Sunday)
CACSS: Doug Dawson. Exploration of the Southern Fifth of Namibia,
Summer 2004 Hiking from sunrise to sunset and camping out for 3
to 4 weeks in the South of Namibia provides an up close perspective
on many of the exotic succulent species we cherish in our plant
collections.

EVENTS OF INTEREST IN THE SOUTHWEST AREA

July 2-3, 2004 10:30 AM - 4:30 PM (Friday & Saturday)
CSSA: Hundreds of award-winning plants will be on view as the
Cactus and Succulent Society of America presents its annual show
and sale. This prestigious event will feature “the best of the best”
from prize-winning growers nationwide. Stop by the sale area and
pick up some unusual specimens to add to your own succulent
collection, or tour The Huntington’s 10-acre Desert Garden. General
admission. Friends’ Hall

July 17, 2005 12:00 - 5:00 PM
HENRY SHAW CACTUS SOCIETY: Annual Show and Sale at the Missouri
Botanical Garden

August 14 - 15, 2005 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM (Saturday & Sunday)
19th ANNUAL INTER-CITY CACTUS AND SUCCULENT SHOW
L.A. County Arboretum, 301 N. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia, CA
The largest and finest cactus and Succulent Show Anywhere!

September 14, 2004 7:00 PM (Tuesday)
ARIZONA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY: Wendy Hardy & Daryl Workman
The first meeting after our Summer break will be an interesting
presentation from the City of Scottsdale regarding the native plant
salvage program. Please mark you calendar to join us, and invite a
friend or two!

WWW.CENTRALARIZONACACTUS.ORG

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the author(s).
Queen Victoria’s Agaves (Agave victoria reginae)  
JIM ELLIOTT  WWW.ARIZONACACTUSSALES.COM

This is a large and varied family of agaves with many named varieties or forms which sometimes is lumped with a second named species: King Ferdinand’s Agave (Agave ferdinand regis). As a Nurseryman I love to have as many named species/varieties/forms/hybrids as possible for the ‘collector’ who has to have it all. More to sell. Old Chap.

However, this family of beautiful agaves really makes the point: If you don’t absolutely know your plants you had better absolutely know your Nurseryman! Some of these forms are among the most beautiful and desirable agaves ever grown while others tend to become “Ho, Hum” as they mature. I will attempt to outline some of the distinctions among these forms based on 25 years of growing them. There is a lot of confusion with various sources using the same name for different forms or different names for the same form.

Omatum: this name is usually assigned to those Queen Victoria’s most heavily marked with white lines on the dark green leaves. This form normally has a lot of leaves and grows fairly compactly. This trait leads directly to the first confusion as agaves are often offered as......

Compacta: tends to have short leaves and often more than average. It may or may not have the spectacular white lines of ‘Omatum’. It does tend to grow very slowly and does not become extremely large for the species. About 15 to 18 inches wide is normally tops.

Variegated: would be better served if called ‘forma marginata’ as the variegation is concentrated along the outer edges of the leaves. The plants I have seen run a little larger in size with longer leaves than ‘compacta’.

King Ferdinand: is now accepted as an extremely open form of Queen Victoria. Its’ decorative white lines (a form of bud marking that occurs when the leaves are young and held tightly to the plant’s core) tend to be much narrower as the leaves are relatively much longer and often have more pronounced terminal spines, I often defer to Gard Roper who has become an acknowledged expert on agaves. Gard points out that the King Ferdinands often have multiple terminal spines (usually four) which makes them unique in the world of agaves. With the longer leaves this form can grow much larger in overall dimensions although 22 to 24 inches wide is still about as large as our cultivated plants get.

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

There is a significant difference among the Queen Victoria and Kind Ferdinand in the amount of sunlight they can handle in our low deserts. Omatum and Compacta require at least afternoon shade and do best in full day filtered sunlight In full sun most of the forms normally assigned to Queen Victoria’s agaves will be scarred and often die from too much afternoon sun. In contrast the forms normally recognized as King Ferdinand’s agaves will stand up to full sun if they are established before the onset of summer. In fact the best looking King Ferdinand agaves are attained from full sun positions with regular watering at least once a month.

This difference that we have observed has long been a mystery to me since the two forms grow on adjoining sky islands in habitat In discussing this with Gard Roper, Gard has a theory that might provide the answer to the deviation of traits among forms of this variable species. When he was studying the plants in habitats near Monterrey, Mexico, he observed that the most compact forms often grew on fairly vertical surfaces while the rounded tops of the hills had the more open form called King Ferdinand. Gard speculates that the cliff face dwelling plants have evolved into forms having the maximum number of leaves and a minimum of surface exposure to the strong winds as their access to moisture is much less. They have to take up what they need very quickly as the water flows off almost immediately. In contrast those plants growing in more level areas would be able to take up water at a more leisurely rate so did not have to evolve the very compressed form to minimize surface exposure.

I have never been to the habitats but in general the King Ferdinands do have a more reflective surface with a grayish cast to their green color while the Queen Victorias tend more to a bright green color. The difference in habitat (flat versus vertical) could account for this difference also as the cliff face itself would tend to shade the Queen Victoria agaves during a larger part of the day.

Weeks after writing about the compact (Queen Victoria) versus open (King Ferdinand) growth characteristic of this agave family, I have just realized that I have been observing a reinforcing piece of information for years. Observing yes, but not really seeing. A not too unusual status it seems.

The offsets of the Queen Victoria end of the complex stay close to home. They are tucked up under the parent plant without any apparent separation as those of us who have tried to propagate from offsets are well aware. You practically have to dig the parent out completely to affect separation. However, the King Ferdinand branch of the family has much more independent offsets. They can push out under the ground a considerable distance before surfacing and creating an independent plant. cont. on page 6.
Twenty-two years have passed since Dr. Howard Gentry published his landmark research “Agaves of Continental America” (1982, University of Arizona Press). New species have been discovered and new information now supports a few revisions in Gentry’s standard taxonomy. The approximate species count in Genus Agave is 200 species, with 47 more subspecies and varieties (Garcia-Mendoza, Cactus and Succulent Journal, Vol. 74). Agaves growing in terrain as rough as the Grand Canyon, Arizona are only occasionally available in the U.S. nursery market. Much material remains unattained in the vast wilderness areas.

Fabrication of names with no scientific foundation harms comprehension when these names proliferate by the hundreds. One might well ask, “Why not use Gentry’s nomenclature with a few revisions and new species added?” Sources of name confusion: (1) Invention of new names on the internet takes seconds, but few are ever expunged. (2) Revisions of Gentry by Ulrich, some useful but mostly not, have led to two names for the same species in numerous instances, example; (Agave scabra/Agave asperrima, etc.) (3) Invention of common names such as the sharkskin agave, ferdinand regis, durango delight or the blue wave refer to better forms, the best clones or hybrids. Common names cause confusion especially when they proliferate and are not well organized or available.

Before Gentry’s research Agave taxonomy was described as “utterly useless” by Dr. P. Standley in 1920. Eight hundred of the proposed species had an eighty percent error rate. See Gentry for the twenty-four names expunged under just Agave angustifolia. (Gentry 1982, p.559) Taxonomy rarely managed any agave that came into collections. Debate was endless. Even the best taxonomists were defeated by either remaining in their armchairs or in Europe. No one was willing or able to do the volume of required fieldwork until Dr. Gentry spent part of forty-two years on his research, much of it on dirt roads or on pack mules. Today new highways allow easier access. Since 1995, when internet communication became commonplace, “name confusion” has increased markedly again and threatens to block daily use of a good taxonomy.

Recently, agave availability in U.S. nurseries has increased greatly. Several energetic seed collectors are going down the “road from hell” repeatedly until they find seed. Three nurseries where new agave availability is occurring are: Starr Nursery, Tucson, AZ; Mesa Garden, Belin, NM; and Rancho Soledad, Oceanside, CA. The first two have internet plant lists. Mesa Garden has a seed list including ones not available elsewhere. Mesa Garden needs time to respond due to 200,000 orders a year. Agaves survive mail order easily. Use the Google search engine to locate nurseries or use these URL’s: www.starr-nursery.com www.mesagarden.com www.ranchosoledad.com/home.asp

New species discovery has increased recently due to better Mexican government funding (Raul Fuente-Martinez. D.B.G. staff). Abasai Garcia-Mendoza (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico) and his students appear to be the leading researchers on Genus Agave today (Cactus and Succulent Journal, Vol. 74, Pg 177).

New Agave species list:
1. Agave delamateri
2. Agave ellemeetiana
3. Agave filifera ssp.microcopsis
4. Agave gerris-mendoza
5. Agave gentryii
6. Agave grisalvensis
7. Agave hidalgensis
8. Agave isthmensis
9. Agave ovatafola
10. Agave montana
11. Agave petrophila
12. Agave philipsiana
13. Agave rzedowski
14. Agave tenifolia
15. Agave valenciana
16. Agave warelliana
17. Agave wendtii

*Agave guadalajarana* grows at 5000 feet elevation twenty miles North of Guadalajara in the State of Jalisco, Mexico.
From this list of new agaves currently available for purchase, include numbers 8, 9, and 10. Others will take time to reach market, but attention might speed this up. Thirteen proposed new discoveries are numbered 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16. Newly discovered localities are 2 and 16. Numbers 5 and 6 are agaves covered in Gentry but have major new taxonomic perspectives.

1. *Agave delameteri*, group ditepalae: A “cultivar" in the Tonto Basin of Arizona found only by Native American ruins, a food agave most similar to *Agave palmeri* and *Agave murpheyi*. Wendy Hodgson of D.B.G. research states “cultivar traits include sterility, clonality, prolific bulbil production, and ancient cultivation.” Domesticated cultivars are very different from wild agaves. Sixty clones make up the entire population of *Agave delameteri*. The sonoran desert trail at D.B.G. shows an example of a rock check dam used to grow agaves. These cultivar gardens were deserted around 1400AD and some agaves stayed in just that location untended and reproducing by offsets for 600 years.

2. *Agave ellemettiiana*, group choritepalae: has been recently located in a high altitude cloud forest in Oaxaca by Garcia-Mendoza. Previously *Agave ellemettiiana* grew at Kew Gardens in London, UK since 1877 with the original location unknown. It is an attractive soft green agave related to *Agave guiengola*.

3. *Agave filifera*, ssp. microceps. group filiferae: discovered by Myron Kinnach in Sinaloa state, similar to *Agave filifera* but smaller, offsets in dense clumps.

4. *Agave garcia-mendoza*, group marginatae: large for the group marginatae, five feet in height, dark green leaves, found in the Mexican states of Hidalgo, San Luis Potosi and Queretaro.

5. *Agave gatesyi*, group salmianae: renamed from Gentry’s *Agave macrocalyx*, a medium sized slow growing agave similar to *Agave salmiana*, three feet tall by four wide with very thick strong olive green leaves.

6. *Agave grijalvensis*, group marginatae: this Chiapas agave was named *Agave kewensis* by Gentry (1982, Pg624). Bernd Ullrich moved it from group sisalanae to group marmoratae. It does not offset and is rare. Garcia-Mendoza has a photo of it in Vol. 24 of the Cactus and Succulent Journal.

7. *Agave hidalgonis*, group marginatae: At a height of five feet this species is large for the marginatae. It is located N.E. of Mexico City in Hidalgo State and is not yet available in the U.S. Caution: It is not the same agave being sold as *Agave hidalgo* in Phoenix nurseries which seems most similar to *Agave kerchovei*. The agave sold in Phoenix nurseries was located in Hidalgo State with uncertain identification. Most confusion in the genus occurs in group marginatae due to many intermediate forms and hybrids.

Also, group marginatae is likely to produce the largest number of new species.

8. *Agave isthmensis*, group hiemiflorae: one of the most beautiful agaves in the genus, fifteen inches in diameter,
tight globose form, more beautiful with age. It is similar to *Agave potatorum*, *Agave pygmaea* and *Agave seemanniana*. It grows on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec near the Pacific Ocean where Mexico is the most narrow. The Isthmus is always beastly hot twelve months a year. Before the species was identified and discovered one clone was sold under a Japanese clonal name. All existing *Agave isthmensis* appear to be offsets of this one plant. This plant offsets vigorously and is for sale at Starr Nursery in Tucson. Demand outstrips supply for brief periods.

*(9) Agave ovatafolia*, group parryanae: Three feet tall by four feet wide in fifteen years, slow grower, open wide ovate light lime green leaves makes this one of the prizes in the genus. It is from Nueva Leon State south of Texas. *Agave ovatafolia* is most similar to *Agave havardiana*. It will be available by late summer of 2004 from Starr Nursery in Tucson. An article is pending on this agave in the Cactus and Succulent Journal.

*(10) Agave montana*, group salmianae: *Agave montana* is the highest altitude agave in the genus at 10,000 feet. This very dark green agave grows south of Monterrey, Mexico. It is a slow grower to five feet tall by six wide. It needs filtered sun, a big planting hole with rich soil and lots of water to thrive in Phoenix. It is closest to *Agave salmiana* but more beautiful. Go to the Google search engine and enter *Agave montana*. You will see interesting photos on several web sites and where to mail order this agave.

*(11) Agave petrophila*, group striatae: It grows on cliffs like the ancestral *Agave dasiloides*. It has many numerous narrow leaves and is from Oaxaca and Guerrero states. Leo Martin saw it growing on cliffs on his last trip to Mexico and said it was beautiful. It takes a lot of time and risk to collect seed from cliff growing agaves. Brian Kemble and Kelly Griffin solved this problem by repelling over the cliff face on ropes to facilitate their publication on *Agave dasiloides*.

*(12) Agave philipsiiana*, group diptepalae: This cultivar was discovered in the Grand Canyon, Arizona and recently found in the Verde Valley, Arizona, used for food (Wendy Hodgeman, D.B.G.). In 1400AD, lower elevation sites in the Grand Canyon produced food that was traded to higher elevation locations near Kayenta, in geographic areas too cold for agave cultivation (Kayenta Anastazi).

*(13) Agave rzedowski*, group striatae: it is a small primitive agave like *Agave petrophilla*, from Jalisco and Sinaloa states (Carrillo-Reyes, Aivna Ramirez Delgadillo, 2003).

*(14) Agave temuijolia*, group striatae: unattractive floppy narrow leaves similar to *Agave striata*, offsets in dense clumps.

*(15) Agava valenciana*, group marmoratae: potentially very interesting like all the marmoratae group, *Agave zebra*, *Agave marmorata* and *Agave gypsophyla*. It is a very new discovery from western Jalisco state (Chazaro 2003).

*(16) Agava warelliana*, group polycephalae: The locality was found for the first time as a wild plant by Garcia-Mendoza at the Pico de Orizaba Volcano, Veracruz, and LaTrinitaria, Chiapas. It has an interesting triangular shaped leaf. Prior to Garcia Mendoza’s discovery, *Agava warelliana* grew at La Mortola Garden in Italy since 1912 without anyone knowing its habitat.

*(17) Agava wendtii*, group polycephalae: Most similar to *Agava pendula*, small soft leaves, lives on a cliff face, only accessible by taking a boat down a remote river in Chiapas (discovered by Dr. Chazaro).

A formal published update of Agaves of Continental North America is needed. Gentry’s book remains landmark taxonomy but is not user friendly for quick reference. Gentry simply could not do definitive taxonomy and convenient reference at the same time. The key need is for better photos of all agaves in the genus. Gentry’s solid taxonomic base makes an update on Genus Agave feasible.

Garcia Mendoza makes a suggested limit for Genus Agave publication. “I consider the Genus Agave to consist of only the subgenera Agave and Littea” Cactus and Succulent Journal, Vol. 74, p.178). Manfrieda and related genera need to be covered separately. This new agave list is also a tool to organize future discoveries. Four additional new species of agave are expected (Garcia-Mendoza). The Mexico City collection at the University (U.N.A.M) is the place to start a review of new species. Chad Davis at D.B.G. and Greg Starr in Tucson helped compile this list.

This characteristic affects the moisture retaining ability of the parent plants in a major way. The tightly held offsets of Queen Victoria magnify the minimal exposure of the compact plants growing on extreme slopes while the more independent growth style of the King Ferdinand’s offsets would have minimal effect on the parent plant.

**Juvenile Forms**

Nature had a real field day with this family. In addition to the confusing proliferation of sizes, markings, and compactness; many of the plants have distinct differences between their juvenile forms and more mature plants. The small offsets of many of our ‘Qmatum’ and ‘Compacta’ varieties have narrower and longer leaves than the parent plant! This makes it especially important to the customer to know and trust the Nursery as the most spectacular forms of the Queen Victoria agave are not obviously special when they are small and affordable.

Another example of this age related maturation of traits occurs with the relatively new form called ‘Variegated’.

The young offsets have a fairly muted yellowish color along their margins which matures into a distinctively golden color with age. As with most variegates it tends to be sensitive to too much afternoon sunlight.
Agaves: Our Newsletter theme this month is agaves. We have several great publications in our library that can help you learn even more about these fascinating plants.

**Agaves, Yuccas & Related Plants**, by Mary and Gary Irish. (2000, 312 pp, hardcover). This is your librarian’s favorite agave book. Mary and Gary Irish (former director of public horticulture at the Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix, Arizona and photographer/plant geographer, respectively) provide a wealth of information on the cultivation and gardening uses of Agave and Yucca, as well as several other American genera in the family Agavaceae, including discussion of their cultivation in more adverse climates like Phoenix. Includes keys for identification and some 100 color photographs and 18 drawings.

**Agaves of Continental North America**, by Howard Scott Gentry. (1982, 670 pp). A classic, this book is based on twenty-five years of research on the genus Agave. It combines an authoritative taxonomic treatment and extensive ethnobotanical information with an attractive, readable text which has much to offer both scientists and laypersons. Gentry has gathered together enough material on Agave taxonomy, distribution, ethnobotany and cultivation to make two or three books and presented it in an informative and engaging fashion.

**The Agaves of Baja California**, by Howard Scott Gentry. (1978, 119 pp, paperback). This is a systematic and economic account of plants of the genus Agave, family Agavaceae, that are indigenous to Baja California and the adjacent areas of the Gulf of California. Taxonomically, it is a revision of the three generic groups established by William Trelease in 1912. The economic aspects of the plants are represented by historical notes on Indian uses. Under various species there are reports of modern attempts to exploit agaves for fiber and chemical constituents.


**Arizona Highways**, November 2001. Mostly aesthetic, this issue has fantastic pictures of agaves in their Arizona habitat.

**How Do I Check Out CACSS Books?** To see a list of the books we have please see our catalog. Paul Schueneman, the CACSS librarian, can email you a copy of the catalog (see contact information at the end of this article). Or, you can pick up a catalog from him at a CACSS meeting. Or, there’s a copy of the catalog on the CACSS website: www.centralarizonacactus.org/liblist.htm. When you would like to check out books or journals, contact Paul at least a couple of days before the CACSS meeting and he will give the books to you there or he will go with you to Webster Auditorium (our books are shelved there) after the meeting and you can browse/check out books.

**Have You Seen Them?** We cannot locate Vol. 4 of the Euphorbia Journal or Cacti by V. Cerutti (1998, 126 pp). If you know where either of these 2 books are, could you please contact the Librarian (see the bottom of this article for contact information). Thanks!!!

**Book Returns:** We currently have 29 books checked out. Over the past few months we have had a couple of our meetings off site and I have missed several meetings so there has been no opportunity to return books. I will be at all of the upcoming meetings so could you please return your books. Or, if you happen to be at the DBG you can leave them off anytime at the plant shop with Judy Brody or Muriel Beroza. Several checked out books have been requested by fellow society members. Thanks!!!

**Binding:** Several of our older books, particularly the paperbacks, are starting to fall apart. Some of the books cannot be replaced (eBay, Alibris, etc. do not have them). Does anyone know how to bind books or have the equipment they could loan me to do it? Professional bookbinding is beyond the library’s budget.

**Need Help?** Contact the CACSS librarian, Paul Schueneman:
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Goodbye to Gus Hermann

CACSS members have lost a good friend with the death of Gus Hermann, Sr., on May 28, 2004, at his home in Florence, Arizona. Many of us remember his Open House a few years ago just before he moved to Florence Gardens. His place was an absolute profusion of cactus, succulents, bushes, and trees. No matter how fiercely the sun shone on the neighborhood, Gus’s backyard was always several degrees cooler buried in deep shade. As Gus moved from one visitor to the next, his enthusiasm for plants, rocks, and people was evident. Nobody was a stranger for more than a couple of minutes. He rapidly loaded each person up with offsets, cuttings, and the knowledge of how to grow them and where they came from.

His relocation to Florence Gardens was hugely successful, especially for his cacti which now had enough sunlight to bloom. His new home really became nearly Heaven when his son A. J. and wife Sherry moved to the Gardens when they retired. Now he had it all with wonderful neighbors, room to roam, his plants, and his family.

Gus, with his dog Ruffy, had to make many trips back to the Valley for medical help in his fight with prostate cancer. He often stopped at our Nursery either coming or going to share his excitement over the latest blooms and to share his latest photos. He never had a down word about his own health. Instead he worked to pick up everyone’s spirits with a new set of photos (usually of Sunrise or Sunset with rainbow-hued clouds). I swear Gus must have kept Kodak in business all by himself with the profuse photography taken on his daily hikes around the neighborhood.

Gus and his family traveled extensively through the Southwest on camping trips. Their interests in cactus and minerals grew with each discovery. As Gus became more proficient in the identification of cactus he found some that were new to science. Pediocactus simpsonii, variety hermannii, is named for him. Gus found it in Zion National Park along a back road that is no longer open to the motoring public. When we asked him about the plant, Gus doubted that he could find it again after the Park Service rerouted the roads. I wouldn’t have bet against him, especially if there were interesting rock samples in the area. Gus and his daughter-in-law Sherry joined the CACSS in the early 80’s. They attended meetings regularly and it was only when Gus’s hearing began failing that he stopped attending. His enthusiasm for plants never ended and he had several experiments and projects underway this year. I will certainly miss his knowledge and uplifting personality. Those of you who met Gus will certainly add: “Amen”.

Jim Elliott