



*Dr. Samuel Ayres, Jr.*

#### Medal of Honor Award

**E**ACH YEAR the Garden Clubs of America selects through its 182 member clubs throughout the country a person on whom to bestow its prestigious Medal of Honor, "awarded for outstanding and distinguished service to horticulture." This year's award was presented to Dr. Samuel Ayres, Jr. at the annual medal awards dinner in Birmingham, Alabama, last April 5th. Dr. Ayres, accompanied by Mrs. Ayres, was there to receive the presentation from Mrs. Robert Homans, the club's National Medal Awards Chairman.

Dr. Ayres' name was submitted by the Diggers Club of Pasadena through Mrs. Stephen M. Farrand, the Diggers Club medal awards chairman. In listing his contributions to horticulture, Mrs. Farrand was at the same time setting forth Dr. Ayres' unique position in the field. As most Southern Californians with more than a passing interest in plants know, Dr. Ayres was largely responsible for the creation of the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, selecting the site and leading

the citizens' committee work necessary to persuade local and state authorities to purchase the land. For 35 years he has been collecting seeds from Hawaii, South America and Australia during vacation periods from his profession as a dermatologist, giving most of them to the Arboretum for testing and evaluation as part of the Plant Introduction program.

In addition, Dr. Ayres, together with Dr. Mildred Mathias, vice-chairman, at the time, of the botany department at UCLA, the late Ralph Cornell, landscape architect and photographer, Henry Davis, publisher, the California Arboretum Foundation, the Southern California Horticultural Institute, and Los Angeles Beautiful, undertook the publication of a series of booklets dealing with the many colorful plants that could be grown in Southern California. This was a five-year project which resulted in the publication of five colorful booklets. In 1974, the booklets were combined into a single publication, *Color For the Landscape: Flowering Plants For Sub-Tropical Climates*, fulfilling yet another of Dr. Ayres' many projects aimed at enriching the horticultural community for the benefit of the people.

Today, at age 84 and with no thought of retiring, Dr. Ayres continues working both in his profession and as an amateur horticulturist intent on helping to make Southern California and Los Angeles more beautiful places in which to live.

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Mrs. E. W. Menninger

**A**S HAS BEEN observed in these notes before, the Arboretum has been the recipient of many gifts in its 30-year history, and it is no exaggeration to say that its plant collections, library, and other departmental divisions have been greatly enriched by the generosity of a long succession of garden-loving friends.

One of the Arboretum's most dedicated friends is Mrs. E. W. Menninger, a close neighbor and one of the first ten members of the California Arboretum Foundation. On several occasions during 1977, Mrs. Menninger donated various books, research equipment, and plants to the Foundation which, in accord with legal requirements, requested the Board of Supervisors to accept them on behalf of the County for use by the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum. At a Board meeting held last January 31, the Board gratefully acted upon a motion entered by Supervisor Peter F. Schabarum, accepted Mrs. Menninger's gift with thanks, and expressed its appreciation in a letter to her which noted that the items were valued at almost \$30,000 and would "further enhance the many activities at the Arboretum."

#### Retirement

**I**N THE FALL of 1956, a new telephone operator was hired at the Arboretum to operate a new switchboard in a new administration building that was about to be dedicated. The operator was Marge Wood, a soft-spoken, good-humored lady with an infectious laugh who before long came to be known as the "voice of the Arboretum."

Last March 30, after 22 years of service, Marge was the guest of honor at a retirement luncheon held in the Arboretum lecture hall. Among the 125 fellow workers and friends who attended were a number of Arboretum retirees who came from all parts of the county. A highlight of the program was a recorded take-off on comedienne Lily Tomlin's famous switch board-operator skit. The proceedings ended with the presentation of a service pin and a number of gifts, including a large money tree that was grown especially for Marge, and a warm round of farewells for a lady who will be long remembered.





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