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California Horticulture Oral History Series

Wayne Roderick

CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTSMAN:
UC BERKELEY BOTANICAL GARDEN, TILDEN BOTANIC GARDEN

With an Introduction by
Walter Knight

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1990

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*Photographed in U.C. Botanical Garden
by Suzanne B. Riess*

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Introduction by Walter Knight, Field Associate, California Academy of Sciences Botany Department.

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INTRODUCTION--by Walter Knight

Wayne Roderick and I were both born in Petaluma, and we lived only a half mile apart, but since I am seven years older our paths never crossed during school years.

After World War II Wayne and his parents conducted a nursery business and my wife and I had an interior decorating shop. Both of our enterprises were on the property where we were born.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s my wife, Irja, would go to the Roderick Nursery to buy plants to enhance the area about the garden. But it was not until about 1961 that I met Wayne for the first time. It was one Saturday morning when he came to our shop to buy some window shades for a house he had recently purchased in Berkeley. He had given up his nursery business and begun employment with the University of California at their Berkeley botanical garden in the native Californian plant area.

At the time I was much interested in photography and seemed to be attracted to taking pictures of flowers although I did not know one plant from the other. During our conversation while preparing the window shades, we both became aware that we had something in common--plants. The rest of the day was spent in looking over my slides. It resulted that I had taken many pictures of native material. Wayne said that most of his botanical experience had been with ornamentals and that even though he had been assigned to the university's native area, he could learn a lot more about the botany of California.

We agreed that if he would come to Petaluma after work on Fridays, we could go on field trips over the weekend and further our knowledge of the local flora. So each Saturday morning Wayne and his mother would accompany Irja and me to some interesting place where we could photograph and collect plants. When Wayne would return the next Friday, the four of us would get together and study the pictures from the previous weekend. With the help of literature we would identify the plants as they appeared on the screen. This routine continued for a couple of years until we all became more comfortable with our ability to identify and grow the plants that we had studied.

Wayne continued to work at the University of California botanical garden in Berkeley until 1976. He became director of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Berkeley where he remained until his retirement.

All during the time he worked at Berkeley, it was apparent to all of his friends that he had a special devotion to his mother. Each weekend he would go to Petaluma to assist her with shopping and some of the heavier chores in her garden.

Paralleling this time, in 1965 I went to work as a gardener for the same Regional Parks Botanic Garden and soon was working as supervisor. In 1971 I became supervisor of several developing parks within the East Bay Regional Parks District. In 1979 I became a park administrator working out of the main office. Tilden Park and the Regional Parks Botanic Garden were placed in my jurisdiction.

The best part of this development was that Wayne and I had the opportunity of being together again. I soon learned that he had enhanced the management of the botanic garden considerably since I had left it in 1971. He had started a winter lecture series for the visitors' center. Highly qualified speakers attracted large audiences to the little auditorium to hear of the latest horticultural methods or see a slide show of interesting field trips.

He also enhanced the garden by installing a freshwater pond with many plants found within the California botanical province. The water gradually seeped out of the first pond constructed, so Wayne found a garden patron who "bankrolled" a plastic liner which was placed at the bed of the pond and the problem was solved.

Also, he inspired a crew of volunteers to do watering in the garden and to remove the sporadic seedlings. These seedlings were carefully canned and labelled and later sold at what turned out to be an annual spring plant sale. The proceeds of the sale were put into a trust fund used for garden development. Ultimately, some of the good things which resulted were a chain link fence around an addition to the garden, a 495 page garden guide, which I had the good fortune to compile, and paved paths for easy access.

Thus many good things happened to considerably enhance the quality of the garden, largely because of Wayne's ability to generate friendships with garden visitors and to bring his old friends to assist in garden maintenance and development. For example, Ted Kipping, a tree shaper, brought his crew to do tree surgery and eliminated growth detrimental to some of the trees. This would have drained the botanic garden budget considerably if an "outsider" had been hired to take care of this.

Also, the Regional Parks Botanical Garden became a showcase for lily displays as well as other small plants which were never featured in the garden before Wayne's time. He took a special liking to bulb plants and became an expert in their cultivation.

Our contact with each other during Wayne's last couple of years at the garden was fortunate as he never liked to do anything with record keeping or paper work. He always delegated those duties, so I was happy to help him with his office work as I knew that would enable him to spend more time on projects within his area of expertise. Also, as I was handy with carpentry, I built some shelves and cabinets to make his office facility better.

I always had the feeling that I was the culprit who forced Wayne's retirement from the garden because when I left in 1981, Wayne said, "I'll be damned if I'm going to do any of that paper work, so I'm quitting too!"

During the time of his association with nurseries, botanic gardens, and the California Horticultural Society, he developed a skill in formulation, care, and maintenance of rock gardens. He was asked to lecture on the subject in Canada and England. He travelled to Spain, Turkey, Russia, and Mexico in his pursuit of horticultural knowledge. He always collected seed whenever he could and has conducted a seed exchange program for many years.

During his foreign travel he has met many world-renowned horticulturists and maintained contact with them. His home in Orinda has been open constantly to guests interested in plants, and he has taken them on field trips to all his favorite collecting sites.

Over the years I have been fortunate in becoming acquainted with scores of botanists and horticulturists interested in the California flora. For the most part, these individuals are never bored during their working career or in their retirement. Their vocation is their hobby. Many of them never take the time to watch television as they have almost total dedication to their prime activity. Wayne goes even beyond this as I have never known any of his waking moments that he is not engaged in a horticultural or botanical pursuit.

In retirement, Wayne probably makes as much of a contribution to the botanic garden as he did when he was director, as he volunteers so much of his time to it.

As a side note, Martha, Wayne's mother, moved from the nursery location in the country to Petaluma where she grew a collection of plants that was the envy of gardeners throughout the country. In fact in the late 1970s she won an award for having the best garden in the area. We took our eight-year-old granddaughter, Tiffany, to visit Martha's garden and even at that young age, she said, "Mrs. Roderick has the most beautiful garden in the world."

Wayne's skill is not only horticulture but in developing friendships. That is why he will be remembered.

Walter Knight
Field Associate, California Academy of
Sciences, Botany Department, San
Francisco

February 22, 1991
Petaluma, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Wayne Roderick's entire life has been dedicated to sharing his knowledge of flowering plants and flowering places. The formal sharing, and educating, has taken the form of running a nursery in Petaluma, California, and two native plant botanic gardens in Berkeley. Informally everyone knows Wayne Roderick through his participation in horticultural societies and garden groups. He is retired now, but he is busy all over the horticultural map. He gives classes in flower arranging, he opens his house and garden annually to, among others, the members of the American Rock Garden Society, Western Chapter, and to his many horticulturist friends, from Oregon and Nevada and abroad. And he gets out into that garden every day and weeds and loves it!

All such formal and informal reasons, as well as admiration for Wayne Roderick's contribution to knowledge of California native plants, inspired David and Evelynne Lennette, originators and sponsors of the California Horticulture Oral History series, to recommend Mr. Roderick to the Regional Oral History Office as an interviewee in the series. Further strong endorsement came from Dr. Robert Ornduff, director of UC Berkeley's Botanical Garden, and from George Waters, editor of Pacific Horticulture.

My first introduction to Wayne Roderick came on March 4, 1990, a drizzly Sunday in spring. It was Open House at 166 Canon Drive in Orinda for members of the American Rock Garden Society, Western Chapter, and it was prime time to see rock garden bulbous plants in situ, some in bloom. Wayne--it was immediately clear that I could address him informally--had already heard about the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library from Adele and Lewis Lawyer, friends from the rock garden and iris worlds and interviewees in the horticulture series, and that day he said he was agreeable to the idea of tape-recording his history.

Interviewing began on April 30, 1990, after Wayne's trip to England and Turkey. We met in his living room for four two-hour sessions that were concluded on June 6th. The interviews were designed to be a chronological account, deriving from Wayne Roderick's vita, where he states he was born in the same home where his father was born, in Petaluma, California and into a "plant-happy family." "I had my first plot of ground before I was five years old...first rock garden by age sixteen."

Wayne and his father Frank Roderick opened a nursery in Petaluma in 1945. In 1959, after the death of his father, Wayne closed the nursery and came down to Berkeley to take a job at UC Berkeley's Botanical Garden. He was head of the California section of the garden, and lecturer there, from 1960 to 1976. He went on to be director of the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden from 1976-1983, and retired in 1983.

In his vita Wayne Roderick describes his specialty as California native bulbs and rock garden plants, as well as bulbs from other lands. In 1966 he received an award from the California Horticultural Society for his contribution to their work. The award particularly noted Wayne's devotion to the horticultural society's seed exchange scheme:

"He collects the seeds, prepares the lists and attends to the dispatch. For almost every one of the monthly meetings he brings plant material and assists in the organization of the discussion sessions... He is frequently to be encountered running errands of mercy for his friends (which means everyone). Given...the opportunity of a foreign vacation he plunges deeply on a detailed reconnaissance of famous and nearly-famous British Gardens, together with a talk to the Royal Horticultural Society...Let him get into the Sierra or the North Coast Ranges or way out into the desert...he will return with booty and information..."

The reward was given for "selfless service."

The thinking behind the oral history interviews was to allow the personal qualities, train of thought and associations, working manner and style of this extraordinary horticulturist to bear witness to itself. Wayne is a "character" by his own and his friends' acknowledgment. He is not without temperament, and certainly not without opinions, reliably and consistently himself. He was completely open to the oral history interview process. Spoken history was a perfect medium for him. Spontaneous, talkative, and un-self-conscious, he needed no encouragement to share his thoughts on the subjects we were documenting and the people we wanted to know more about. He was candid in his choice of words.

Wayne Roderick is also candid in writing. His recent article on "Wildflower Haunts of California" in the Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society [appended] echoes his spoken language. He promises the reader he will "bring the wrath of California down on your head for digging any plant! But California will bless you for taking a little seed... Some of these areas I have personally fought to have set aside, and I will personally hate you, too, if you use this information to exploit them by digging plants." In that article, and with that caveat, he takes the reader on a trip from Oregon in the north, west to Eureka, east to Bristlecone Pines Preserve, and south to Mount Pinos, to find

those wildflower haunts. Lucky the Bulletin reader who can take off and go. "I have left out so many good places that some people will think there is something wrong with me..." he concludes, in characteristic fashion.

Wayne Roderick's knowledge of the propagation of native plants with bulbs, tubers, corms, rhizomes, and rootstocks is probably close to total. He has published on the subject [appended]. His contribution to the Inventory of California Natural Areas and the Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants in California, and his work, soon to be published, on the horticultural value of native plants, is a rare combination of the scholarly and voluntary, born of field experience. Designated by one of his editors, "Ambassador of western petaloid monocots," he is also the guy in the garden next door.

Our inclusion of Wayne Roderick in this series of interviews serves in part to help define the series. To read about his relatively un-academic approach to horticulture, and to realize his abundant native abilities, will be instructive to others in this field which has so much room in it, and so much to offer to everyone, in theory from the five-year old that Wayne was, to the re-entry gardener in pursuit of what has become a most popular and satisfying, if not trendy interest, to plant pathologists, botanists, photographers--all manner of amateurs and professionals.

As I have indicated, Wayne was an open and interested interviewee, and his editing of the interview was swift and efficient. His choice of Walter Knight to introduce the interview was inspired. We asked Adele and Lewis Lawyer to proof-read the oral history, and it is their captions in colloquial Latin that we have included in illustrating young Wayne.

Wayne Roderick's oral history is the third volume completed in the California Horticulture Oral History series. The series is a part of the larger group of interviews conducted by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley on horticulture, botany, and landscape architecture. The oral history office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of the director of The Bancroft Library.

Suzanne B. Riess, Senior Editor

Regional Oral History Office
Berkeley California
May 25, 1991

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Wayne Vernon RoderickDate of birth April 2 1920 Birthplace PetalumaFather's full name Frank S RoderickOccupation Business / Farmer Birthplace PetalumaMother's full name Martha C ~~Abb~~ Albough RoderickOccupation Florist Birthplace Montrose, ColoradoYour spouse _____Your children _____Where did you grow up? PetalumaPresent community OakindaEducation High schoolOccupation(s) Retired horticulturistAreas of expertise Horticulture + BotanyOther interests or activities Photography, Opera, Ballet, Symphon
GardeningOrganizations in which you are active Calif Hort. Soc., Royal Hort
American Rock Garden Alpine Garden Soc Calif Native Plant Soc
Herb Soc. of America

Born in the same home where father was born, in Petaluma Calif. and into a plant happy family.

Had first plot of ground before I was 5 yrs. old.

Was into Orchids as well as succulents by age 14.

First rock garden by age 16.

Had my own strain of asters, Af. marigolds, and polyanthus primroses by age 18.

We started a nursery in 1945 and closed out in 1959 after the death of my father.

Went to work at Univ. of Calif., Berkeley, Bot. Garden as head of the Calif. section and lecturer. 1960-1976

Director of Regional Parks Bot. Garden from 1976-1983

Retired in 1983. (as I say I am now retarded)

I have specialized in our Calif. native bulbs and rock garden plants as well as bulbs from other lands. I have introduced several plants into horticulture. I have two plants named in my honor. I have done much in conservation for some the most interesting botanical areas that I made known.

I have done extensive traveling studying plants from the arctic to the tropics: not less than 12 times to Europe; I have been in Central Asia, China, S. Africa to mention a few.

I am an honorary member of Herb Soc. of America.
Life member Alpine Garden Soc. (England), Calif. Horticulture Soc., and Calif. Native Plant Soc. (and a charter member).
Member of Amer. Rock Garden Soc., Pacific Hort. Foundation, and a Fellow of the Royal Hort. Soc.

Awards:

Man of the Year Univ. of Calif., Berkeley. Cal 1974

" " " Calif. Garden Clubs, Inc. 1977

LePiniec Award Amer. Rock Garden Soc. Ca. 1980

Rixford " Calif. Hort. Soc. Ca. 1965

Annual " " " " 1983

Fellow of the Calif. Native Plant Soc. 1986

Honorary Trustee of Friends of the Bot. Garden. Berkeley 1988

I FAMILY AND EARLY YEARS, 1920-1945

[Interview 1: April 30, 1990]##¹Family Origins

Riess: Tell me about your beginnings.

Roderick: The first thing I can say, I was born in the same house that my father was born in, in Petaluma.

Riess: How did your parents get to Petaluma?

Roderick: My father's father came in the Gold Rush. He was a Portuguese, and he was from the Azores, born and raised there. The name then, I think, was Joseph Rodriguez e Catano, changed to Roderick when he became a citizen in Tuolumne County in the late 1860s. My father's mother's name was Flora. I remember on the ranch they had an old building where a lot of things were stored. Before it was burnt, and I was just a small kid, I found this trunk with a lot of his papers. I saw his citizenship papers, and he had his citizenship papers when Tuolumne City was still the county seat, before it went to Sonora.

Somewhere around 1868, 1869, somewhere around there, as near as I know, he moved to Petaluma. At that time Petaluma was to be just a little village, head of water transportation. The great city was going to be Bloomfield. The population of Bloomfield is still about twenty. He bought whole big blocks out there, too. He had the stage between Petaluma, the head of the water transportation, out to Bloomfield. But Petaluma grew, and he bought some acreage out on the edge of town and finally settled there.

¹This symbol (##) indicates that a tape or segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 142.

Riess: This is your father's father?

Roderick: Yes. And he became the court interpreter.

Riess: Interpreter? For the Spanish-speaking people?

Roderick: Spanish, the Italian, French, and Portuguese. And something tells me, and I don't know yet where I got this idea, German. The pictures we have, he always wore a Homburg hat, always had a tie on, and had a big white flowing beard. He died about five years before I was born.

My father's mother died shortly after he was born. My father [Frank S. Roderick] was number twelve in the family, and the older girls raised him. Again, that's all the information I know because almost all of those died before I was born.

Riess: And when were you born?

Roderick: April 2, 1920. As they always said, I was born a day late. My mother's side of the family, we have records back to the 1660s in New Jersey. I have information from the Revolutionary War, where this one ancestor was a captain in the Revolution and the first governor of Kentucky, and lots of fantastic, interesting information from there on.

Riess: Why did the family come to California?

Roderick: My grandmother on my mother's side [Mary F. Conley]--her husband [Christifer Albush] died, and she remarried [William Davis]. She had heart problems, and in those years, you went from a high elevation to a low elevation. My grandmother and her first husband were married in Kansas and moved to Colorado and bought a property way out at the edge of the country. They had a garrison of soldiers to keep the Indians down. Then when my grandmother got ill they moved to California and lived two or three places here. I can't tell you any more than that.

She had leased the ranch out back there, and finally the family of relatives who were back there wrote saying that the tenants had made such a horrible mess of the ranch, they better get back. So, she moved her seven kids into the tenant's house on her property. They had to get a male teacher that could beat up on at least three of the Jack Dempsey family, because it was the Jack Dempsey family that rented my grandmother's ranch, or leased it. When you read of the Dempseys in Colorado, it was on my grandmother's ranch.

Finally she got rid of them. She sold the ranch and came back to California. Again, they moved around, and finally they settled up in Eureka. My father got in a fight with his father and moved to Eureka, and that's where my mother and father were married. Then they moved, and about that time my grandfather had a stroke, and they moved back to Petaluma.

Riess: It sounds like your mother comes from a family of strong women.

Roderick: Yes, very strong.

Riess: And she was a strong woman herself?

Roderick: Extremely so. Very opinionated. Extremely so. She was absolutely crazy over plants.

Riess: Are you a first child?

Roderick: No. I was the second one. My sister's a little older than I am--two and a half years. Her name is Lavelle Marie Donovan.

A Petaluma Chicken Ranch in the 1930s

Riess: What was your father's business when he came back down?

Roderick: They had chickens. My grandfather had one of the first hatcheries in Petaluma. I can remember the old incubators still stored in this building where they had the hatchery. Why they stopped, I have no idea.

Riess: There's an oral history in our office with the Jewish chicken raising families in Petaluma. Apparently, there was a large group.

Roderick: I remember when they came in, and immediately a lot of the credit was stopped. It was what we always referred to as the Russian Jews. Now, there were other ones. There was a Mrs. Hayes who lived close to us, and we absolutely--we didn't care much for her husband, but she was an absolute doll.

Riess: But these were Russian Jews? That you do remember.

Roderick: That's what we referred to them as.

I remember when my father--let's see, that was about 1935 or so--had financial troubles, family financial troubles. He

was semi-in business with them. It came to around, I think it was thirty thousand all total. My uncle owed thirty thousand dollars worth of checks, and there was no money.

My mother had put a lot of checks in the mail. Well, my father hauled chicken manure from Petaluma to Salinas and Watsonville for the lettuce fields and all those crops. And it was big, lots of money in that. When she told the fellow who owned the bank--he was a family friend--she said, "This is what's happened." He said, "We'll cover the checks." Never signed one paper. All those checks that my mother had mailed to the farmers were all covered. My mother was able to get enough money to cover all of them, and they came back. I think there was something like a fifteen cent charge for doing all that. Very shortly after that, all of a sudden no more credit.

Riess: And how do you account for the end of the credit?

Roderick: This is where I have to be vague because I don't know. The Jewish people come in--this one type--and they would run up big bills, and they'd go bankrupt. From then on, all bills had to be paid and paid on time.

Riess: But your father was one of the early--

Roderick: Chicken raisers, he and his brother. His brother died when I was, oh, probably five or six years old. He kept on to just about the time of the Depression. Then, he was buying this chicken manure, sending it to Salinas and Watsonville, and my mother's baby sister's husband was selling it.

He got into Chinese gambling and drinking.

Riess: The uncle down there?

Roderick: Yes. And he had these hand cards all made up of Runge and Roderick. My father had all kinds of credit, but he had none. He was buying commercial fertilizers, the chemicals, and charging it all to my father. This would have to be about '33, '34, in the middle of the Depression. Fifty thousand dollars was a lot of money in those years.

Riess: Yes. What was the other name?

Roderick: Runge.

Riess: That's your mother's family name?

Roderick: No. It's her sister's husband. Her family was Albush.

Riess: A hatchery just means that all you do is get the eggs and--?

Roderick: And hatch them. They undoubtedly sold a lot, and then they raised a lot. Around, I'd say, the 1920s, it was considered one of the largest chicken ranches at that time because it was all hand work. They got more mechanized before my father gave up raising chickens. I think then we were a very small outfit.

Riess: Did they candle the eggs?

Roderick: I do remember once seeing candling, but it was more the weighing of and packing the eggs into great big boxes. You still in the stores get these squares that hold, I'd say, about three dozen eggs--something that way. They had boxes made that were two stacks. I imagine that they were about eight to ten stacks high on each one of these sections. I remember when I was a small kid I used to have to do that, help pack eggs.

Riess: How big was this operation?

Roderick: They had about twenty thousand chickens. Nowadays it would be considered just a drop in the bucket, you know, because it all is mechanized.

Riess: What is your memory of the sounds and smells and so on of all that?

Roderick: My mother tells when I was a tiny kid she could set me out there in the brooder houses where the chicks were raised, and I'd just play with the chicks. They'd be all over me, and they'd come to me. My sister would go out there and they'd all run. She said I just had a natural feeling for--in fact, I had all kinds of pets as I grew up. I had more fun playing with those little baby chicks when I was a baby myself.

They used chopped alfalfa, which has a beautiful fragrance, for the litter for the chicks to run on. I can still see the persons cleaning the houses. It seemed like they did it every day--I don't know how often. But if it wasn't cleaned it got to smelling terrible. The other thing was the diseases that we'd get right away if the house was not kept very clean.

Riess: Did your mother have a role in the actual management?

Roderick: She did most of the raising of the chicks, and then my father and uncle--my father's brother--and I think most of the time they had another person. My sister and I even gathered the

eggs. We never liked that because the chicken houses got to smelling heavily very quickly, you know.

Riess: The chickens are very possessive about their eggs, too, some of them.

Roderick: Sometimes, yes. Being that they were gathered every day, the chickens never really got a chance to try to set.

Riess: You said that it was the same home where your father was born, but your father had left and come back?

Roderick: Yes. My mother was sixteen and he was twenty-six when they were married. Then I came along four years later. It probably was three years before I can remember what exactly my father was like. He was gray and bald-headed. He lost his hair very, very early.

Riess: And your mother was very young.

Roderick: My mother was very young, and she kept her hair till the day she died. So, I feel pretty good. I've still got a little bit of hair on top.

Riess: You've got a fine crop!

Roderick: Yes, I've got a fine crop compared to my father, but nothing compared to my mother.

A "Plant-Happy" Family

Riess: You've described your family as plant-happy. Why?

Roderick: My mother, I guess, was born that way. My father loved farming. He loved it. Well, he had fancy cows as a hobby after he got rid of the chickens. And he raised a lot of vegetables and things to feed the cows. Our vegetable garden was more cut flowers than it was vegetables. Then we had about an acre around the house that my mother gardened. My father always wanted everything in rows so he could get in with the horses and cultivate. My mother, of course, wanted beauty, so she had anything but rows.

Riess: Did she order from seed catalogues?

Roderick: She got a lot of stuff that way, went to the nurseries.

I remember the Depression years. My father loved plants, but he would not let my mother have the veronicas. He didn't like them.

Riess: That's that big bushy--

Roderick: It gets about three foot tall, the kind that my mother liked. I remember she went out the back door one day, and here she picked up a silver dollar. She jumped in the car and went to the nursery and bought two gallon-can veronicas, one red one and one blue one, much to my father's disgust.

I can also remember about the same time going down to Oakland. Between Richmond, where you got off the ferry, and Oakland, there were a lot of little nurseries. This one Japanese had a dwarf flowering crabapple bonsai, and he [father] loved that thing. The fellow had propagated two plants. He had them in square five-gallon cans. It took him [nurseryman] about three years before he would sell him one--and he sold it for fifteen dollars, which would be about two hundred and fifty dollars nowadays. Instantly, my father bought it. Money was no object if it was a good plant. [laughs] He wanted things in rows, and yet he loved the landscaped area of the garden that my mother had.

Riess: Was the land flat?

Roderick: It was slightly sloping ground. It was west of Petaluma where they had that sand, low sand. It was very shallow. It was only about fifteen, eighteen inches of soil over an impervious hard pan. We were about halfway down this gentle hill, and all the rainwater had to drain through that sandy area. Flowering cherry trees, which they bought dozens of, fruit trees--only plums and apples could stand that amount of water in the wintertime, peaches and apricots and the cherries all drowned.

Riess: He really knew the land and knew what was going on, and you became part of all of that.

Roderick: I had my first plot of ground by the time I was five years old. My mother said that's how they got a lot of weeds in the garden. I had to grow them on to see what they were going to turn out to be.

Riess: You mean from seeds?

Roderick: Yes, or anything I found that had a leaf that was a little bit different. I'd dig it up and put it in my little plot of

ground. I don't think it was more than about five by ten foot at the biggest.

Riess: That's early to be so intrigued. How do you account for it?

Roderick: I just took after my parents, I think. My mother said that from the time she was small, that's all she could remember was seeing plants and growing them. When they first moved to California that next spring on this piece of property my grandmother had, which was somewhere in the Placerville area, up came all kinds of narcissus and things like this, bulbs, and my mother just about went out of her mind.

Riess: I think of Petaluma as being really out of reach of the Bay Area. How often would you have gotten on the ferry and come down and gone to nurseries?

Roderick: My father and mother used to go quite often down to the Salinas-Watsonville area, probably once a month, maybe only three times a year. I don't quite remember that. They couldn't work in the wintertime hauling the manure because the sandy soil, which was perfect for the chickens, would get so soft they couldn't get the trucks in.

My father had gotten a crew of men that he liked and could trust and everything. So he did all kinds of other things with the trucks in the wintertime, one of which was cut Christmas trees in November as the rain started and haul those to San Francisco, or really to Petaluma, and then people from San Francisco would buy half a truckload or whatever they wanted.

After that, in January, he found out there was a good market for old cars. So he put the men to junking. In those days it was down in Emeryville where they took all that stuff and sold it.

Riess: I used to see those scrap iron heaps in Emeryville. I don't know whether they are still there.

When he was hauling manure he used trucks, not barges?

Roderick: No, no. It was trucks early on. They then hauled it down to the railroad tracks and filled these what we called gondolas, and shipped that to Salinas-Watsonville. It was unloaded there and spread. My uncle-in-law was the one that knew all about getting it unloaded and spread around. It was a big operation.

Riess: So that's why they were down in the Bay Area that often, and your mother would come along and shop?

Roderick: Oh, he couldn't go without my mother because she was so plant-happy. We had a lot of unusual choice things in the garden.

Japanese Nurseries and the War

Riess: Did you go to the Japanese nurseries in particular because of what they offered?

Roderick: It was more along San Pablo Avenue--that's when it was the only way you could get down to Oakland--almost all those nurseries in through there were Japanese. A few Italians, but the Italians carried more the ordinary things. The one thing I kept remembering was the long, tall yew trees, and conifers, the dwarf ones. The Japanese had the more unusual things. I can remember ten, fifteen nurseries along San Pablo Avenue.

Riess: Was [Toichi] Domoto's nursery there?

Roderick: I didn't know about him till after the war. No, I'll take that back. When I started to go to junior college up in Santa Rosa I worked part time in a nursery. It was just before the war, so I only got part of one semester in when war come along. I started work at the nursery just after I got out of high school. Twice the owner went to Domoto's nursery. That was before the war. Then after the war we started the nursery, and then, of course, I used to go down there quite often. I got to know Toichi Domoto very well. He's a good friend--rarely seen. He's so old now, he doesn't get around very much.

Riess: When you talk about unusual things, you're talking about the camellias and the cherries? And persimmons--had they started bringing in Oriental persimmons?

Roderick: We didn't get persimmons until much later, after we started a nursery. We knew about them, and we knew we liked them. I can't tell you--. I do remember at Toichi Domoto's that he had two or three very interesting persimmons there, but I never had one. We didn't grow them. You can see right out my window there I've got a nice big persimmon tree.

Riess: It's a beautiful one. It's so lush in spring, too. It's one of the nice greens.

Roderick: Oh, what a display it is in the fall. It's the soft one, and the foliage does not turn very beautiful, but oh, what a sight with the fruits on it.

Riess: It's sad to think about all of those nurseries, come wartime.

Roderick: Yes, and my father, when the war came along, he couldn't get trucks, and all of his good men were gone. He couldn't trust men. He and my brother-in-law then bought a poultry commission house.

Riess: What does that mean?

Roderick: It means that they bought the farmer's chickens and sold them to the markets in San Francisco. Never kept a chicken overnight.

Riess: They were brokers?

Roderick: Brokers, yes. Most of his customers, both in the manure and with the chickens, were Japanese. They knew how my father dealt, that his word was always perfect and he never went back on that, and the Japanese liked this. He knew the ways that they liked to do business, and their humor and all this, and they did everything they could to do a deal with my father.

So, he knew the Japanese people very well. In fact, at the time of Pearl Harbor we were interviewed for one whole half day by the F.B.I. on what our ideas were about all of our Japanese people, and there were only two persons that we didn't like. They found out that one of these families--there was something very funny about them. They went to a concentration camp. That was great. But all the rest, we fought for them.

Riess: Your family was interviewed up in Petaluma?

Roderick: Well, in Santa Rosa, which was the county seat.

One of this family that--we really didn't know them at all, but they were just funny people. Even the Japanese called them "damn Japs." I heard that expression.

Riess: This was before the plans had been made for the camps?

Roderick: Yes. This was immediately after Pearl Harbor. I'd say within a week. It was not that important except that we were very much interviewed.

Riess: Did your father in any way take over any of the nurseries or help any of the Japanese?

Roderick: No. We didn't do anything that way.

Riess: When these people you knew were going to the camps, were they close enough to your family to turn possessions over to your family?

Roderick: We know about the people that took over a lot of these ranches, but there was nothing much that we did.

At the same time I was drafted, and almost every one of the men my father had working for him were drafted. He had to get rid of all of his trucks and try to see what else he wanted to get into. He found this poultry commission house, and he went to work there--again I'll have to be vague--for a very short time. The old gentleman that owned it didn't know how he was going to work, and my father and brother-in-law then bought him out and took over.

Riess: Got a fine entrepreneurial gene in your family.

Roderick: We got into all kinds of stuff!

From Weeds to Orchids

Riess: Now, let's just step back a bit. You said on your vita that you were into orchids, as well as succulents, by age fourteen. First you had had your plot of ground where you were raising and examining the weeds.

Roderick: Then by this time I was, oh, I'd say eight years old. I was out of the little patch of weeds. I was expected to help in the garden.

My father--everything had to be very good. He had fancy cows. The best one was the world's third highest butterfat producer at the time. Of course, all kinds of records had to be kept on this. I liked that cow because I could ride her, she wouldn't buck me off.

But before I was eligible or big enough for milking cows and things that way, I worked in the garden. We got up at five every day when the cows had to be milked. I went off with my mother and helped weed and water until seven. By this time my sister would be working in the kitchen. (She turned out to be a very good housewife--very lovely home.) At seven we'd come in

and have breakfast, get ready to go to school. When I got, I'd say, about thirteen, fourteen, then I went out and helped my father with the cows.

Riess: This was not an unusual life in Petaluma, where maybe the rest of your classmates started their days with a certain amount of farm work too?

Roderick: Yes. It was more a farming community. But in the town of Petaluma we had a lot of well-to-do people. Some of those were friends, but we never chummed when I was in school. Before I went to high school, which was in the town of Petaluma, I went to the grammar school my father went to in the country.

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Riess: You were in school with kids who had the same experiences.

Roderick: We had some of the George P. McNear family in there, and they had a little clique that stayed together.

Riess: Which clique is that? Is that the farming clique or the town clique?

Roderick: It was the wealthy clique. You have a little bit of this at all schools, I imagine.

Riess: How about the Kortums? Did you know the Kortums?

Roderick: Yes. One Kortum was over at the Maritime Museum.

Riess: Yes, Karl Kortum. And, Bill Kortum was--

Roderick: --a veterinarian. And their sister, she's the one I really know. She lives in Santa Rosa.

Riess: They were farming, weren't they?

Roderick: Yes. They were more dairy. I can't quite remember much more than that. I know where the house is. I think it's still standing. [Being remodelled, September 1990. W.R.]

Riess: So, that was your typical day. I interrupted you. You were saying that by the time you were fourteen--

Roderick: I had started cactus and succulents as a kid. I'd say I was about six, seven, eight when I did that. In fact, my father built a tiny hothouse. And I saw these ads in the old, old Sunset Magazine for orchids, quite an article on them in several

places. Come the Oakland Garden Show, I got my mother to bring me down. There was a full carload of us, I remember. We stopped at this one nursery that sold orchids, and I bought my first orchid plants. I think I was about fourteen.

Riess: And that nursery--they were displaying at the Oakland Garden Show?

Roderick: No. They didn't, I don't think, have anything at the Oakland Garden Show. We came to see the Oakland Garden Show, and I rushed the family through the show as quick as possible.

Riess: So you could go shopping.

Roderick: So we'd go shopping, which was perfectly all right. I had saved my money, and I spent it.

The Oakland Spring Garden Show

Riess: That garden show is very famous.

Roderick: Yes. Howard Gilkey made it, that show. Howard Gilkey was a real character. He'd even tell you how great Howard Gilkey was! I've seen some of his gardens that he landscaped. They were all right; they weren't great, but they were all right.

But what he did in that building for the show was unbelievable. He built these great big giant redwoods, about ten feet in diameter. They went up to the ceiling in that building. Then he put limbs--. How the devil he did it--.

Riess: You mean he built them with bark and--?

Roderick: Yes. They were all hollow inside. It was just the bark.

Someplace in the building would be waterfalls to get humidity to keep the plants growing, to keep them at their prime.

Riess: What was the building that he was in?

Roderick: The building down somewhere near where the Oakland Museum is. Right beyond there was a big auditorium.

Riess: The auditorium that's still there?

Roderick: I guess. A big, flat floor. He'd get these nurseries to either force or hold back rhododendrons--great specimens of them with masses of buds--and have just one big splash of color throughout that building. It was an impossible garden thing, you know, for doing in your garden, but it was absolutely beyond belief to see all these big masses and masses of color. Masses of them.

Nothing at all to have a six-inch pot of hydrangeas, maybe all pink. There would maybe be two hundred pots of those in that one splash of color. Then there would be the rhododendrons, and some of those would be six, eight foot tall. Big swaths of these, all maybe 'pink pearl,' all pink ones, maybe ten of those. That would fill my whole house, you know! It was just beyond belief, the spectacular colors that he did!

Riess: Do you think that that was a greater day for gardens than it is today?

Roderick: No. I think now you've got more people gardening for the one reason that so many places, like here in Orinda, you're supposed to keep your place looking like something. (They don't plant very nice things.) And the freeways now have gotten lots of plants planted out around interchanges to make it look nice. I think people are doing more here than they did in those days.

Riess: You mentioned Sunset. I wondered how much you would hook up that kind of consciousness of gardens with Sunset's impact.

Roderick: In the olden days Sunset Magazine was far superior to what it is today. The main part mostly was on gardening. Today you open up the main part, and it could be on houses, it could be on anything. In those days I could open that main, first part--it was on plants. Houses and things that way were farther in the back, and then cooking and things like that were in the end. But the first part used to be mostly gardening. I think this helped to get us to be as good gardeners as you're seeing.

Early Attempts at Rock Gardens. Native Gardens

Riess: What if the orientation of all of this had been to working with the native plants. What a different landscape we'd all have! Was there any kind of appreciation for native grasses and shrubs then at all?

Roderick: I can remember, I'd say, about 1932 my mother and one of her best friends went in for a rock garden. It wasn't very much of

a rock garden. It was a shady place in both Mrs. King's and my mother's place. They went in for ferns and all the little shady plants. They went out and collected in the wild. They had the first little bits of native gardens that I can ever remember.

For some unknown reason our natives have not made as much hit until here just recently as they have in Europe. They will do anything there to grow our California natives.

Riess: I've read that they were collecting and hybridizing in the early nineteenth century.

Roderick: Within the first five years of our California poppy in cultivation, they already had three different colors. They got these color breaks.

Here in the East Bay you'll find more people planting California natives than almost anyplace else in this state.

Riess: And it's happening now, rather than 1932 or whatever.

Roderick: Yes. These few years of drought that we've had, there's more and more. And then we have one real good landscape architect that's planning drought-tolerant gardens. There's a couple of others that's doing fair, but Ron Lutsko is probably the best in this. He's a young fellow. I know last week he was gone. He had several estates that he was planting down around the San Jose to Carmel area. Last year he was commuting to Los Angeles because of a big professional building of some kind that was all being done in natives or drought-tolerant plants.

Riess: But the dream garden of Howard Gilkey would be a damp and floral place.

Roderick: For that one week it was spectacular. I've seen a couple of the places--they haven't been kept up--such as the city park in Oakland. Yes, it was spectacular. The walls, the way they were built, and the design that was used. But it was just something like one of these big estates that makes a big show and that's it.

Mother's Blue Ribbon Garden in Petaluma

Riess: When you came down with your parents on those trips to Salinas-Watsonville and stopping at the nurseries and so on, were there famous gardens to go and visit?

Roderick: Not that I ever remember my parents ever doing that. No, I don't remember that. I remember going to San Francisco once in awhile. Then we'd make a drive through Golden Gate Park. But we didn't do much in those days. We had in Petaluma the garden clubs.

I know by 1935 I was the youngest member of the Petaluma Garden Club. I know I was into that. And they had these great flower shows. We had judges come from all over for the flower shows. I know I couldn't have been more than fifteen and into the first flower show. My mother, of course, showed all kinds of stuff. Piles and piles of blue ribbons.

Riess: Very competitive?

Roderick: Oh, yes.

My mother started out with about three things, annuals, and worked up some very good forms. I went and hand-pollinated and it got so we had our own strains of China asters and African marigolds--and what was the other thing? Something else, annual, that went into the vegetable garden, and we rogued and hand-pollinated.

Riess: How did you know how to do that--the hand-pollinating?

Roderick: Looked at it and did it.

Riess: I mean, had you been around nursery people and seen how breeding and hybridizing was done?

Roderick: No. It just came natural, I think.

Riess: And you hadn't gotten out a book from the library or anything like that?

Roderick: I remember getting chicken feathers to use--. I'd pull them out of the wings of the chicken--or tail feathers, stripped down to little things. Finally, my folks did get camel hair brushes, but first I used chicken feathers--just the tips of chicken feathers.

Riess: Had your mother been doing it before you?

Roderick: I don't remember. I know she was selecting. She grew up almost all of her own annuals. We had a hotbed. In the winter all the soil was taken out and cow manure was put down almost six inches on the bottom, and then about six inches of the soil above that.

This was a raised bed. It was facing south with the windows on top to keep the rain out, keep the warmth in.

She would plant her seeds, I would say, early March so they would be big enough by mid-April to plant out. She raised the annuals by the tens of thousands. Some of this in the very beginning was kale for feeding the chickens, but she raised hundreds and hundreds of annuals and had these big beds. Nothing at all to plant a hundred to a hundred and fifty, say, African marigolds in one bed, and a big row or two out through the vegetable garden.

Riess: You said that she didn't want things in rows. Did she design her garden each year?

Roderick: Yes. She had these big, long swoops, and we had moss lawns, or really this Irish moss or Scotch moss--it's a little flowering plant that looks like moss. And walks, one big main walk so she could run a wheelbarrow up and down without crushing the lawns. She would start all the beds with one type of a border, generally ageratum or lobelia or something that way, according to what all colors that she was going to put in.

Then with the African marigolds she'd probably buy seed and grow that on. She'd have a French marigold, probably a bronze color, then the African marigolds behind that. If it was, say, the asters, she would probably put more of a blue that would combine with the other colors there.

She generally had in the spring lots of stocks and snapdragons. In one big bed she had a big white flowering peach. She built the bed up high enough that it would survive. She had pink tulips underneath that that would come up every year. And then maybe lavender stocks. Then she had thousands and thousands of daffodils, old-fashioned daffodils.

She planted Linaria seed in with the daffodils and it came into bloom after the daffodils were finished blooming, and by the time it was finished blooming, then she'd pull out the tops of the daffodils and the Linaria all at once and then put in her border of summer annuals. Of course, I was expected to do my share of that.

Riess: [laughs] That's pretty relentless.

Roderick: Yes. It was a full-time job. Her garden was almost as bad as Ruth Bancroft over here in Walnut Creek. My mother was her main gardener, just as Ruth is.

Riess: How did your succulents do in your glass house?

Roderick: They did poor. We found out that they did better outside, but we did raise a few other things that were tender. I even had a couple hibiscus plants planted in the ground. But the roof was only seven feet, and in a hothouse you should have at least ten foot to get air circulation. Plus, we had to chop it out because it was pushing the glass out. We had just a little electric heater which did not give any good heat for keeping the orchids.

Then my father started to build a big hothouse. We made it big enough--I think it was sixty foot long, and it must have been twenty foot wide--and about this time is when we decided to start a nursery. That came right after the war.

I was discharged early because I got tuberculosis. I came home, and I stayed in a tent just outside the house for, I guess, a year and a half. (They never did find spots on my lungs.) Of course, we had all the milk, cream, vegetables, fruits, a lot of fruits. In those days my mother used to can a lot of these things, so there was all kinds of good food. My father always raised his own meat. He rented a big freezing place not too far from my home, and he'd put a whole beef in there, and maybe a pig, and two or three lambs.

Riess: That's really a wonderful land-of-plenty story!

Roderick: Boy, we lived high on the hog. In fact, during the war years we planted very few annuals in the vegetable garden. But my mother's one or two sisters, my grandmother--and my sister by this time was married and had a boy--they all worked in the vegetable garden. They all canned, especially at my mother's house. They would can two or three hundred quarts of each thing.

Riess: Sounds like this was for more than their own use.

Roderick: This was for their own use. We lived all winter and the rest of the year on that. I'd say that garden was a good quarter acre. That beautiful sand and, of course, we had all our own water.

War Experience, Garden Experience

Riess: What was your war experience?

Roderick: I was drafted immediately after Pearl Harbor. My mother always said that when she became a grandmother she was going to get a motorcycle and raise hell. Well, Pearl Harbor come along. A few days later she become a grandmother, and a couple of days after that I was drafted. She grew up very rapidly.

I was taken to Camp Roberts. Never finished my full training there. Somehow I said I would be very good at camouflage and things that way because I knew plants. Well, they didn't have that, so I become an Army cook. That was very good because I cooked already. In wintertime when we were kids, when we couldn't get outside, my mother would have "cooking day." It might be a roast beef, or it might be cookies, or it could be how to prepare some interesting vegetables. So I got to be an Army cook.

Riess: And you avoided the infantry, it sounds like.

Roderick: I was in the coast artillery. It was about the fifteenth, somewhere around there, of December when I was drafted. I was sent to Camp Roberts. They took me in the first part of January and we were supposed to finish our training by, I think it was, the first of April. But by mid-March I was on a troop transport to Hawaii. I was in the first replacement after Pearl Harbor over there, one of the first batches. I spent my time in Hawaii as an Army cook up at Diamond Head.

Riess: What could be better?

Roderick: Yes, because on my days off I got into a lot of the estates. Got so anytime I wanted to go in any of them that I'd go in the employees' entrances, and I'd go anyplace. One fellow had a whole garden of orchids.

Interestingly, one of the fellows that worked for my father wound up in Alaska in the Aleutian Islands, and he had an aunt and uncle in Honolulu. I'd been there for quite a few months before letters could get around to where everybody was. My mother kept up with all these good employees that we lost during the war, where everybody was, what went on. Finally this fellow wrote and said for me to go look up his aunt and uncle. It turned out that he was head of the agricultural department of the University of Hawaii. Boy, did that ever start opening up places!

Riess: Places to go and visit?

Roderick: Yes. He was a fantastic person.

From there I got sick. They sent me back to Virginia.

Riess: How did you contract tuberculosis?

Roderick: I have no idea how I did that. I was sent back to Virginia and seemed to be all right for awhile. Then again I got sick, and they discharged me--got rid of me as quick and as easy as they possibly could. They were trying to put me into a sanitarium, but they couldn't find any lesions in my lungs. The social worker that my mother was working with saw all of the stuff at my mother's place, and she said if they would put up a place out where I'd be in air all the time it would be the best place to convalesce. Well, that's what they did.

By the time that I was finished with all of my examinations and everything, we were building up more and more plant material. My father then--.

Riess: What do you mean "your" examinations?

Roderick: First at Fort Miley, then finally up at Santa Rosa.

Riess: You mean your physical examinations?

Roderick: Yes.

My father was building up the plant material, and finally I was able to do some work, and I went to work at the military post out at Two Rock. It was called Two Rock Ranch. It was the communications post where the Japanese code was broken.

Riess: This is where the R.C.A. installation is now?

Roderick: Now it's not R.C.A. It's something else--maritime school or something. I was a fireman there for a year and a half. Got enough money to buy the first big block of plants. My father was doing the building, so we kind of worked on all of it together.

Riess: I have a look on my face that you'll come to know that means that we can't go forward because we have to loop back to answer a few questions that are on my mind. You said that you had gone to Santa Rosa Junior College. This was right after high school you went there?

- Roderick: Yes. I didn't go for a year. I guess I worked at this nursery in Santa Rosa getting money together and such things as that.
- Riess: Then when you were eighteen or nineteen or so, you went to junior college. What did you study there?
- Roderick: I studied under Dr. Milo Baker, who was the very famous botanist, but I never quite finished.
- Riess: Junior college was two years, but you didn't have time to finish the two years?
- Roderick: I didn't even finish really one semester. Pearl Harbor come along. You could say I was a complete failure. Really, I got enough information to know how to use a book. That was it.
- Riess: How was your high school education in sciences? Was that helpful?
- Roderick: Yes. I took everything I could. There was only one thing I got a D in, and that was chemistry. Very poor at such things as chemistry.
- Riess: Did they have Future Farmers of America?
- Roderick: They had something of that, but I didn't go in for that because I knew that I wanted to go more into botany and horticulture. I didn't know for sure at that time what.
- Riess: Did you want very much to have more of an education, or did you not see that that was necessarily a prerequisite?
- Roderick: I wanted to go on, but when I got thrown out of the Army it was a heck of a job trying to get enough money, first to go to school--at that time there was no such thing as the G.I. Bill and it would have cost quite a little bit, and I couldn't really work. And we had enough plants in the garden that we could propagate, and I knew the wholesale nurseries from before the war where I had worked, I knew who to contact and all this. Being fireman out at this military post--there was no real work to that at all, except once in awhile just a little bit.

By the time that we got the nursery going, then these different things for the veterans [G.I. Bill] came out, but we already had the nursery going, and we had it for fifteen years when my father died.

Learning Plants

Riess: Did you take correspondence courses by any chance, or anything like that?

Roderick: No. But I had all the books that I could lay my hands on. I spent all of my evenings in the books. I did my own education.

Riess: When you got entre to the gardens that you wanted to visit in Hawaii, and when you went into those gardens, did you take written notes? How did you approach those gardens?

Roderick: I didn't know in those years that you had to take notes. I was always told that you remembered, or else you're not using your brain.

Riess: You developed that capacity to remember?

Roderick: I did then, but I'm finding now that I have to write things down or else.

Riess: You said when you started the nursery with your father you had all the books you could lay your hands on. Did you at that point decide that you had to learn things systematically, and write out the flower families and so on, or did you just read it and remember it?

Roderick: In fact, there's still a lot of the books right here in my bookshelf.

Riess: What I'm wondering is whether because you were self-taught, whether you learned flower families or learned systems and taxonomies in a whole different way?

Roderick: Yes. In high school I didn't pay too much attention to plant families. It's just what the plant was.

Riess: You mean common name?

Roderick: No, scientific names. Chinese houses were Chinese houses because they were Chinese houses. It wasn't because they were *Collinsia*, which belongs to the *Scrophularia* family. That didn't mean anything at first. But when I started with the nursery, then it become more important to know some of these things. When I started to work for the University it was imperative to know this.

The botanist I worked with for so many years was extremely slow in trying to get these things, and I had to furnish class material. And the person that was setting up the classes had certain plant families and certain genera, class material, that he had to have. This is where I really got my education the correct way. The first way I learned was more from horticulture, and then all of a sudden into botany.

Riess: How does that distinction work? You know a plant by how it grows?

Roderick: That's the first way I learned how it grows. Then, what the plant was: is it going to get the color I want? Is it going to get the size I want? Will it grow on this kind of soil? Then all of a sudden we got the nursery and I had to start playing it from a botanical way, but not complete botanical. Still had to know how it grew, but also what that correct name was and how it belonged a little bit in botany. When I started working at the University, then it went from horticulture more to botanical. So, then I had to kind of reverse and figure out how they--.

Riess: How did you do that? Did you get out the books once again?

Roderick: Sure. Put my nose in the books. I have a T.V. set now because my mother had a stroke. I never had a T.V. set till she bought the T.V. set two weeks before her stroke.

Riess: Your evenings were spent with your books.

Roderick: With my books. Now I have that darn idiot thing. I generally watch just news.

1921 *Roderickia waynii* (seedling)

1940 *R. petalumii* var. *youthii*
R. youthii var. *noseinbooksii*

1970 *R. plantsmanii* var. *bulbi*
Californicae
generositae
internationalii
hateyouii.

II NURSERY BUSINESS, 1945-1959

Hard Work: Propagating, Dealing With Customers, Staying Ahead##

Riess: Did your father defer to your knowledge when he put the nursery together?

Roderick: I knew the plants. Of course, my mother worked in that-- couldn't keep her nose out either. She had to get into it. But the only thing my father wanted was good plants.

Riess: You said there were a lot of nurseries up there in Petaluma?

Roderick: There was really only one other competitor in Petaluma at that time, and then there were several others come in about the time that we were closing out. Also, at the same time we closed out, my father died, and then the chicken industry went to pot. We were out in the country. We depended mostly on the farmers. They couldn't afford to buy anything luxurious, which meant plants.

We were doing extremely poor there the last six months after my father died. I could see the writing on the wall, that either I had to go head over heels in debt, buy a piece of property in town or someplace, or--I didn't like fighting with the customers.

Riess: You had this business for fourteen years?

Roderick: Fifteen years.

Riess: Fifteen years. What was your role in the nursery?

Roderick: Running it, because my father had his business and all his little things that he was doing, and I did the whole business of the thing.

Riess: So you did sales?

Roderick: Sales and propagation and trying to do landscaping--very low amount of that because the nursery itself took too much time. I used to propagate a lot of our camellias. I used to graft about three to four thousand camellias every year. I tried propagating rhododendrons and some of those things, but it was too difficult, too much work for what you get out of it.

Riess: A lot of labor. Did you have assistants?

Roderick: No. Did most of it myself. The nursery was never kept quite up to snuff because I didn't have the time. I could not get enough fertilizer around. I could not keep the weeds down as good as I wanted. It drove me crazy. That's what I hated about the whole thing, plus certain persons that you had to fight with the whole time.

Riess: Customers, you're talking about?

Roderick: Customers.

Riess: What kind of things did you have to fight with customers about?

Roderick: People that wanted to buy a good plant and then would not give it the care, and then it was all my fault that the plant died. Such things as that.

Riess: You got into installation then, also?

Roderick: A little bit, not too much. There was just so much--. We covered so much space, we had so many plant materials in the place that we just couldn't quite keep up. You have to keep the hothouses going.

I found things that no other nursery was propagating, and I'd go into that. I started to really get the fuschias going in Petaluma because Victor Reiter is a close friend. I used to go and get my new plants from him and propagate those. Then everybody got into fuschias, so I got out of fuschias.

Then I started tuberous root begonias in pots, plus beds of those for people to come and dig. That got too common, and then we got a fungus disease in them that was too much work, so I got out of that. I think I went into geraniums. And by this time we had a lot of orchids, so we sold some cut flowers of our orchids, and I'd divide the plants and sell some of those, too, to get rid of some of that kind of stuff. Always had things going all the time.

Fellow Nurserymen: Victor Reiter, Toichi Domoto

Riess: How had you built up this network? How did you know Victor Reiter?

Roderick: He had a little nursery, which he was running in the red to cut off his income tax. He still has the largest--well, he's dead now, but the family still has the largest private piece of property, I think, in all of San Francisco.

Riess: Where is that?

Roderick: It's up on the side of Sutro Mountain, not too far from the U.C. Hospital, on Stanyan Street--1195, I know that. Four and a half acres, I think, of garden the nursery used to be. Now it's mostly weeds and poison oak.

Victor Reiter was way up in the plant world. He was, I guess you can say, the dean of the horticulturists for many, many years. Lot of interesting stories I could tell about him, too.

Riess: Did you belong to organizations in common?

Roderick: Yes. California Horticultural Society.

Riess: Was he one of your suppliers back in 1945?

Roderick: He would have been one of those, seeing that he probably started about that time ten years earlier.

Carla Reiter and I were talking the other night, trying to figure out how long it was that we'd known one another. I bought their oldest daughter her first pair of shoes.

Riess: What was he your supplier for?

Roderick: He had fuschias and rock garden plants--all these kinds of little things, choice things.

Riess: Who supplied really large plant materials, trees?

Roderick: In the olden days the first of the big ones was W.B. Clark, which was down in San Jose. In fact I even knew W.B. before he died, and he must have died about 1950. An old, old, old nursery, and huge. Grew lots and lots of things that they dug

out every year, you know. They produced a lot of the modern lilacs and a lot of the modern flowering quince. They did a lot of hybridizing in those days. A lot of our good old shrubs are from them.

Riess: When you sold them from your nursery, was that maybe the first of such a plant up in Petaluma? Do you think your nursery had that kind of role?

Roderick: Yes, we had a lot. In Berkeley is the Berkeley Horticultural Nursery. Ken Doty's father had huge growing areas up in the Portland area and he used to come and get cuttings and grafts from my mother's garden. Then he would send, in exchange, plants from his nursery in Berkeley [Berkeley Horticultural Nursery] that were so few and so rare that we didn't even list them.

Some of them, they were so rare that I wouldn't even sell them. I'd give them to Victor Reiter, or maybe to Toichi Domoto. They were too delicate for me to propagate, and I didn't have the time to take care of them. You see, for Victor money was no object, and Toichi had a big crew of people that could take special care of some of these things.

Riess: I'm curious how that network works, that trading among yourselves. You were just a kid then, compared to these people.

Roderick: Yes. A lot of them took me in. One thing I always said, "I'm so stupid that I can't lie." If I don't know something, I tell people so. If I don't believe that that's the correct way, I'll say, "No, I do it this way." I'm trying to learn still, and if you lie, people can feel this, and they're not going to tell you.

Riess: You mean by lying, pretending that you know something when you really don't know it?

Roderick: Yes. I think this is why I got on so well in England. I've been told by a lot of my friends, "Oh, no. That garden's not good enough for you to see"--these big, you know, two hundred-acre gardens. [laughs]

Riess: Domoto also raised bonsai?

Roderick: You should have seen the bonsais before the war. Lots of those were killed by complete neglect. That first time I was there with Mr. Von Grafen from the nursery in Santa Rosa, Von Grafen Nursery. It was one of the big, old nurseries, now the Flamingo Hotel in Santa Rosa.

Some gentleman was there that was very elderly and dressed about like what Victor Reiter dressed like in later years: old, worn-out suit, and shoes that should have been thrown away. Toichi had the family tree out there, this Hinoki cypress, the most gorgeous thing. The container was about four or five feet long by about three foot wide, the trunk about ten inches in diameter, and the whole tree about six foot tall. The most gorgeous thing.

This fellow was just coming to the car. Toichi was with him. The guy was leaving, and Mr. Von Grafen got out and introduced me. You could see there was something wrong with Toichi. He was very upset. He said, "That man, I think he's going to take my bonsai--my family tree. He offered me"--I've forgotten what it was in those days it was fantastic, something like \$7,000. But there was also another one he knew about, and if he could settle on that other one, then he wanted both of them. Otherwise he didn't want either one. Toichi wouldn't leave the office area. The guy said he was only a short ways away, and he'd call within an hour's time.

Finally the fellow called, and he couldn't get the other one, so he didn't want Toichi's. You never saw such a relieved person in your life. The second time, a few months later, that I went down with Mr. Von Grafen, he [Domoto] had planted the family tree out in front of the house. He couldn't sell it then. [laughter]

Protecting Stock, in the Nursery and in the Wild

Riess: Does this frequently happen around nurseries, that you get a splendid specimen that you're very reluctant to let just anyone have?

Roderick: I had a telephone call Saturday morning from a big wholesale nursery down in Watsonville by the name of Wintergreen--one of the top wholesale nurseries, small, but quality, quality. There was a group--the owner was gone and his salesman was there to take the group around. These two women wanted only to buy his stock plants. They got into a screaming mess there, that they wanted to have those, or they were going to raise hell. He told me, he said if he had been there he would have thrown the women out.

We all have plants that you don't sell, especially your stock plants. The way that Wintergreen works up their stock plants, I can see why he would have really thrown the women out, because he's propagating a lot of our wild shrubs. He finds cuttings of a plant he thinks is fine, brings them home, makes his cuttings, soaks them in fungicides for a couple of hours, puts his cuttings in for rooting, keeps working fungicide in with them, pots them up, keeps up the fungicide. When those plants get big enough to take cuttings off of them, again same process over.

He does that four times before he ever takes one cutting to think about selling. Working the fungus out of them. Then, he never plants those in the ground at all. They're kept in containers to keep them free from fungus, which means much easier propagating. You work several years before you ever get a plant that you can start to think about selling. You don't want to get rid of those.

Riess: Those women shouldn't have been allowed to see them.

Roderick: I can remember once, way back when we first had the nursery, I had a strain of polyanthus primroses that was almost as good as Vetterle and Reinelt's. I was working on it, and I finally got a double-flowered one. A poor, miserable color, but I knew it was one that I could take and pollinate the flower and maybe work up to double ones with good color. I had bragged about this. I had a group of people through the garden. My mother had--we still kept the acre garden up. She took people down and showed them this. Went back a few days later to start pollinating, and somebody had dug the plant. Lost the whole thing.

Riess: That would be one reason you'd want to get out of the business.

Roderick: And one of the reasons why you don't really let anybody get around your propagating stock.

Riess: Yes. The enthusiasm about plants, which you think is a shared enthusiasm, that enthusiasm, I understand, also verges on mania.

Roderick: I took a group of the conservationists of the Native Plant Society up to Siskiyou County up in the Siskiyou Mountains, and all three species of our lady's slippers grow in that area. They wanted to see the Cypripedium montanum, and I showed one clump with about forty flowers on it--miserable specimen; it was a very poor flower form, but it was still a Cypripedium montanum. I went back, and the plant was dug, gone. These were

conservationists! So, now with such things as that, I do not show anybody or tell them where these things are.

Riess: It certainly is an issue. You had an article recently in the Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society [Vol. 48, No. 1] on a wildflower trip through California. You admonished people just to observe. But what can you do? Can you trust them?

Roderick: Well, I have one thing I trust--the Dutch bulb growers. They want to have three bulbs of any one of our native plants that they possibly can, and ten at the most. If they can't do anything with that many, there's no sense in going on any farther. I'm all for doing that, instead of seeing these persons going out and digging like mad everything they can see. In Holland they're just unbelievable, what they're doing with some of our natives.

Riess: That's where they'll be propagated, back there?

Roderick: Several of our natives are going to be sold into horticulture this year from this one grower that's so great.

Riess: And you will have been the conduit.

Roderick: Yes. I feel very proud about that, because I know how many plants that a person's dug, and there was a couple of times there where things were very plentiful and he got a little greedy. He knew when I told him off, too.

Riess: [laughing] I have a feeling that this conversation has more subtleties than I'm aware of.

What was the name you referred to earlier? Vetterle and Reinelt?

Roderick: One was French and the other one was Bohemian. They both had little funny ways. Frank Reinelt was the last one of the group. They are the ones that produced the tuberous root begonia, the polyanthus primroses that you still see on the market, and delphiniums. I can't tell you too much about those.

I can remember my mother telling when she was first married, or just before she was married, up in Eureka is where the first tuberous root begonias were grown. Then it was sold to Vetterle, I believe, and moved to Santa Cruz. Then they worked and developed the tuberous root begonias there. Then I think it was Reinelt that went on and developed the delphiniums and the primroses to such perfection.

Finally, Frank Reinelt kept the nursery going just to keep his employees so they could make a living, even if his health was so bad that he desperately wanted to get out of there. But to play he grew--first it was succulents, hybridizing them, and then finally he went to cactus, getting beautiful spine cactus which have always miserable flowers, and poor spine ones that have beautiful flowers, and hybridizing those. Then, he finally died.

Sunset Western Garden Book--An Opinion

Riess: For general knowledge about gardens and plant names and flower names, so many people use the Sunset Western Garden Book.

Roderick: Everyone uses it, and there are still a lot of horrible mistakes. I know who was the editor.

Riess: I wonder if you remember when that first came out, and whether that was probably the first thing that people were able to lay their hands on?

Roderick: I think it was the first popular thing for the complete amateur, and it was very good. It had lots and lots of good ideas.

They did have lots of mistakes in it. The second issue--I helped out on that--they still put in mistakes that shouldn't have got in there. This next one that came out still had some, and the last time, which is the new one, they took my name out because I raised so much hell with their books.

I used to get a lot of their new gardening books, and the last one was on hanging containers. I started out, I think on the cover, with red ink. There was hardly a page that I did not red ink.

Riess: What's the nature of the mistakes?

Roderick: Well, I can't remember too much on that.

Riess: I mean, are these little details, or are these things that would totally foil you if you were trying do it yourself?

Roderick: Some of the containers, on this one on hanging containers, would hold two or three hundred pounds of soil for the size of the container. Now, you don't hang those from a ceiling or hang them on the limb of a tree.

But the one picture I raised so much hell about, and they didn't take out, it shows a picture of this beautiful grand piano in this alcove with three hanging containers over the grand piano. Now, what would happen if one of those should fall, or they got too much water. I thought that was absolutely hideous bad taste. I raised hell about this. That last one that I raised so much hell about, they gave me double pay and no more books from then on. [laughter]

Riess: So, that's sort of a conceptual blooper. But in the Western Garden Book do they get their botanical information wrong, or what?

Roderick: It's been so many years now since I've done anything on that. They said, for instance, Ceanothus 'Julia Phelps' grew to fifteen feet. Well, you know, I never see any over about seven, eight feet. It's one of the smaller growers. You know, it would be things like this here. And yes, it would take heavy clay, but it won't grow anymore than something like that. I can't remember enough, to be honest with you, but it had a lot of mistakes, and if people would plant these things, and the plant would hurry up and die, then the people would get disgusted.

Working with Landscape Architects

Riess: You became aware of it as a nurseryman because you saw people come in with this book as their authority, and they weren't able to get the results that they expected?

Roderick: Well, I always tried to give instructions. Again, that was another thing. We got landscape architects' drawings. We got to know certain landscape architects, that if this is what you want in the line of plants, you have got to have this, we don't want nothing to do with this. You better take it someplace else.

One of the worst ones of all was Tommy [Thomas Dolliver] Church. Tommy Church did beautiful plans, but he didn't know his plant material. I never met him. I saw quite a few of his plans. The last person I dealt with, I told [her] that was the most horrible, hideous mess I had ever seen in my life. For the plants right around your front door, you want something that's going to look nice the year around. You can't believe the

horrible plants that he put in there. They were going to look horrible for six months out of the year.

Now Dewey Donnell, there at the head of Sonoma Valley--that's gorgeous. It's so simple a thing that you couldn't go wrong, and the plant material blends in well. That's the only place I've ever seen of Tommy Church's that is good.

Riess: Maybe that's because Halprin worked with him on that one. That's done jointly.

Roderick: I don't know about that. But I think that's a beautiful garden.

This one lady that we were working with--I can't remember who the landscape architect was--she had a lot of shade. It was an old, old estate, and her husband and her had just bought the place, and she was having it done over. It was going to be about two acres of garden. She told the landscape architect that they needed lots of space for camellias because "I love camellias. I want lots of shrubs, flowering shrubs, because"--she was a ballet teacher and her husband was an attorney, in fact he was the city attorney for Petaluma--"we do lots of entertaining, and I want lots of things I can cut to bring into the house."

She had all this shade, and he left her space for three camellias! But at the nursery we had about fifteen, twenty camellias that the family had been buying for her as gifts. The shrubs that the fellow put in were pyracanthus, cotoneasters, and I can't remember what the other thing was. No heathers, nothing that would give color in the wintertime, nothing that would give color during the summer.

We suggested a lot of the low-maintenance perennials, not drought-tolerant, but low-maintenance, like Shasta daisies--a little bit of water and they'll work wonders. He didn't do anything except cotoneasters and pyracanthus, and there was one other shrub. I can't remember what the third one was.

Riess: That's cruel. As the business grew, and particularly post-war, were you working with landscape architects or landscape designers more? And did they become better-informed as the years went by? How has that changed.

Roderick: I think with landscape architects it has not changed too much. I think these landscape designers who have been gardeners and then graduated, I think they know more than so many of the landscape architects. Jonathan Plant is well-trained. Of course, Ron Lutsko is tops. Ernest Wertheim, one of the old-

timers in San Francisco, knows his plant material. There's quite a few like this around.

But so many of the landscape architects know what the shape of a plant is, the type of foliage, blending foliage together, but they could care less if it's the right soils or what. They don't know the difference. They have no idea. I know of one landscape architect that is color blind. I've never seen such a horrible mess as in some of his gardens.

Riess: In Petaluma, were you working with--you said you didn't know Tommy Church up there?

Roderick: No. Very few of the landscape architects that I know--. The couple that I did, I used to tell them off. [laughs] This one fellow would ask, "What do you think of this?" I didn't see him but once in a great while, but it was in my area, and if he thought that the people were going to come to me he'd ask me. And I'd tell him. He did--mostly they were smaller gardens, and he did quite nice for them.

Most of the landscape architects do have a good eye for design, but there's very few of them that know their plant material well enough. I think there's something like two hundred and fifty plants that they have to know to graduate out of college. Ron Lutsko now is just finishing up his thesis for his master's degree, so he can really teach now at UC. They want him. They want him bad. But if he didn't have his master's, the pay was so small that he didn't dare to take the time. He loves teaching. He loves to get over to his students the idea of decent plant material growing under good soil conditions.

Garden Snobs and the Garden Conservancy##

Roderick: When Victor Reiter's father died, his mother inherited most of the estate. Victor sold off the stocks and bonds that he inherited to save the property that he inherited, and he still had \$600,000 left, he told me. Then he started to really work in his stocks and bonds, and that's when he got out of the nursery business. Each kid--he had three children--each one when they were married was given a home as a wedding gift, and I believe a million dollars set aside for them.

He wore these old, lousy clothes to Cal Hort meetings. Some woman who saw this old gentleman there, and thought he must

be so poor, she asked if California Horticultural Society could buy him at least a new pair of shoes so he'd have some decent clothes to wear. That's the kind of a character that he was. [laughing]

Riess: I think the plant world is full of characters.

Roderick: Oh yes.

Riess: How about Anita Blake? Do you think of her as a character?

Roderick: Yes. Anita Blake. The thing I keep thinking about her--I didn't hardly ever know her, but she used to give these lectures, and finally she said, "You know, I got plants from many sources," and she'd get to giggling. She said, "I got some from so-and-so, I got some from so-and-so, and I got some through the government experiment station, and I got some of them legally." [laughter]

Then the other character--I never met her, I only saw her from a distance--that was Madame Ganna Walska. She always used her professional name. She had a forty-acre garden [Lotusland] down in the Santa Barbara area. She married, I think it was McCormick. They lived in Chicago. He built an opera house for her, and she was the first to perform in the new opera house. Her voice was so bad that everybody got up and walked out. So they closed the opera. It was just recently the opera house has been opened up, I understand.

But they would not do anything with any of society in Chicago, and they finally moved--I guess maybe he died, and she moved up there to Santa Barbara and built this great garden. Some horrible, bad taste from what I've seen. She's supposed to have left several million dollars to keep the garden going. Oh, we've got plenty of characters around!

Riess: [referring to discussion off tape] You were describing the Orchid Society. They used to meet at the Claremont Hotel when they first organized, you said?

Roderick: They had met there for awhile. Finally, about the second or third time, I had to say who I was, from where. I got up and said, "Wayne Roderick from Petaluma," and some woman right alongside said, "Huh! Farmers coming in!" About three or four years passed--I still went back at times--and finally I got cymbidiums to bloom. I took this one plant down. It was in a ten-inch pot and had sixteen flower spikes on it--an old-fashioned thing that everybody throws away now. And they wanted

to know how I grew it. From then on I was known, because nobody had more than one or two flower spikes to a pot.

We were using sawdust and shavings, and a cheap sprinkler set up in the middle of the place where I had them outside in the summertime--I think it was about a two-dollar, two-and-a-half dollar sprinkler instead of a fifty-dollar one. And they shook their heads: "But you don't mean you're using just regular shavings?" "Yes. Just whatever we get from the sawmill." It wasn't fir bark, special ground, and all this kind of thing. This was before fir bark, really. But they just shook their heads and couldn't believe it. From then on they didn't call me a farmer anymore.

Riess: Was Rod McLellan at that point the premier orchid person?

Roderick: Rod McLellan was just starting in on cymbidiums--no, it's a little bit later on than that. A few years later, some friends of mine, we started trading with and getting some fairly good cymbidium, and they were all superior to what the McLellans had. So they said, "What about making some trades?" I said, "Sure, I'll bring down flowers that you can get pollen from." In the meantime the McLellans had spent a heck of a lot of money and got all the finest plants from Europe. And he come out, and he took one look, and he said, "Trash." Turned around and walked back. So, I took all my flowers home.

Riess: Really?

Roderick: Yes. Well, they had gotten hold of some beautiful--the best stock they could get.

Riess: But why did they say "trash"?

Roderick: Well, mine were just these little old-fashioned things, and they didn't want them anymore. They were going into it in a big way.

He [McLellan] was always very fancy--had to have a bow tie on all the time and had to have his little cookie-duster moustache trimmed, I guess, by a professional every day. He was pretty fancy.

Riess: It sounds like we could write a book about snobs and eccentrics in the flower business.

Roderick: Oh, yes. You know, at UC I got into everything I could, and I got into the early plant explorers of the West. And if you want to get into some really crazy ones, it's them. There were some real, real strange ones. For instance the California poppy. It

was found by a French botanist, named for a German doctor friend while they were working for Russians in Spanish territory, and published in an English publication, as well as in a German.

Riess: That's Eschscholzia.

Roderick: Eschscholzia was Dr. [J. Friedrich] Eschscholz. It was Chamisso--afterwards he become a German citizen, [Adelbert] Von Chamisso, and in Germany to this day he's still considered the greatest love poet that's ever been born, he's the man that wrote the book, The Man Without a Shadow. The love poems were written to Eschscholz the second time that Eschscholz came back to California. But still he was married and had fourteen kids. Call that whatever you want!

[Interview 2: May 24, 1990]##

Riess: You are working with the Garden Conservancy? I see that the first garden under their care is Ruth Bancroft's, in Walnut Creek.

Roderick: There's a whole group of us working with Ruth Bancroft to get everything straightened out as to exactly what property and everything that she will give. And her children just think it's the greatest thing to ever happen. They're all for it.

But down at Santa Barbara is Lotusland, Madame Ganna Walska's garden, and the neighbors are all complaining about having it open to the public, and the estate doesn't want to bother having it open to the public. So the Garden Conservancy is trying to get this straightened out with the neighbors and so forth to go on and open it up.

Riess: There must be legal language and precedent that you can take from groups like Nature Conservancy and get their help.

Roderick: Tides Foundation is our legal side and financial side. We had a meeting with the Tides Foundation attorneys and Ruth Bancroft's attorneys, and our group that's trying to get everything straightened out. You never saw nicer things that the attorneys had to keep saying and how they all worked together. Ruth's old attorney came along, and he's in his late eighties and he's not very competent anymore. Finally it came out that the group that is working with Ruth is more for Ruth than they are for the Conservancy in protecting the family. It was interesting. After it was all over, that's the way it figured out.

Riess: That will be good when you're trying to explain this proposition to future garden-givers.

Roderick: All of this is being carefully watched and thought about because it's something so new. There are several places, like up in Portland is the Berry Estate, which is now the Berry Botanic Garden, but they can't hardly have it open--again, because of the neighbors. So, these are some of the things that we want to work on.

Generally speaking, people going to a botanic garden are not the kind of people that are going to cause problems in the area or in the botanic garden itself. You get a better quality people that go to these places. The undesirable would rather head for a bar or something that way.

Riess: In fact you would think it would increase values in the neighborhood rather than alarm the neighbors.

Roderick: I've never been to Lotusland. I've met Madame Ganna Walska in years back. That's all you can say, [laughs] met her and got the heck out, because she was such a wild one!

Wayne Roderick, Mendocino Coast, 1965

III UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BOTANICAL GARDEN, 1960-1976

Job Possibilities for Roderick, 1960

Riess: Now we should plunge right into your work at the UC Botanical Gardens. And that is "botanical," not "botanic," isn't it?

Roderick: Yes. They have that two-letter ending there that I can't quite see what difference it makes, but it is important somewhere. I always have said "botanic," but UC is "botanical."

Riess: Tell me about how you were hired.

Roderick: That goes back in history again. We had the nursery up in Petaluma. We kept it. My father would say, "Oh, yes we're going to move into town and work this out." And I said, "No, let's keep it down low." It was more than what we could really keep up, and we were trying not to hire help, too.

Then my father died and a lot of things had to be settled out. At the same time the chicken industry had gone to pot, and we were in the country, and our main customers were farmers, and they couldn't afford anything that was luxury. Of course, plants were something they could get along without.

It got down to--we only did about three hundred dollars in one month in the wintertime, and that was not easy, to try to make a living on that kind of little bit of money. Plus, ornamental plants are not very good boiled for dinner. I knew there were a couple of openings at Davis. So I went over there and talked around.

Riess: What kind of openings?

Roderick: One was a big research plot for working with all kinds of things about shade trees--disease-resistance, not too large growers, every description of a tree you could think of, flat-land, wind-blowing, hot. The other job I can't quite remember, but it was

just as dull a work--more or less doing the plowing in between the trees and plants. And yes, they would hire me there right away.

I got to thinking about this. The next week I said, "I'm going down to UC Berkeley." I went to the garden. It turned out that there was an opening. And here I was, the most dirty, filthiest guy, because I decided to do it just on the spur of the moment. Didn't even shave or anything. Got down there, found out there was this very interesting little native area.

Riess: How did they describe the job to you?

Roderick: I don't remember exactly. It had been listed already. Anyhow, I went down to Personnel, and I went to the head of Personnel in these dirty clothes. Here were two or three men in beautiful suits and ties and everything else. I had over an hour interview, and something came up, the fellow was talking on the intercom: "Yes, I'll be through with Mr. Roderick in about twenty minutes. And so-and-so," which was this one fellow who was still out there, "I can get rid of him in ten minutes. Then, I'll be there." I felt like a damn fool for sure! I got two raises when I was accepted.

Riess: Was it listed as "gardener," or what?

Roderick: No. It was called "senior nurseryman." They had very, very few positions. There was a gardener, and senior nurseryman, and I think that was it. Then assistant manager and manager and director.

"Continuing Education"

Roderick: I got, in nothing flat, to the top of my category, and I couldn't get any more raises. It went on for nine years that way. The laws or the rules of the University said that if you are not promoted in I think it was six years when you got to the top of your field, that you were no good, and that you had to be fired. I got an interview and then I became a "museum scientist." But the job description said that I had to have at least a master's degree, and I don't even have a degree, and that it should be a person with a Ph.D.

At that time I also guided all the college classes that used to come around to visit the garden. I took them through the garden and lectured them on the different plants. When I

got this higher position, I couldn't take classes around anymore, and they hired a Ph.D., and she couldn't take the college kids! She could only take grammar school kids, which has turned out to be one of the greatest things of all: there's all these grammar school kids coming, and they have a tremendous bunch of docents that take the classes around, getting the youngsters broken in on plants early.

Riess: Speaking of "taking classes," were you able to enroll at UC and get some more academic work? Did that happen at all?

Roderick: No, it didn't. I thought about it and thought about it, and I still couldn't quite get the classes I wanted in this area. I was more into horticulture classes. I would have to take them at Merritt, or some one of those places, and I was more or less teaching the instructors over there!

Riess: In the Lester Rowntree oral history I read that she didn't regret her lack of university education. "It would spoil everything," she said, "It would be all put-on, veneer, pretense."¹

Roderick: I can tell you one thing that I absolutely adored about her. She was telling me one time--. There was a patch of a Lewisia rediviva, and you could see the ocean from there. Normally they are inland where it's hotter and drier. It was just a small colony. She went up to see it one spring, and the highway crew had straightened the road out a little bit and took it out. Her quote was: "I said strong words for a Quaker. I said strong words!" I just bet she did say more than "darn" and "heck" on that one! Oh, but she did get mad!

Employees and Managers at the Garden

Riess: When you arrived on the job at the Botanical Garden, who did you talk to?

Roderick: The first person I talked with was Dr. [Helen-Mar] Beard. I had had contact with her from time to time when I used to go down there. I was so interested in the native plants. Many a time we'd get talking over this, and I thought, "No, that's not that, that's a such and such." And I'd go in the book, and see that

¹Lester Rowntree, California Native Plant Woman, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1979.

there is this one little character that throws it into this and not that.

Riess: You mean, in your nursery work in Petaluma you were already specializing in native plants?

Roderick: Not specializing--we could hardly sell them, but we tried to. But it went back to my high school, when I had the largest collection of wildflower specimens that was ever collected for a class project. Every spring in the science course--and I can't remember the name of that class--you had to collect wildflowers and press them and have them identified. I think you were supposed to have something like fifty, and once in awhile someone got a hundred, and I think I had about two-hundred-and-fifty species all together. So, it goes back.

Riess: When you were coming down to talk to Dr. Beard, it was out of your own curiosity?

Roderick: And to see what they had. That way I would learn something.

Riess: Who was she?

Roderick: She was the botanist.

Riess: At the Botanical Gardens?

Roderick: Yes.

Riess: In my readings of the history of the Botanical Gardens there is a swing between its being very much connected with the University and then a kind of swing away. This seems to be an issue.

Roderick: There was a lot of controversy in the University. Way back, it was very important. Then there was a period when there was hardly a graduate student that was doing anything up there. Then there would be a whole bunch more graduate students. Of course, when you get the graduate students up there or are producing a lot of class material, that was when the Botanical Garden was good.

When Reagan became governor, and he was cutting everything he possibly could, botanic gardens and universities were getting heavily cut. I was laughed at all the time because in my annual reports for the native area I counted every individual flower I gave out for class material. So I was producing anywhere from forty to fifty thousand flowers every year just for class material, and I got laughed at. Up at Davis especially I was

laughed at: "Who wants to be bothered with class material? That's just nothing."

Well, Reagan cut the University severely. At UC Davis their arboretum was cut to zero. But here at Berkeley we got cut only 25 percent because we had all these masses of class material. From then on, I was kind of liked.

Riess: I have a note here that when Mac [Watson] Laetsch came in, in 1969, the Botanical Garden was going in the direction of relating more to community needs, outside UC. Do you think this was seen as a way to keep themselves afloat, too?

Roderick: I can't remember because I don't have too much love for Laetsch.

Riess: Let's step back again. Who were some of the other people up there? Herbert G. Baker became director in 1957.

Roderick: He was there at the beginning. He went out just as Laetsch came in, immediately after, I think.

Riess: I wondered who you sat down with, for instance, and talked about the philosophy behind the California native garden.

Roderick: Nobody. I talked to nobody. Helen-Mar Beard gave me a little bit, but even before my time there was quite a stretch from this one fellow till I took over. He was given a vehicle, gas card, and told to go out and collect. The University a very little bit, but this fellow got a nice all-native nursery. [laughs] Then, he had to get out. I guess they caught up to him.

Riess: It was a scandal? He was selling on the side, or supplying?

Roderick: It was quite a scandal. He had a nursery up on the Russian River. We didn't get very much plant material here, but I've been to his nursery and it was absolutely covered with plants.

Riess: Who was he? Can we name his name?

Roderick: Yes. That was Harry Roberts.

Riess: I guess that is a kind of hazard of the job, the temptation to do a little business on the side. Maybe this happens a lot.

Roderick: I never had time to do that for myself. For the first ten years I lived there at Berkeley I owned a forty-five by forty-five foot lot with an old Victorian house on it. There was no space, and I was thankful. It was even a heck of a job cleaning out the weeds on what little bit of land was showing.

Riess: Were you given a vehicle?

Roderick: No. I paid. Practically every last field trip was on myself. For one thing, the one person immediately above me was extremely jealous because I had, I guess, more knowledge on these things than what he did. He was foreign-born. Somebody from Cal Hort would come in and talk with me, and I would tell them, "Come on over here. I've got a weed patch. I can weed, and we can talk, and we don't have to worry." I'd be working away. He'd come up and say, "I saw you talking to so-and-so. I won't tell on you this time, but you watch out. You better not do that anymore."

Plus, the boss himself was such a miserable person. His common thing for the garden was: "If there's anything I hate, it's plants. I'm staying here till I can retire, and I'll never come back to this horrible hell-hole." Worst of all, his orders were never direct. You always had to try to figure out what he meant. If he got mad at you, he wouldn't speak to you. There were six months he wouldn't speak to me because he said one thing: "First things first: weeds." It meant that I was not to collect any more plants until I got the weeds under control. I didn't know what he meant. I just went out and weeded faster. But then he wouldn't speak to me for six months because I did bring in a couple of plants the next weekend.

Riess: That's really hard to work that way.

Roderick: Yes. It was terrible. Baker was not a very good person. He was pretty difficult to work under. And then there was this one other botanist by the name of Paul [C.] Hutchison who was impossible. Helen-Mar Beard--well, her husband said that Helen-Mar thinks in low-gear and jitters in high-gear. I was always on the run all the time and couldn't get her to do things that should be done. I'd go in and fill out the final papers, something that way, to get the numbers--every plant had to have a number--so I could plant it out. She got so she'd hide the papers or lock them up so I couldn't get to them. Oh, it was difficult.

Riess: Do you think it was because the Botanical Gardens lacked serious University support?

Roderick: That was a lot of it. Then, the other thing was that about 80 percent, if not better than that, of the staff was only interested in their paycheck. They weren't interested in the garden and in the plants. Now it's just about the opposite. Everybody's interested. I think one fellow is going to leave because he doesn't like the place here. He was born and raised

in Oregon, and that's where he wants to go. So right now it's a good job. I think as soon as he can he's going to move back to Oregon, if he can get something up there he likes.

Weeding and Collecting Class Material

Riess: If you were set to weeding--I'm just kind of curious about all of these ranking orders--what did the gardeners do? You said you were a "senior nurseryman," and there were "gardeners" also. What were they doing?

Roderick: There were only a couple. Mostly, it was "senior nurseryman."

Riess: And yet, you were put to work weeding?

Roderick: That was my favorite thing, weeding. I still like it. The first thing in my work clothes that's worn out is the knees from being down on my hands and knees weeding. You can see what's going on. The little plants--you can really see if they're coming on and doing well. You can know an awful lot of what's going on by weeding. I've already said that the University Botanical Garden really was a glorified weed patch. Everything comes down to that. You've got all this area, you've got all these rare and choice plants planted out, and you've got to keep the weeds from getting around.

Riess: But I would have thought, just for the sake of argument, that in fact the California native section wasn't that rare and choice, and that natives and weeds are practically indistinguishable to a lot of people.

Roderick: Yes, in the native area there were-- We had a lot of different species of clarkia. In one bed they would be a weed, and in the next bed they would be a desirable plant. This is where I had problems with the student help that I got. They always at first would think I was the most horrible person. To get them on my side, the first thing I would tell them was that they could call me "the old fart."

Then I'd tell them, "Now, you weed these three plants out totally." Then, I'd take them back over: "Now, these next two weeds have got to go." So, they would leave the things that I wanted. About this time they would get to laughing with me, and they would say, "How old are you?" I always told them, "Two years younger than God." This is the way I kept two jumps ahead

of them. [laughing] It was a lot of fun working with those college kids and trying to keep just ahead of them.

Riess: What you've described so far is just maintaining what was there.

Roderick: Oh, I was out every weekend, practically, collecting somewhere or other.

Riess: Was it all on your own initiative, or did you have to check it out first? Get it okayed?

Roderick: Well, the botany classes had all the different materials they needed for class, and the most important class that I was associated with was the taxonomy class, where they had to learn to identify the plants. Unfortunately, that class started in January, so it was very difficult to get a lot of material for that time.

I'd get the list of the families that they wanted--some quite often with the genus, they'd want maybe three different genera in one family--so, when I was out I'd watch for seeds that would bloom early or late in those families. Plus, I would go down to the desert. Generally I left on New Year's Day to go down to the desert for a few days. I took ice chests with me, and I collected a lot of stuff that would come in at the right time. Some of these things froze beautifully and we'd freeze some of them when we got back.

Riess: Freeze the seeds?

Roderick: No, the flowers for the classes. Those classes got up to about four hundred, four hundred-and-fifty students. That's how come I was listing so many hundreds of thousands of flowers for class material. We'd bring those out, and I did not distinguish, when I put in my report, whether it was wild-collected plants, or whether it was ones that came right out of the garden. I figured it was just all part of my job. That's why I listed so many.

Riess: Those professors were totally dependent on you then?

Roderick: Yes. When I left the University and went to Tilden, the fellow that took my place, a fellow that I helped for his formal education, any plant was all right if it came up on its own, but if the weeds came up, that was too bad. He was "too good to pull a weed." All that class material kind of thing went down the hill to zero practically.

Riess: What professors do you remember particularly working well with?

Roderick: Bob Ornduff, who then became the director. To me, that was absolutely heavenly. The only thing that differed in our thoughts was that for the Botanical Garden I had to think "little" about what I could take care of. He could think "big." We're still good friends to this day.

Riess: When Ornduff would send you a list, he knew that all those things were there, or he kind of hoped that you'd be able to find them?

Roderick: He hoped, and he knew that I was going out and collecting, too. This was when there were still lots of wildflowers. I did like I did with seed collecting: I never collected a whole patch. I'd just take here and there so nobody ever could see where I had taken. It would have to be a big colony before I--well, you have to figure four hundred-and-fifty specimens, and generally, the smaller flowers, the students had to have two. That would take an awful lot. So it would have to be a very large patch before I would really touch it.

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Riess: You knew your plants. But taxonomics? How much further along were you on some of these areas than the students? Did you have to run to keep ahead?

Roderick: I didn't have T.V. I didn't go here or there. I didn't go to the shows. I don't go to bars--still don't go to bars. At that time I didn't take too many magazines. I had my nose in the books, studying this and studying that, all the time. I did that on my own before we ever had a nursery.

When I was in high school and got interested in this botany thing, my folks bought me [Willis Linn] Jepson's Manual [of the Flowering Plants of California]. I have it right over here, and there's no cover left on it. It's in bad shape, but I can't get rid of it. I studied and studied, and when we had the nursery I did all the botanical work completely, and studied and studied night after night. I learned all this on my own.

Then, I had to go a little bit different when I went to work for the University. Instead of it being just a little bit of a pleasure like before, I then had to start working from the plant family and think of it as class material. It made quite a little bit of a change.

Also, the little bit of botany--I had only the one semester of botany at junior college before the war came along. In fact,

I never quite finished; I was drafted before I was finished. Then I found out that my professor gave a complete different accent than what everybody else used. I had to learn everything from a different accent. It's still confusing.

It was a lot of fun, though. My pleasure was going out and seeing plants in the wild. Then, to work with the University-- I'd still do it even if I didn't get paid. [I shouldn't say that.] They did give me Friday afternoon for going out and doing that. I did get, about five times, a car to go out and collect. One time--I was never so disgusted--I got the car as far as Eureka and had to put it in the garage and get it all fixed up and then turn it right around and come back home because they didn't think it was going to make it back home.

Riess: You were better off relying on your own car?

Roderick: Yes.

Riess: Did you ever bring back the wrong thing?

Roderick: I brought back one plant, a Compositae named Iva axillaris, the greatest stuff for class material. This must have been about the late 1960s, I'd say. I think now they've finally gotten rid of the horrible thing. [laughter]

"Desk Work" and the Dawn Redwood Fuss

Riess: How was your day divided up, between the weeding and the student work and just sitting at a desk?

Roderick: I was never, hardly ever allowed in those days to sit at a desk.

Riess: Weren't you doing some publication along with all of this?

Roderick: My little bit of writing and all of that--of course, I kept being told, "No, you can't write that. You're not educated. You can't write that." I had to do that all at my house at night or early morning.

In those years there was practically no work in the office. A very few minutes a day. In the rainy weather, yes, then I did a little bit of research. But mostly, for three years, I cleaned out the vault from day one of the Botanic Garden.

Riess: What was the vault?

Roderick: It was a vault that had just everything stuffed in it to get it out of sight. It was a room about ten-by-ten feet. Now it is being used as a vault should be used correctly. This was filled with boxes and boxes. I went through every one of those boxes. They found things they never knew existed.

Riess: Papers or plant materials?

Roderick: It was all paper stuff. Boxes of papers. Tons of old water bills and those things we threw away. But then I found such things as a letter from the person that they were trying to hire to build the rhododendron dell. In it he said that he would not accept the job unless they furnished one boxcar-load of leaf-mold, which would cost six hundred dollars.

Then I found, I think that it was from 1948 or 1949, a letter from the Arnold Arboretum saying what an s.o.b. that [Ralph] Chaney was for stealing all the glory of the dawn redwood, when it was Arnold Arboretum that had gone over there first and brought back seed, and then, about three or four months later, Chaney goes over and brings back a couple of seedlings and more seed, and with all kinds of publication. This was a five page, single-spaced letter.

Riess: So, you saved out all those interesting things?

Roderick: Oh, sure. Then finding the old pictures of the canyon when it was still a dairy ranch--1916, I think, the first photographs were taken. One of those man-planted pines, that was an old pine then, is still in existence. There were six of them planted. There's still one of them.

Riess: Was there always a lot of fuss about the dawn redwoods? Did people come from near and far to see them because they were so special?

Roderick: That I don't remember so much. The one thing about them there at the garden that's so interesting is that the first two were planted above the dell, one on each side of the stream, and they're much bigger than the ones down in the lower part of the dell. This Harry Roberts that I was talking about was tending, I guess, those dawn redwoods when they were first brought in, and there was one scrub, one that just wasn't doing anything--.

Riess: A runt?

Roderick: A real runt. He gave that to my mother, and my mother had the first one planted in Sonoma County. She gave it very tender

care, and finally it took off, and it did grow. I haven't taken a look at it for quite a few years. But when she sold the ranch in about 1970, I guess, it had about a two-foot trunk on it at that time. So, it really took off.

Riess: But now it's common enough.

Roderick: I think now they've kind of gone downhill as far as something to plant. They're rooted from cuttings, just about like our native redwood here.

California Native Area

Riess: Were you propagating them, or were you not involved in that kind of activity?

Roderick: I didn't get into that. I never tried that. I propagated my own things for the native area. Of course, the thing I propagated the most was any of our native bulbs. I specialized in that. I had two hundred two-by-two foot boxes, and I had anywhere up to three species of bulbs--generally Brodiaea and Allium and Calachortus--in each box, or something like that. When I left, this fellow that took my place let the weeds grow and almost all of those were killed out. Now that Roger Raiche is there, he has built up a fine collection of them again, but not so extensive.

Riess: When you arrived, was there a lot of unplanted area?

Roderick: It was almost all unplanted.

Riess: I want to get a picture of what you had to deal with when you arrived. Was it the same area of the garden?

Roderick: The same area, except anything that was from the main road that goes on down to, say, over across the creek, from there south through the native area, that was all open. There was just a fringe along the main path through the native area, there was a fringe of plants there, and they had been planted in gallon cans, can and all. And they were still dying and falling over, getting their roots cut off. So, there was practically nothing along that main path that was originally there. I think probably eight or nine plants only.

Triumphing Over the Soil

Riess: What did you tackle first?

Roderick: First thing was trying to get the place cleaned up, and working the soil. I tried to plant along the front, but originally that was not to be the Botanical Garden. From the stream that comes down through the rhododendron dell east was supposed to be the Botanical Garden. The lawn is a raised bed, and it's all the topsoil from that front part of the native area and the parking lot. On the lower side of the parking lot was the dump. I spent years cleaning out broken glass, old wire, pieces of tin cans.

The soil was the most horrible clay. Finally, I got lots of chicken manure and put it on top of this. It was more litter than it was manure. That still wouldn't break it up enough. I thought I had it okay, and I had a hundred small pots of plants to plant out. I turned the sprinkler on and let it run one whole day. Turned it off that night. I started the next morning with a pick, worked all day, my whole eight hours, and I got ninety-four of those two-and-a-half inch pots in the ground with a pick. And they all died because the ground went and cracked again. In those years you had to be careful walking across that area because the ground cracked so bad, you could fall in and break a leg. Up to eight-inch-wide cracks. It was horrible.

Riess: Really? So, you just continued to amend it? How did you develop the land?

Roderick: Baker put one of his research plants in that front area. His idea was that on the desert there's a thunderstorm every week-- not in the same place, but he never figured that one out. So he had these plants watered heavily every week, and they grow in rock crevices or in grit. And here it was in this horrible clay, and they rotted.

Then he went and demanded to have big holes dug about two foot in diameter, two foot deep. Filled them with sand and put his plants in there. Well, they held water even better, and the plants died quicker [laughter]. So then I went through and broke this soil from one of these holes to the other so that the water could run out down in the bottom.

About the same time, up at the Rad Lab they were digging out soil that was far superior to what we had, although it was still clay. They were taking it out to build a new building.

I stopped a fellow. It turned out he had three trucks, and he's getting paid to haul out at so much a load. I told my immediate superior, or my boss I should say, and he says, "So what? Let it go." (This is the fellow that said that he hated plants.) So I told the assistant manager. He went over this guy's head. He called Dr. Baker's office, and the secretary there said, "Oh, great, great."

We had the guys drop their loads on to me. We got sixty-two loads. The sixty-third one was backing down into the area when Dr. Baker comes in. Well, the secretary hadn't told him, and he threw this tantrum. Absolutely would have no more. I had to push him aside to keep him from being run over. You can't believe how a grown man can stamp his feet. [laughter] I pushed him out, but he had it stopped and I couldn't get anymore. I wanted a hundred loads.

Riess: But nevertheless, that really changed the terrain.

Roderick: That made all the difference. Then the next thing, after that Baker wouldn't let us have sand or grit to go into the clayey stuff that we got. But the road was not paved in front of the native area, and I'd take my helpers, when everybody was gone that was a boss, and we'd hurry and sweep that gravel up and run wheelbarrow-loads all over on top of that clay and work it into the clay so it couldn't be seen too much. That's the way we got things going.

Riess: That's interesting. That's really funny.

Roderick: I was laughed at and everything else. Everybody knew what I was doing, you know, but he couldn't catch me.

Riess: Sounds like it wasn't truly a botanical garden. It was a garden that existed in response to whatever kind of needs the University had, and it wasn't a public garden.

Roderick: When I went there, there was practically no class material coming out of the native area.

Riess: If they weren't doing class material, what were they were doing up there? Because that's the very least that they would be doing.

Roderick: This is what I would like to know myself. I have no idea what was really thought of.

Riess: It didn't have a public function?

Roderick: No. It was very much of a weed patch.

I did a lot of things that nobody had ever thought about doing. I started the first vernal pool that was ever started. I published the very first papers on the horticulture of a vernal pool. That had never been done before.

I brought in all kinds of annuals, tried everything to see what I could grow. A lot of them would not do anything. The soils still are not right for growing a lot of that stuff. The first and only time that *Dirca* had ever been grown from seed and planted out, I had done that.

Riess: What is *Dirca*?

Roderick: It's a shrub that's restricted to the greater Bay Area. It's related to *daphne*. It's in the same family. It's called leatherwood, because you can take the stems and tie a knot in them, it's so pliable. It is on the rare and endangered list. Anyhow, I got a bunch of seed of that--a hell of a chore to get the seed. I checked the plants every week. Went out one week, looked at them, and no, it's going to be another couple of weeks. Then I went out the next week and the seed was all gone. It drops off before it looks like it's ripe.

I got down on my hands and knees in this patch and I got about two hundred and fifty seeds. I got about two hundred to grow, and I got about twenty of those established in gallon cans. Of those I had, I think seven of them survived out in the open ground. To this day there are still one or two of them left there at the garden.

Riess: And this is a good survival rate?

Roderick: Yes, I think so. There have been others that have grown on and had better soils, and hopefully they were planted at better locations.

Riess: That's just a reminder of how much you have to do to get your results.

Roderick: I did a lot of that kind of stuff. Of course, that to me was pure joy, just trying out everything.

Plant Islands, Soil Tests

Riess: When you talk about making the vernal pool, and developing the pygmy forest and such things, was your thinking about plant communities just developing? How many communities do you have within that California native garden?

Roderick: I never took time to figure out.

Riess: At the Oakland Museum the California transect is organized in nine biotic zones. Was this way of looking at California natives developed back when you started working there?

Roderick: I never thought about that. I looked at it more later on like what Ledyard Stebbins called his "plant islands," and I remember looking at all these areas and finding these different things and oh, yes, that soil's such and such, and so that's going to be different, and not knowing for sure how acid it was or alkaline. But I'd take and duplicate something towards that type of soil, with more or less some of the minerals I might find in there, sneak a little bit of lime in, for instance, to get more like what they found in one place, or add lots and lots of acid stuff.

Of course, where I was born and raised there in Petaluma, it was very alkaline, and we just kept putting in more and more humus to counteract, to make it more acid. I was using that, not thinking so much of acidity, except like in the Central Valley where you find the vernal pools and you would find the white coating on top of some of those. This is where I would put lime in to give it those conditions. But always I was using grit and sand and humus to break up the clay so roots could get down.

Riess: If you brought back some plant which would be practically impossible to grow in the soil up at the Botanical Garden, did you test the soil in the field and try to duplicate that?

Roderick: No. I would never go into that. But I had the feeling in my hand what a soil should feel like. I could take and feel that: oh yes, this has got more grit than most places, so I'm going to have to get this onto a mound to get the drainage. Quite often I would dig down into the clay and put in a transition zone.

When I went to work up at Tilden it was just the opposite with Jim Roof. He didn't know there would be any difference in

soil, you'd just plant something on top. Then he found out they wouldn't grow in that horrible clay. He then made mounds of good drainage on top of the clay without making a transition zone. So the roots go down and hit the clay and turn out, and if you don't water them, they die. I would always make that transition zone.

Riess: They're able to penetrate that?

Roderick: They kind of adapt to a heavier soil. Here in my own place with this horrible clay, when I start to convert to get a good top soil, the first layers I spade into the clay. I spade in, and I do that three times, breaking the clay up as much as possible to the smallest particles so I would get a good transition zone. I've always done that.

Riess: And then when the roots get down there, they toughen up sufficiently so that they can then fight their way through?

Roderick: They seem then to be able to penetrate into the clay. At least that's what I kind of have worked out over the years, without doing any more research work on it.

Riess: Speaking of Jim Roof, was it helpful for you to be able to go over the hill into Tilden Botanic Garden and see what he was doing when you were working at the UC Botanical Garden?

Roderick: No. At that time I didn't do any of that.

A Vernal Pool and a Pygmy Forest

Riess: Why did you do a vernal pool? Where did you see your first vernal pool?

Roderick: I'd seen them earlier. Then when I started to work for the University, and I was travelling around, I got to see real vernal pools, more than what I was ever used to up in Sonoma, you know, up in through that part of the country.

The vernal pool plants were such interesting plants, and we had one graduate student that came in--oh, I hadn't been there more than two or three years--and was doing research on this one genus called *Downingia*. I got fascinated with that, especially. So I had to have a vernal pool. I made a little vernal pool which is still there and still in use.

Riess: I remember seeing Downingia down at Coyote Hills, in one of their ponds.

Roderick: Yes. In good years there's lots of it down there. But the best one of all was over near Byron, so [ironically] they made a good hay field out of it, levelled it, and filled the vernal pool in. Now the big, big patch is not so good anymore.

Riess: How about pygmy forests? Where did you get that idea?

Roderick: Well, my father loved bonsai. My mother and father used to go up to Fort Bragg, and my mother always would have to go out and see the dwarf forests, and my father got fascinated. Near the spagnum moss bog, which has now got a big fence around it to protect it, there was the city dump where the neighbors dumped all their garbage.

It was just a little dirt track out there, and how my folks got out there I don't know. But they saw these trees that had been run over more than once, all twisted and gnarled. He'd dig them up out of the little road.

Riess: This is up at Fort Bragg? Right outside the town of Fort Bragg?

Roderick: Yes, just off of Highway 20.

Anyway, my father dug up these old twisted trees.

I started to work down at UC shortly after my father died. Closed out the nursery and got everything straightened out. I went and I took a lot of my plants that were there that my mother couldn't take care of, and there were several of these bonsai that had never been touched. They were still in the original soil.

I don't know how long I had them, but I'd say about three or four years. I made this little cement platform with a little edge around it. And I knew a friend who had some of the soil in his place, and I got the soil and dug a few more plants out of his place. He was clearing it. And I made my first little dwarf forest.

The oldest, biggest plants were the ones that my father had. The pine tree that's there today was one of those that my father had dug. That would have been about 1950 when he dug that. It's still there. It's not very big, and it was old then. That's how I got that started.

That dwarf forest there at UC now has more than doubled its size. I had just a tiny area, what I could handle and take care of. Now that these other soils have been all amended, you know, and all this here, it's got so now that it's easy for a person to take care of a bigger area. They have, I guess, tripled the size of that piece of land there.

Riess: I'll give your voice a rest and read a description from an article in a campus publication [Berkeleyan, April 18, 1990, Vol. 18, No. 20] that came out around the time of the 100th anniversary of the Botanical Garden. It starts out:

"Surrounded by poppies more vibrant than taxicabs, the vernal pool at the University's Botanical Garden is a replica of rain-filled ponds that are disappearing in the onslaught of urbanization and agricultural development in California's Central Valley. Nearby is a hillside dotted with boulders and clumps of delicate wildflowers, a recreation of alpine fields above eleven thousand feet high in the Sierra Nevada."

Is that alpine field area yours?

Roderick: No. That's just real new. I had made a rock garden-like area in there to grow alpiners. Again, I had on the top part all granite. I brought all those rocks in on my own, all the soil in on my own, the granitic soils. I figured I brought in somewhere between sixty and seventy tons of materials over the years doing that.

Riess: In the back of some vehicle of yours?

Roderick: My pick-up.

Riess: "Then there are the stunted pines and cypress painstakingly transferred from the Mendocino coast along with acid-rich soil for the reconstruction of a pygmy forest."

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Riess: Do you know the name Edward Greene from way back, the person who apparently started the garden?

Roderick: He was the founder of the Department of Botany for the University.

Riess: This says of him,

"Something of a visionary, Greene insisted on collecting the native plants of the state for the garden situated on the gentle slope where Moffitt Library now stands."

Did some of those old plant materials end up in your native garden?

Roderick: No. I think there were hardly any of those kinds of plants that were moved up to UC in the 1920s. I think mostly potted plants and things like that were moved up. Probably more cuttings taken of what was on the campus proper and grown on. As far as I can remember of what I've gone through, there were no real specimens moved up.

Native Garden, Strybing Arboretum

Riess: Where else could you go and see masses of California natives being grown? Had Strybing Arboretum developed their California native section?

Roderick: No. About 1962 or 1963 I really got acquainted with Art Menzies. He was just starting the native area there himself. I kept him sober longer than anybody else had ever done, five days short of six months without taking a drink. We went out practically every weekend someplace in California and collected. Of course, he couldn't drive. I think it was because he knew he'd get probably drunk and would wreck a car and kill somebody. I think this is probably why he wouldn't drive, but I never found out.

Riess: But he was not your mentor in all of this?

Roderick: No. There was already a lot of planting, like the redwoods and all that, in Strybing. But he's the one that really went on to develop the rest of the area.

Then he got acquainted with Barbara--I can't remember what her name was before she got her divorce--and they married, and she took [drove] him. But he still couldn't leave liquor alone.

Riess: Barbara Menzies--I know that name. Wildflowers?

Roderick: Yes, it goes way, way back. I got to know several of the Menzies here in California. Rob, who lived in San Rafael, was the head of the family, and he had the manor chair and the family silver, the family china. He was plant-happy. I never found out exactly what different persons did for certain, but I do know that the cook was a rose expert, and the butler kept all the equipment in good working condition and kept the paths, things like that.

But Art and both his mother and father and his brother were all alcoholics. The brother was, most of the time, in an institution. His brain was gone pretty well. Finally Art just got so bad that he went and killed himself. He knew he'd been drunk and so bad on the job for so long that they were going to fire him, so he committed suicide. But what a plantsman!

Western Hills Nursery, Occidental

Riess: That's a sad side note.

Had Marshall Olbrich and Lester Hawkins gotten Western Hills Nursery in Occidental going by then?

Roderick: Let's see, it was after my mother built her retirement home, which would have been about the 1970s, when Western Hills was trying to get going. I can't tell you exactly how we got together. My mother would have them down to Petaluma for dinner. They'd talk plants like mad, so quite often I'd be in on this.

My mother would go out--you always had to come before dark so she could go out--and she'd dig up a lot of things for the [Occidental] nursery. They'd always bring her a few things from what they were getting together. They would trade back and forth. There are still quite a few plants that they consider good that my mother introduced, and my mother bought a lot of things from them that they couldn't keep growing there at their place.

Riess: Their place in Occidental is awfully damp and cool.

Roderick: Yes.

One thing still has not really got on the market, and my mother found out by accident how to grow it. This was a Hydrangea villosa. It's one that has to have lime. She planted

the plant right against the foundation of her hothouse. It was by accident that she did this, and it did beautifully. In acid soils it does zero. It was planted about six inches from the foundation, so of course the roots immediately got right against all that nice, fresh cement. It is a magnificent plant.

Riess: Western Hills is more like a garden than a nursery.

Roderick: It is a garden-nursery.

Riess: Was their intention to create a California native garden?

Roderick: It was created to grow unusual plants. It's still that same way today.

Riess: Unusual native plants or not?

Roderick: Anything and everything, including natives.

Riess: They were not pursuing the natives?

Roderick: No. They loved natives, but then they got so they really went wild for Australians--they planted a lot of those. Then they went into the perennials. They went--Lester never went to England to do anything, but Marshall did, and collected lots of the new perennials.

They were not too particular whether they were high-maintenance or low water requirements and all this. California Flora [Nursery] in Fulton is more interested in low water-requirement plants, but Western Hills is still going in for plants that need a lot of water. See, they are in a high rainfall area, and that used to be a boggy area. It used to be all just solid rushes. It's wet almost the year around.

Riess: I mentioned that nursery because being at the Botanical Garden for seventeen years, you must have gotten quite a network of people who could tell you where to go and get things. I'm trying to see how that network evolved.

Roderick: It turned out that all the graduate students and so forth came to me to ask where they could find different things in the wild. I was always interested in every plant I could get my nose into, so of course any of these new nurseries and things that way, I had to get my nose in there right away and find out what was going on.

Cross-State Collecting Trips

Riess: On your trips I know you had plants that you had to get. But in seeking those plants did you cover every corner of the state?

Roderick: I used to. When I worked for UC I tried to be in every county once a year--well, it turned out to be about every year and a half. I used to start out New Year's Day, go down into the low desert and gradually work up farther north and higher up into the mountains. I had a certain place I had to go year after year and see what everything was like there.

Riess: When you got to an area would you talk to locals to find out where things were?

Roderick: Sometimes. More than anything else, it's just what I observed. For instance, to go to the desert I always went over Tehachapi, got on the far side onto the desert, then I turned north, and I used to camp all the time for the first night at Jawbone Canyon. I loved the name of that. All of a sudden I found out that there were unbelievable masses of flowers from January on through April, until finally now the motorcyclists have just torn the canyon to pieces.

But I could go in there and find three or four species of Gilias for class material, in masses, and things of that nature that I could always get. Plus, being in a canyon with many little side washouts, you could always find a place that was sheltered from the winds. It was such a good place for the first night and the last night. It was a seven-hour drive from that area to home. It was just a good stop.

Riess: Once you parked your vehicle--truck, I take it? Was it always a truck?

Roderick: I tried to have a pick-up. I still have a pick-up.

Riess: For many hours would you explore?

Roderick: I was rather cautious. Too cautious, probably. If the road had not had very much traffic on it, and you could only see two or three cars a day, I wouldn't go on it because I'd be by myself, and God only knows what can happen to a person out that way. In fact, one time I tried one of these roads, and I could see where cars had been, and I went out there and sank down out of sight. Took a share of one day trying to get myself out. That was my first education on the desert.

Riess: How about snakes and things like that?

Roderick: I don't pay any attention to snakes. They're friendly, they're nice.

Riess: I guess if you're looking for things, you're observing everything anyway.

Roderick: You're going to see one, and especially, you can hear one.

Programs: Indian Uses, and Explorers of the West

Riess: Back to the Botanical Garden. You said, when you were summing things up in the beginning, that the educational programs were the greatest change--the docents making the garden available and intelligible to children.

Roderick: It's the greatest thing that's ever happened.

Riess: Bob Ornduff said that you developed the program on Indian uses of native plants. When did that happen and why?

Roderick: Well, several things. On the labels that we have for the plants you have to have the author who described the plant, and if they had Indian uses you have to have that on it. So curiosity killed the cat. Dr. Beard had a couple of books on the Indian uses. They were very poor, but she had them. I got interested in it. "Well," I'd think, "That doesn't sound very good," so I had to get my nose into more and more of this. On the other side of the wall in there [gestures] I've got a whole row of books on Indian uses. I've gone into that a great deal.

I worked up the labels for the first trail. Well, it wasn't good enough for them, so they hired some girl to do this. Oh God, I got so mad at her! I'd bawl her out. They went ahead and published a trail guide with numbers identifying the plants, and they had the wrong picture, and the wrong plants with the wrong uses, and everything else. I screamed and bitched, and finally I got those pretty well straightened out.

Then I got more interested in these authors. Quite often there would be two and three persons a plant was named after, and I had to find out what that was all about. Quite often one of them would be the person that found the plant. So I went into the early plant explorers of the West and worked up a very

interesting lecture, and I have to give it--every few months somebody else will ask for it.

Riess: You mean now?

Roderick: Oh yes. I got my slides permanently set up, and I've got a whole list of all the explorers, the dates that they were here in the West, and what some of the more important plants were that they found.

Riess: Have you published that, also?

Roderick: No. I have it partly worked up. My problem is trying to write so a person can make sense out of it. I have to have a lot of good editors to work on me.

Riess: It sounds like an important thing to get onto paper. Why don't you just tape-record it and then let somebody transcribe it?

Roderick: Well, I've got somewhere put away in this house about two-thirds of them, oh, let's say one page, and for most of these I even got line drawings made to have a little booklet done.

Riess: Did you give lectures on the Indian uses?

Roderick: The Indian uses--I did a little bit at UC, but mostly it was giving lectures out around. At one time, when the Native Plant Society was quite young, there was one member of the board of directors that was a grammar school teacher--the greatest person you ever saw in your life. He got me involved with this. I made up a lot of the stuff, and he got me into going around to some of the schools and showing this.

I had a tug o' war rope, you know, that I made out of Fremontodendron bark. It was long enough so that three kids could hang onto each end of it, and then they could see if they could break it. Oh, gosh, the kids just loved getting involved. I really had a lot of fun doing that. I still have a lot of Indian friends--. No, most of my good Indian friends, the old ones, are all dead now.

Riess: Did you pursue your questions about plants with them?

Roderick: There was this one lady that I absolutely adored.

Riess: Where was she?

Roderick: She was up on the Klamath River. She was a Karok--the last pure-blooded Karok--and her grandmother was the last medicine

man of the tribe. When Grandma got too old, little Ethel did the collecting of the plants for her grandma. She still lived where it was primitive enough that she kept three dogs to make sure that one of them would find any bear that came wandering into her place. Her address was Somes Bar, California.

Riess: Karok is an Indian group I don't know.

Roderick: It was immediately above the Hoopas. The other interesting thing was that the Hoopas were kind of warlike, while the Karoks were very friendly. Even today, some of the Hoopas--I just don't get very close to them.

I was visiting this one Indian lady, and this fellow saw me there. Pretty soon I left, and we met someplace. Boy, I'm telling you right now, he was friendly and, "Come on, we're going to have a big dance tonight up at the Forks of the Salmon. Come on up. Oh, we're going to have fun. Everybody's going to get drunk, and the blood's going to fly in all directions. Oh boy, are we going to have beautiful fights!" You know, this kind of people.

Riess: Were the people in anthropology interested in any way in what you were finding out from the Indians?

Roderick: No. They were doing their own thing, and I wasn't good enough for that.

Riess: It sounds like you are kind of a natural teacher, and maybe not everybody up at the Botanical Garden was--that your reason for doing this was that you were interested in sharing it.

Roderick: Yes. I love sharing. In fact, this last Saturday down at the arboretum at the UC Santa Cruz campus I gave a lecture, and I was introduced as "too generous, giving away most of my garden to anybody that wants it, as well as knowledge." That's one of the ways I was introduced. That's all I like doing is sharing. It's like with the Indians. I have had so much pleasure with them, and I love to share. I've learned from them.

Roses and Orchids, and the Public

Riess: In an article [Herbert G.] Baker wrote, I believe in 1977 in Pacific Horticulture, he said that the Botanical Garden's horticultural connections to rose and herb and orchid groups and so on were stronger than the connections to the Department of

Botany. Rose and orchid growers and so on would visit the gardens and get involved in giving things to the gardens, and the botany department had kind of withdrawn?

Roderick: The orchid collection had quite a few hybrids and such things given to the garden, of no botanical value. At one time it was a very lovely collection with a lot of showy plants. The rose garden many, many years back was a very big one, but I think it was gone before Baker ever got there. Now they've got a heritage rose collection. Rather small, but it is also to encourage more people to come in and visit the Botanic Garden.

Riess: I see, the effort is to bring in people.

Roderick: Yes. It can go two ways. Botanically it is interesting, and it shows the history of roses. But also it is something that joins the wild part with the modern plants.

Riess: Were cultivars being produced up there, or was that not the work of the Botanical Garden?

Roderick: I think you are going to find that cultivars are coming from other places. We were selecting out wild plants that showed a cultivar form, but not stressing that. Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden has done a lot more than that. Santa Barbara Botanic Garden has done a lot more than that. Tilden now is going quite a bit that way. In fact, we've got one plant that we have figured out a cultivar name for and we'll be introducing it probably this fall.

Riess: And then you make it available through plant sales?

Roderick: Well, we'll be giving cuttings to nurserymen and places like that to get it into cultivation.

More on Employees and Managers at the Garden

Riess: Do you remember a fellow named Paul Hutchinson?

Roderick: Boy, do I!

Riess: Did we mention him already?

Roderick: We just barely mentioned him, but that's all.

Riess: He was the senior garden botanist?

Roderick: Yes. The funny thing was that they found out after we finally got rid of him that he had practically no more education than I did. [laughs]

Riess: Do you think you scared people who worked under you?

Roderick: I don't think so. I did not antagonize anyone. In fact, one fellow that was way under me, he was so horrible and bad, I kept telling him, "You're so bad. If you make so much trouble again, I'm going to see if I can have you fired." The fellow that was the manager then, the foreigner, he had plenty of excuses to fire the fellow, but still wouldn't fire him.

Riess: That was Anton Christ who was the manager? That's the "foreign fellow?"

Roderick: Yes. I can't remember the guy's name now. I can still see him. He was an alcoholic, and he would leave the weeds and pull the big plants. In fact, he would take a saw and saw off shrubs when he was supposed to be only weeding. That guy, every time I see him he still thanks me for all the things I tried to do for him, including firing him, I guess! I don't know. He's still friendly. But I have tried never to antagonize a person. I would tell a person exactly what I thought and why, so there's no way that they could be mad.

Sixties Disruptions at the Garden

Roderick: I went through so much in the sixties, all these flower people and all this, and especially the minorities raising hell. Hate, hate, hate everywhere. I got the wild idea that if I use the expression "hate" in a jovial way, maybe we can get rid of the hate in the word "hate." So I keep telling everybody that I hate them and all this, especially to these young kids--well, some of them were forty years old--that I work with and have around all the time. I keep telling them that I hate them, but, "Here, take this plant. Now, shut up. I hate you." I'd do all these kinds of things. It got so that everybody right now, they will start laughing, "I hate you too!" It rooted the hate out of that word.

Riess: You're thinking about when there was so much disruption down on campus.

Roderick: Oh, God! I got in the middle of some of it.

Riess: How?

Roderick: There at UC they hired a bunch of these minorities. Everybody left. I was the high man on duty at UC. I'm telling you, there were a couple of days there that I didn't know if I was going to survive from one day to another.

Riess: You mean up at the garden?

Roderick: Yes. There were some blacks, but a lot of them, I think, were probably Mexican. They practically destroyed the place, but I kept two jumps ahead of them. They were going to kill me because I put down everything absolutely accurate on their papers.

This one kid worked two half-days. I put down at the bottom of the paper where I added it up, "one day." But he couldn't figure out that one-half and one-half made one whole. They had this handle with a short chain, I'd say, about eighteen inches long, with a big block of wood with big lead slugs sticking out. He was twirling this around me, right around my shoulders, right close to my head.

Riess: It sounds hideous, but it doesn't sound like it had anything to do with the flower children. What was the problem?

Roderick: It was I was stealing time from them, and I was forcing them to work, and I was the establishment, and I was this, that, and everything else. This kid kept working this right up around me, right close to my face, just missing my head by a few inches.

Finally, one of the other ones said, "Man, don't you know what that thing is?" I said, "I don't know what that thing is." The guy stopped, and there was one of these slugs out. I said, "Oh, look, you lost one of these here. Here, have it back." They couldn't believe it. I was "so stupid," you know. This is the way I kept ahead of them.

Finally, they got down to one of the hothouses, and they were smashing pots of plants. Unknown to them, they weren't very desirable plants; they were just filling space, really. I raised some hell about that. I said, "On top of that, you know you're already signed out for the rest of the day." "Oh, whoopee," they had made their money. I refused to sign some of these papers, the kids had done so much damage and so much trouble.

There was a woman that was--these were high school kids--she was still signing them in. I said, "No, I will not sign those under any condition. If you sign them, that's your problem, but I refuse. These kids are not any good."

Riess: Who sent them up in the first place?

Roderick: It was some kind of doing with the city or the state or something, I don't know, to give these kids that were minorities and of the lowest quality, trying to teach them--.

Their superiors who were sending them out, they thought they were doing good, but they would never set down on them themselves. Now, that was not doing the kids any good. I tried to get a little bit of work out of them. But oh boy, I'm telling you, that one day I thought for sure I was going to get killed.

Upgrading Field Data

Roderick: In the article in Pacific Horticulture Herbert Baker also said that it became a project up at the garden to try to replace material--I'd like to know how this works, particularly with the California native section--that they were trying to replace material of horticultural origins with corresponding material from wild sources.

Roderick: Yes. We had things with no field data on it that was good either for show or for class material. Then we'd get wild materials, plant it out, and as soon as it got to flowering size, then they would chop out the plant of no value.

Riess: So, it's not that the actual plant is inferior. It's just that you don't know the history of it.

Roderick: Because these wild-collected plants, especially if you have, say--well, for instance mostly what was chopped out was Rhododendrons in the rhododendron dell. A lot of those were garden varieties. So what? But, for instance, now there are three, I think, different collections of Rhododendron arboreum, maybe one from way high in the mountains, one from mid-elevation, maybe one from the lowest elevation of its area. Each one of these will show some kind of little different characters in it. Hard telling exactly what.

But there is the one in the Rhododendron world that is very famous. It's called a self-topping Rhododendron arboreum. It's a much smaller grower, undoubtedly from the top of its elevation. So, this could be historically--or hysterically, I think now--important, because it is called a self-topper because it doesn't grow very tall.

Riess: Was the rhododendron dell in your charge?

Roderick: No, no. That was strictly for the Dr. Joseph Rock Collection. Plus, there were lots and lots of hybrids planted in there. Now they've chopped out almost all of the hybrids, which meant that there's a lot less rhododendrons, but new ones are being planted. Young ones are being planted here and there.

Incidentally, when I was cleaning out the old vault I found copies of the Joseph Rock numbers. There were three copies. We kept one there, I gave one to Strybing Arboretum, and I can't remember now where the other one was sent. It was sent someplace. But there are the three copies. It was all typed, hand-typed, and duplicated from the old blue paper you put in between, stencil-like. That was, I think, a hundred pages thick. Somehow they had it clamped together that way. I remember Anton told me to throw two of them away. I said, "God, no!" I took one myself, and I gave that to Strybing Arboretum.

Riess: But you couldn't leave one at the garden because you knew it would be thrown away?

Roderick: I had to fight Anton Christ to keep the letter I told you about, the letter about the dawn redwoods, to keep him from burning that up. He said, "God, they can't leave that around!" I said, "That's history." There were May Blos's drawings of nicotiana for Goodspeed's book, The Genus Nicotiana.

Horticultural Characters###

Riess: Did Goodspeed come up to the garden?

Roderick: Setchell I never met, but Goodspeed used to come up there once in awhile, and all the staff hated him because of some of the stupid things that he'd pull. They always had a vegetable garden, and he'd make the staff pull up tomato plants and put them on the table so he could pick the ripe ones off and then throw the rest away. You know, things this way.

- Riess: It sounds like this business draws a lot of peculiar people.
- Roderick: In the horticultural world there are some real weirdos, and I guess I'm at the center of all of them.
- Riess: No, no. You're going to be the norm for all of this! [laughter] How about James West? Did you ever meet him?
- Roderick: I heard a lot about him. No, I never met him. The thing I do know is that Art Menzies had several letters from him. Now, where they are I don't know. But West mainly corresponded with Mrs. Blake. When Mrs. Blake died, all those letters were taken out and burned.
- Riess: I heard that, too.
- Roderick: Boy, that would sure be a loss.
- Riess: Burned for tidying-up purposes?
- Roderick: I don't know. This is what I still don't know. They must have been in her garden room where she kept her records, and I don't know for sure who burned them. But anyhow, they were burned.
- Riess: What is all this mystery about James West?
- Roderick: Well, he was a mystery himself. Why did he call himself James West when he lived here? He was a count or something like that. He was of noble birth. When he went back to Austria--or was it Germany?--he took up his title again. But why did he call himself a completely different name while he was here? He was supposedly, from a couple of pictures I've seen, it looked like he was a very small person but wiry. Looked like he'd be one of these feisty little fellows.
- Riess: And a rock gardener.
- Roderick: And a rock gardener and a cactus nut and all of this. He must have been a fascinating person. I would have loved to have met him.
- Riess: I know. He would be on your list of plant explorers?.
- Roderick: No. I stop at the turn of the century. That leaves out Marcus Jones, one of the screwiest of all plant collectors and explorers.
- Riess: How did you get money for your section over the years? How did you go back to the bosses and say, "I need more money?"

Roderick: Well, I finally found out a way of working Anton Christ, though it would take about six months. I'd get a good idea, and I needed some materials, and I would get him out there and show him what I was working out, and would say, "Don't you think it's a good idea?" He would say, "Well, we can't afford it," and, "Yeah, it's a good idea."

I'd keep hounding on this and hounding on it. I would never say very much, just a couple of words so he knew back in his mind. Finally, after about six months, I would say, "Anton, don't you remember you said you would get me a load of gravel to start such and such a program?" He would say, "Oh, yes. I'll go see about it right now!" That's the way I worked him.

Riess: So he sort of knew that somewhere along the way he had said yes, but he wasn't sure about how or when?

Roderick: Yes, but if you'd come right out and ask him, "No way."

Flood and Frost at the Garden

Riess: Let's just do a quick run-down on disasters in the garden. Apparently in 1961 temperature got up to 105 degrees. That wouldn't be a disaster for your natives, would it?

Roderick: No. The big disaster of that period was the Christmas flood of 1964. It washed out whole gullies and everything. I packed rocks around in washouts from Strawberry Creek.

Riess: When it started happening, you were there working day and night?

Roderick: I tried to get to the garden during the flood itself. When I got up to about the swimming pools, these big rocks were coming washing down the road. I was able to get around a couple of them, but it looked like the road was washed out, and I didn't hardly dare to try to get around in that. I backed up to the parking area where I could turn around and get back out. I never did get up there during the flood itself.

The next day, when it went down, I was up there, and from then on I was into everything helping out--the native area wasn't as badly damaged as the pond above Rhododendron Dell, and there were several other places, trees down here and there--and trying to help clean up the messes.

Then in December 1972 came the "great freeze." Immediately after the freeze the rain came. In the native areas it was the desert plants and the southern California things, low-rainfall plants. They survived the frostbite well--yes, their foliage was pretty badly damaged--but then there was so much water in the ground that the roots rotted. We lost quite a bit from the frost, but it was more the roots; the things that we lost were those that were rotted out, rather than the things that were frozen.

Riess: I thought it was the other way around: that there was so much water first, and everything was super-saturated. The cells were a hundred percent water. And then along came the freeze and they burst.

Roderick: It could have been it rained before. I can't tell you that now. But it was the rain afterwards. For instance, in the cactus garden, yes, some of those great big five, six, seven-ton plants were just melted.

There was this tall, slender cactus. It must have been fifteen or twenty feet tall, if not taller, with arms. There were two plants side by side. They withstood the frost, but then the super-saturated soil gave away under them, and they fell over. One six-hundred-pound arm was still left undamaged. It took eight of us, I think it was, with heavy pipes and lots of burlap to pick that piece up and get it up. We finally got it rooted, and it's now about ten feet tall.

Riess: That's a splendid success story.

Roderick: African Hill was a horrible mess after the big freeze.

Riess: So, you all worked together on that.

Roderick: I was any place where they bothered to push me. I was into everything.

The South African plants, I think, more than the cactus, the stench for weeks was beyond belief from those melted plants. It was just sickening. It was such a horrible, funny stench. You can't call it anything but a stench. You can't describe the odor. It was not the stench of rotted animal flesh. It wasn't chicken manure or pig manure or cow manure stench. It was something completely different. It was a stench that you just could hardly stand it, but yet it was an interesting and fascinating odor.

- Riess: Did they try to take the pieces away, or did they just let them sink in?
- Roderick: A lot of them, you just couldn't pick them up, they were such gooey messes. But what was solid enough we did take it out. At that time we dumped it behind the barn. Now it's all hauled away. At that time you just dumped. But it took tons of material from those cactus.
- Riess: It's not composted now?
- Roderick: Now, they're trying to cover it all up, and they're making it into the Mexican area.
- Riess: I see. But when you were talking about hauling things away--.
- Roderick: Yes, they try to make wood chips out of a lot of the stuff, but so much of that has got a lot of weed seeds in it, and we don't want any more of that. If I can't pull a weed before the seeds are anywhere near mature, it goes into plastic bags, and they take it to the dump.

Mather Redwood Grove

- Riess: Did you have any involvement with the Mather Grove?
- Roderick: I started that! I kept screeching about that and screeching about, "Oh, how I'd love to have that," but it was part of the Rad [Radiation] Lab property. Found out that the Rad Lab didn't want anything to do with it. It took quite a few years before they put a fence in to keep us undesirable people out of Rad Lab country.
- Then they couldn't do anything for help on it, to get help to work on it, but I got Boy Scouts that had to have for a merit badge this stuff about public improvement, or something that way. The first thing I had done was to break the dead limbs off. You couldn't crawl through there. It was limbs right to the ground.
- Riess: You had the Boy Scouts climb the trees?
- Roderick: They didn't climb. Everything was from the ground. With the pole they would knock it out, and then I'd have them pile it all up. It was a horrible, heavy job. It took, I think, three

different batches of boys to do that--three or four, something that way.

But the other interesting thing--. Those are man-planted, but down at the head of the canyon, down below the Botanical Garden on the far side of the canyon, there's another grove. Those trees were planted the same year. The ones at the head of the canyon are twice the size of the ones that were in that Mather Grove. The fog would come up in the summertime and come up into the grove at the head of the canyon, but the Mather Grove would be in full sun, no fog. That moisture made all the difference. The ones in the head of the grove dropped all their limbs, and you could walk through there, while this one held them all.

We removed half the trees after that. That cost money, if I remember rightly. But by this time they were getting things really going. There was the little spring: I'd run that down one place. And the cutest little part-time spring--only in the wintertime--was where they made the amphitheater. They enlarged that, and the best trees were right there. They had to take those out. But that was one of the ways of getting money to do some of this other stuff. Making it useful to other parts of the campus made all the difference in the world.

Riess: Well, there was a success. You were named University of California Man of the Year in 1974. What was that award for?

Roderick: I don't remember why. I guess it was because I furnished class material. I don't know. [laughs] I remember getting that. It's somewhere around in this house. Somebody ran across one of those the other day and sent it to me and it's laying around here somewhere. I forgot all about it.

"Retirement"

Riess: Now, Wayne Roderick, I've come to the end of my questions about the Botanical Garden. What do you think of as your great achievements there? Is there anything you'd like to add?

Roderick: I enjoyed it. I wish I could have worked till I retired from there.

Riess: What happened?

Roderick: Well, at that time there was the University retirement system, which was terrible, bad, very poor. If I had worked there for ten more years it would have been only a few more dollars a month for retirement pay. If I went up to the Regional Park's Botanic Garden, and I worked there only six years, and it was two hundred dollars, it was several times more than what I would have gotten at UC at that time for retirement.

Riess: But you couldn't negotiate that?

Roderick: That was still at that time strictly University retirement. Finally, about five years after I had left there, they changed to the state retirement system, which costs me now a couple hundred dollars a month. I would have stayed there except for that retirement.

Riess: Have you maintained your involvement with UC?

Roderick: [laughs] I know where the keys are. Last time I talked with Bob Ornduff about looking at his personal hothouse of bulbs. He said, "Oh, good. Did you see this, did you see that?" Or, "You know where the keys are, go do it yourself. Don't bother me." I get that from one or two of them every so often.

I try never to do anything without the person knowing what I'm doing. Most of the time it's, "Oh, good, good." It's nice to feel good when I go there. Like last Tuesday I went and showed my pictures that I just took in Turkey, because they were getting seeds and starts on little things I brought back.

Riess: You showed slides?

Roderick: Yes, in the classroom. They darken it and they bring their lunches and eat their lunches and look at the slides. The volunteers and the docents come in too. It's so nice. I saw two of the docents on Tuesday who had been there since the start of the docent program. They're still going on there at the garden after all those years.

Riess: When the docents are trained, do they go through the sections and spend a period of time with the head of each section, so that you would have had a few weeks with them?

Roderick: I haven't been involved with that now for several years, but I used to give one lecture every year on the Indian uses for that part of their education.

Riess: The docent program started--

Roderick: --way back. I can tell you that much.

Riess: The docent program at Strybing, a two-year docent training class, started in 1974. But it was earlier at UC?

Roderick: No, about the same time if I remember rightly. All the people that have been involved in that--the instructors, the head of it, and all this--they always have had some nice people. Though many of the persons that take the training never go on.

Riess: You mean they do it for their own interest?

Roderick: I think that. I think now that you have to pay to take the training, to pay for the instructors.

Some of the docents are just so involved that they can't leave. They've got to go back and back and back. I know several persons like that. Like Tuesday there were the two ladies that went way back to the beginning up there at UC. One of the women that volunteers part-time up at Tilden, she can't come all the time because she's so much involved with the Oakland Museum.

Riess: Well, the Botanical Garden sounds like a wonderful time in your life.

Roderick: Yes. What an experience. Your avocation and vocation are one and the same--to work with plants, especially wild plants.

Riess: When you were up there you were also getting more involved with rock gardens and all the organizations that you belong to. Or did that come later?

Roderick: I tried to keep away. I was doing too darn many things, and I still couldn't resist trying to help out somewhere.

Wayne Roderick reading Lester Rowntree's Hardy Californians, 1975.

IV NATIVE PLANTS

[Interview 3: May 31, 1990]##

Tilden Park Botanic Garden, William Penn Mott, and Friends

Roderick: The California Native Plant Society--really, it was just a group of people trying to save the Botanic Garden at Tilden Park from Mott tearing it down and trying to move it.

Riess: Is that a fair summary of William Penn Mott's intention?

Roderick: Mott knew nothing about plant material.¹ He was a person for recreation. (Incidentally, he lives only two houses from me, just behind you. Thank goodness he's on another street.) Mott couldn't control James Roof, and the only way he could do it was to get rid of the Botanic Garden. He was pretty much towards doing this when a whole group of people--and I got involved in this, too--had these meetings [in 1962] to save the garden.

Riess: They called themselves Friends of the Regional Parks Botanic Garden.

Roderick: Yes. The first big meeting they had with Mott and his henchmen, we got Dr. Leo Brewer to start out with everything. He got up, and he started in, and Mott jumped up and said, "Now, listen, you have to make this very short because we are a very important organization. We have two million dollars we will have to work with." Leo Brewer said, "Well, then, you'll have to listen to me because I'm the head for the University of the Science Foundation, and I have fourteen million dollars to work with!" [laughs] You should have seen the air go out of Mott.

¹William Penn Mott, a graduate of UC Berkeley in landscape architecture, was Superintendent of Parks for Oakland, 1946-1962; General Manager, East Bay Regional Parks, 1962-1967; Director, California State Department of Parks and Recreation, 1967-1975; and Director, National Park Service, 1985-1989.

Riess: In fact that meeting took place at Mulford Hall, didn't it, on the Berkeley campus?

Roderick: There was one meeting there, and there was one up here at the Brazilian Room [in Tilden Park]. I think in 1962 it was at Mulford Hall, and in 1972 there was a meeting about the big freeze up at the Brazilian Room. Poor Mott, every time he opened his mouth at that meeting [1962] he got slapped down.

After that he became the head of the state parks, and he was causing so much destruction--. I found his one dissenting vote on the Park Commission and got him to give a lecture to-- by this time, it was the Native Plant Society. It was so good that everybody else got him to come lecture, and this was the one way we kept Mott under control as the head of the state parks.

Riess: What do you mean by the "his one dissenting vote?"

Roderick: During the uprising at the University the state government decided they had to give a graduate student some say in Sacramento. So they thought, "Well, here's a forestry graduate student, we'll put him on the Park Commission," not knowing that he was going to be the dissenting vote all along. They didn't dare to throw him out. This young fellow, whose name was John Bonickson, he fought and fought to try to keep Mott from destroying.

For instance, there was this big chunk of land in the Los Angeles area, the last natural grassland left--I mean our native grasses, not introduced--and Mott wanted to take it and make, I think it was, two golf courses, or else one golf course and then two recreation areas for children, swimming pools and merry-go-rounds and such things as this, with our last natural grassland.

Riess: That was just ignorance about native plants?

Roderick: I don't think Mott knew anything about plant material, not necessarily just about native plants, but everything else. He was strictly recreation. All he could think of was getting things for picnic grounds and things this way.

Riess: So, in fact, do you think that eventually he came to appreciate the role that CNPS took as a kind of gadfly? Or do you always think of him as an adversary?

Roderick: Every time he sees me he turns his back to get away from me as fast as possible! [laughs]

Riess: How did this group of people get together, Leo Brewer and so on? I know there were some splendid people in the early days of CNPS.

Roderick: There were the Fruges and the Flemings and the Burrs. They were the number one people, and they said it was such a good group--after we got Mott to leave the Botanic Garden alone and let it go on and stay in operation--they said it was such a good group that we had, let's make it into something permanent and call it the California Native Plant Society.

Riess: Who pulled them together in the first place?

Roderick: I think you can say it was Jim [Roof], because he was close friends with the Flemings and with the Fruges.

Riess: Was this August Fruge?

Roderick: Yes. And then Helen-Mar Beard and I down at UC. I'm trying to think--there's one or two other persons in on that.

Riess: You mean in the founding group?

Roderick: In the founding group. I think it was the women. I think it was Susan Fruge and Jenny Fleming and Joyce Burr that really brought everybody together.

But it certainly made a fine group and made a good organization. I'm very pleased to say I'm a member of it.

Riess: In fact a Fellow of the California Native Plant Society, which is a great honor.

Ledyard Stebbins, and Leadership, CNPS

Riess: The first CNPS president was Mac [Watson] Laetsch. You knew him as director of the UC Botanical Garden.

Roderick: He was not very practical. Laetsch tried several new things at the Garden and most did not work well. It cost the garden thousands and thousands of dollars. The one thing left of his is that gigantic tropical house, and it's too tall to do any good--all the heat's up above. They put blowers in there to try to blow the heat down, but they still couldn't get the heat down to where it was really needed. They worked it all over. I

think now they've got heating cables in the soil to try to keep the plants alive.

Riess: But as president of the California Native Plant Society?

Roderick: He was only a short time, if I remember rightly. The one that really brought it together was Ledyard Stebbins. Boy, he was a working fool.

Riess: He's a geneticist.

Roderick: Yes. What a guy. What a character, too.

Riess: Tell me about him.

Roderick: Most of the time he was so energetic, he was just pushing everyone to get things going. If it didn't get going, boy could he throw tantrums.

Riess: Ornduff was CNPS president next, and then John Sawyer.

Roderick: Yes. Ornduff was only for a very short time. Sawyer was, I think, about three years. I don't think that Bob Ornduff was there more than about a year.

Riess: Sounds like a big job for anyone.

Roderick: You've got to figure on, to do a good job of something that way, about twenty hours a week. I know because several of those different presidents were persons I knew well, and I know how much time they took. In fact, the person in right now is a very good friend of mine. Suzanne [Schettler] is just going crazy. She can't hardly sit down. She's going day and night. Cal Hort was the same way. It takes hours of time. They tried to get me to be the president of California Horticultural Society, and I said no way. I want my sleep. You've got to stay up until at least ten o'clock every night to try to keep up on these things.

Riess: Can't you delegate?

Roderick: You do that, but there's all these letters that have to be written and answered. Organizations this way where you're spread out all over the countryside rather than just one little group, it's either telephone calls or writing notes or letters to different ones to keep them seeing that everything is going correctly. Your committees--you're supposed to go to those meetings. You've got to figure at least twenty hours a week to do a decent job.

Riess: Yes, I should think so. The matter of having an executive director must keep coming up. You know, a paid position.

Roderick: Now whether the person is paid there in Sacramento--I don't know.

Riess: But they are not the president.

Roderick: No. The president is down on the Hastings Preserve, Suzanne Schettler. I see her about once a month here in San Francisco, and she says it's a three-hour drive each way.

Riess: Back to Stebbins. Tell me more about him.

Roderick: He has so many thoughts, it's unbelievable, and he goes so many directions all at the same time, I hate to think about trying to say what all he did do and didn't do. It wasn't very much what he didn't do. He was just a go-getter in every direction you can think of.

Riess: Well, think of some of those directions. Was raising money a big issue for CNPS?

Roderick: I think that was before his time, starting to really raise the money.

I think it was Laetsch that got this Mary Wollers in, and she got the job of being secretary. They got an office and a telephone, and all of a sudden we found out that we were head-over-heels into debt! Between the Botanic Garden in Tilden and at UC we got all of our surplus plant material that was in containers and hurriedly had a plant sale to try to get out of debt.

We got enough that first time to pay all the bills that had to be paid, like the telephone bill and the rent and all that. We got that paid. We never did get enough, I don't think, for a couple of more years to pay off wages.

Riess: And then you abandoned the idea of the secretary?

Roderick: The secretary and all that was all volunteer for a long time, until finally when we got into doing an inventory of the rare and endangered plants [An Inventory of the Rare and Endangered Plants of California] we had to have a botanist, and that is still our only paid person.

Exactly when they started making these posters of the wildflowers--. That has really made a lot of money and is what

has kept the organization financially in very good shape for paying our botanist. And, of course, now we have to pay office space and so forth up in Sacramento.

The reason we went to Sacramento is because we got so politically powerful on saving plants that the state wants us to help them out on seeing about, like, making new highways. Are they going to go through a rare plant area? Things like that.

Riess: Is it the state that wants you, or have you become so much of a presence that they hardly dare proceed without you?

Roderick: It's probably our presence. They have been quite nice trying to help out and make certain that important places in the state--.

Riess: Because the voice of the combined CNPS membership would be very loud?

Roderick: Yes.

Riess: How has it expanded? It started out as a Bay Area group.

Roderick: Yes. There's something like twenty-seven or twenty-eight chapters now throughout the state. Some of them are very important; some of them are still just, more or less, a little organization being a bunch of friends and having a good time.

Riess: Did Stebbins go into the hinterlands and create new groups? How did new groups form?

Roderick: I can't quite tell you so much on that. But it was Stebbins that went ahead and really--. He went all over the state lecturing, and with his energetic personality, people couldn't say no! "Yes, we've got to jump on the bandwagon right now!" you know. I think it was just his energetic ways that got the organization really going.

Riess: He was president from '66 through '72, and also he was in the UC Davis Genetics Department. I guess he was only able to give a small portion of his time to the Native Plant Society.

Roderick: His little, small portion was like a full time on anybody else. You can't believe what that gentleman could do! I have seen him twice throw tantrums. One time I was a little bit disgusted, but it was because he was giving a lecture and the projectors-- I think it took the third one before he got one going. And he was very much upset.

Riess: Had you known him before the native plant group?

Roderick: Slightly. I knew him as Professor Stebbins. I didn't know him personally. I knew him as soon as I saw him, you know. Then, when he took over, I wondered, "My God, how is that guy going to ever give any time?" Especially living up there. But what a dynamo!

Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California

Riess: How did the rare and endangered plant survey come about?

Roderick: They had this great big meeting up at Davis that I was brought in on, too, on the rare plants, and where they were, and what you thought of this one, or is that too common? and things this way. It was a whole weekend. I think there were about a hundred, hundred-and-fifty people that were working on that. Piles and piles of maps. We took over the whole ground floor of one big building. We took all the classrooms. It was that many people.

Riess: What kind of people were brought in? You were a natural because you were out in the field from year to year, and you could see populations of plants diminishing or whatever. What other people?

Roderick: It was surprising. A lot of graduate students. Lots and lots of botanists from all over the state. This is how I got to meet some of these other people around and became friends with them all in one place. We ate together and took over one of the dormitories. We really took over that whole campus, practically.

Riess: The task was to make a list of plants that were rare?

Roderick: They started in from that. They had maps. We plotted them out on maps. Maybe four or five people would come and put their knowledge in on one species of a plant: "Oh no, I don't know it there, but I know it over here." That was the basis.

Riess: Did those botanists have maps in their heads? Or do they carry around maps marked with finds?

Roderick: A few had a little bit maybe of that, but mostly it was what they had in their brain.

Riess: Where do you keep your information, Wayne?

Roderick: I have stacks of maps to go look at, but I can remember, and I have certain places that I keep going back to year after year after year. In a little over a week I'm going to go up to Modoc County if the weather improves. I haven't been up there for years, but I bet I can find some of those places I always thought were so nice.

Riess: You don't keep notes?

Roderick: I lose them. I can't keep them! I lose them. I've lost one address of a letter that I desperately need to write. These people asked for information while I was in Europe this spring. When I came home, I found their letter. I finally sat down and took time to write to them--they are in Australia. I'm not sure what I did wrong, but anyhow, the letter came back. It took six weeks for it to get back! And I had thrown their letter away--the original. So now I don't know what was wrong.

Riess: When you got together with this group up in Davis and started on the inventory, was there any discussion then on the ethics of plant and seed collecting? How has that changed over the years?

Roderick: When I started out I just collected, for the very first three or four months, indiscriminately.

Riess: You mean you'd actually take plants?

Roderick: I'd take plants and seed, however I could get it. There was so little at the University at that time. Then I got to the place where I'd be much more careful, collect at a time I knew would be good to collect, and collect preferably cuttings and seeds. Plants--especially at the edge of desert or something that way, there's very little chance of digging a plant and getting it to grow. It's much better to start with seed and get it adapted to our climate from the start and hope that they're going to make it.

The more I went, the longer I went, the more careful I became as to what I collected, and making certain--trying to round out a collection. Get your trees, the main understory or edge of that, and then the little perennials and small plants that grew underneath everything. But mainly at UC I still tried to collect things that were best for class material.

Riess: You're contrasting that with what you did at the Regional Parks, where you were creating a whole plant community.

Roderick: Yes. Jim Roof was only mostly interested in woody plants. I started in trying to collect the other plants that would fit in with what was already in the garden.

Riess: He had all those manzanitas and trees.

Roderick: Yes, the greatest collection at that time of manzanitas. And you looked under the manzanitas and there was nothing! I wanted to bring in all the things that would blend in and make it more of a natural-looking area.

Propagating the Rare and Endangered

Riess: At the Botanic Garden there are some rare and endangered plants. Not only do the labels say as much, but they say where they were collected from. I don't understand the thinking behind this.

Roderick: Always on those labels, where it was collected could be such a wide area, there was no way anybody could find the plants.

But it's turning out that one of the greatest things that has ever happened was the collecting of these rare and endangered plants, some of them now extinct in the wild, two of which have been propagated by Tilden and have been planted back out where they had originally been found. We've got up there, I think it is, about a hundred-and-fifty rare and endangered plants. There are about five or six that are extinct now in the wild.

Riess: With your volunteers you are able to propagate them?

Roderick: The volunteers don't do much that way. What they do is propagate for selling.

It is amazing how many people want to take and get some of these rare and endangered plants. We tried for awhile to get people to register before they could take one or buy one of them. It's surprising how many people were able to do that. Unfortunately, when they took them home some of these were planted in good spots, but others would have water coming off from, say, neighbors' places or from sidewalks and roofs, and would drown out a lot of these. Or else they'd grow too big for the person. That did not prove too satisfactory. We just keep trying now to propagate. We always keep one or two back as a reserve in case something happens to the parent plant.

We're trying more and more to go to cuttings or seed. It's so much easier. You don't do any damage that you can see to the rare plant. When I'm out collecting seed or cuttings, or if I dig a plant or two, I try never to take more than one percent of the seed, or whatever it is. That way you know you can't do any damage.

Riess: When you were first thinking about the rare plant inventory project, was the intention to do anything more than identify?

Roderick: Yes, because that main, big meeting was to not only identify, but to place on the maps--these piles and piles of maps that they had, geological maps--the precise location of these. That was to be kept by the society. I think that they were going to make maps to send out to the state and things this way.

I think they sent sets of maps to several organizations, and with the bulk we could see it was getting into unbelievable expense. So that's when they started to publish the book on the rare and endangered. That way, other organizations could look up on their own, and then they could get their own maps and pinpoint these plants that had to be watched.

Riess: That was the idea: to watch the plants, to make sure that they were not decreasing, to make sure that road cuts didn't go through.

Roderick: Or houses built on them.

Riess: But it was never to propagate and increase?

Roderick: No. That has been more the Botanic Garden. Now, I can't tell you about the whole state. But at UC and Tilden, both of us try to have a lot of these rare plants. We also take and look for good horticultural plants, too, and that's what we start to propagate and to sell. Or, for instance, we give to nurseries to propagate.

Riess: You talk about using those maps for your lobbying purposes. That brings up the whole question of preserves.

Roderick: And it works a great deal with Nature Conservancy. They, though, are trying to get big tracts of land, and not only plants but animals and birds--anything that's being endangered. The Conservancy and the Native Plant Society have worked quite closely together.

Riess: The Conservancy did a California survey too.

Roderick: Yes. I think most of it is based on our survey. But they have to look at something quite a bit different. They don't just look at plants. They look at everything.

Inventory of California Natural Areas

Riess: The CNPS also did an inventory of California natural areas. What was that?

Roderick: Les [Leslie] Hood was the one that was over that. It was taking in a lot to do with the animals, the fauna as well as the flora. It got down to just a few persons where they could work closely together and figure this out. It has been finished. I have seen a couple of the books. I think it's in ten or twelve books on these areas. Exactly where and how that is going on, I don't know. It is very expensive to buy the set of books. It was more done for counties and for the state--the state highways--more that way than it was for the average person.

Riess: They are paid by the state to do these projects, then?

Roderick: Some, yes. There was some of the license plate money. But I can't tell you too much, because I got, more or less, out. I got so involved when I got there at Tilden, when I started to work there, that I couldn't do a lot of this stuff. I went to work at six in the morning and then I'd come home early in the afternoon where it was quiet. I'd sit down with some of these papers I had to try to keep up on. But my main thing was trying to figure out how to get the Tilden out of chaotic conditions. I just couldn't think good enough to be of any help to other people.

Riess: I want to come back to Tilden, but let me just continue to check off a couple more of these projects where I think you might have been involved. Putting together The Inventory of California Natural Areas, was that what led to discovering such things as vernal pools, Boggs Lake?

Roderick: Of course, we all knew that vernal pools were so unique to this part of the world that we all kept thinking on vernal pools all the time. In fact, I think I wrote the first article on how to grow vernal pool plants and how the seeds germinated and so forth. Nobody had ever tried, and I did.

I was just like everybody else: we knew about these vernal pools; we knew that the biggest share of them had already been

plowed up and destroyed and built on, or things that way. I think what was right on the back of everybody's mind was vernal pools! Vernal pools! "We've got to do something!"

Riess: Actually, as you say that, it seems obviously very important to enlist the interest of farmers in the Native Plant Society. Has that happened?

Roderick: A lot of farmers. But still, a lot of the farmers--most of them have this land that has already been destroyed or plowed, and they can't see it.

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Roderick: A lot of the farmers can see all of this, and if they do have a spot that hasn't been ever touched, and there is something unusual on it, most of them are very happy to take and protect what they do have.

Riess: Are taxes mitigated on those areas for people who are taking something out of cultivation to save the plants?

Roderick: I think there's something on that, but I haven't followed that.

Riess: It's interesting--all the ramifications.

Roderick: When I retired I just kind of lost touch with some of these things and have never gotten back into them.

Riess: It sounds like you don't need to; there's so much enthusiasm for native plants now.

Roderick: Oh, boy, there's a lot. And it is amazing how so many of the farmers do try to cooperate. Yes, you do find one that is just absolutely the opposite, who will say that it is one of the most horrible organizations that ever was, and all this. For instance, one area south of Livermore that we go to a lot, there's some rare plant, and this one fellow bought the property, and you can't believe how mean he is. He'll kill: "If I catch you on my property, I'll shoot!"

Riess: He wouldn't even allow you to dig up the plants and remove them to save them?

Roderick: We've tried. It doesn't like to be moved. It is very restricted as to its soil. I even brought the soil in, and I can't make it happy. And if I can't make a plant happy--

Riess: Who can? [laughs]

Roderick: But this guy, he doesn't give a damn. He says, "My property, and I don't want anybody on my property."

Collecting on Public Lands

Riess: Have you worked with the Bureau of Land Management in these efforts?

Roderick: Way back I used to try to, and they were just so uncooperative. But now they are making quite an about-face. I haven't really gotten too far involved.

Way back I got in bad with the Forest Service. Boy, I'm telling you, did they ever stop me from trying to ever go on Forest Service land for collecting!

Riess: How did you actually alienate them?

Roderick: Up in Siskiyou County there was a proposed wilderness area called Red Buttes. All of a sudden the Forest Service was having a secret clear-cut sale on what was called Thompson Creek, which headwatered on Red Butte. I heard about this and I wrote a dirty letter and got it in there the day before, I guess, the secret clear-cut sale.

Riess: You wrote to the State Department of Forestry?

Roderick: I wrote to the [United States] Forest Service headquarters in San Francisco. Right away after this I had to have my botanical collecting permit renewed. I had to give them in advance what I wanted to collect, precisely the plant, the precise location, the precise day, and so forth, and they might give me a permit.

Riess: Harassment.

Roderick: Yes. From then on, yes. I have collected some small amounts that nobody ever sees. And I've always been careful trying to cover up my digging, if I'm doing any digging. I just keep out of sight.

Riess: That sounds like you were being threatened personally. Did it ever get down to a situation where you had to come in late at night with a flashlight?

Roderick: Oh no, no. I don't ever go to that extreme of collecting. Of course, I love collecting seed.

Riess: Another plant collecting opportunity, I understand, is plant salvage at cemeteries, or at new bridge sites.

Roderick: I had only ever gotten in one time that way, and I can't even remember now where it got started. But it was down at Vandenburg Air Force Base. They were extending the landing for the shuttle. Yes, we did collect there. It wasn't a good time of the year. Most of the things that I was interested in trying to salvage, it was the wrong time for them. It was more summer, and you needed, really, wintertime.

We did collect some stuff that we grew. Unfortunately, the one plant that was rare was a very weedy thing, and the flower was zero on it. I kind of got out of sight and collected a couple of other things that were desirable for a botanic garden. [laughs]

Generally speaking, in collecting things, three plants--if you can't get one plant to grow out of three, you can't get a hundred to grow. There's no sense in taking the whole quantity.

Riess: That goes back to my original question: were rules for the game hammered out by CNPS? Was that something you would talk about in the meetings?

Roderick: Once in awhile that was talked out, but with myself I still maintain that if you can't get one plant to grow out of three there's no sense in going on.

Jim Roof, he did not know how to collect. He did not get very many things to grow well. For instance, collecting manzanita seedlings, instead of going real deep to get the root where it's down trying to get to moisture, he'd just go down three or four inches at the most and cut off 99 percent of the roots. He didn't get very many to take. I only lost a few. Again, manzanitas are so easy from cuttings, and you can get better results and a better-looking plant.

Riess: Why would you get a better-looking plant from cuttings?

Roderick: Because you can get a straight trunk on it. The seedlings are all twisted and gnarled. I found that quite often from the seedlings I would get weight all on one side, and eventually they get into undesirable soils, the roots stay rather shallow, and quite often they fall over after they get good size. Cuttings are so much easier and better.

Horticultural Value of Native Plants

Riess: When CNPS got started was also a time that we started being aware in California of the need for planting natives to save water. Which came first? A consciousness about water preservation, or about plant preservation? How do you think they worked together?

Roderick: There were a couple of native plant nurseries that were in--one of them I know for certain was in operation by 1955, I'd say. This fellow had a garden all of California natives.

Riess: Who was that?

Roderick: That was Louis Edmonds out in Danville. When he really started I have no way of knowing, but he's from way back. He was quite well known, and people were interested.

When my family had the nursery in the late forties and fifties, we always carried a few native plants.

Riess: Were you carrying them because you knew that water was a problem?

Roderick: West of Petaluma and Two Rock Valley has little water, and this area should have dry gardens. We tried to encourage people to use a lot of these drought-tolerant plants. But this one woman, especially, she hauled water to water her cattle, but still, she wanted roses and a little bit of lawn. Couldn't get it over to her to plant the more drought-tolerant things.

Riess: Is that one intention in the native plants section of the botanic gardens at Tilden and UC, to show people that it is possible to have a flowery environment while working with native and drought-tolerant plants? Is that the underlying intention?

Roderick: We like to take and show people that we do have some very interesting plant material. But we all are watching for plants that are very desirable for garden plants. Over at UC, Roger Raiche has brought in quite a few things that are now becoming popular for nurserymen to start propagating. We've turned out several at Tilden, and we're going to be giving out cuttings this fall of another, a *Fremontia* that we think is good enough that we're going to give it a clonal name and give out cuttings.

Riess: I noticed that there is a big push now for *Mimulus*.

Roderick: Yes. That was from a Mr. Verity down at UCLA that spent a lifetime hybridizing. I think he took some of Victor Reiter's original hybrids and worked with them, plus the wild ones. The only thing wrong with those is that they are rather short-lived, the ones that he produced. They are quite susceptible to root rots. I think it's because he grew them only in sand, granitic sand--sharp, sharp drainage. He never had any problems with the root fungus. I think this is why they are a little on the weak side. It's because of that. Still, eliminating the ones that are, planting them in heavier soil, if they were susceptible to root fungus they would hurry up and die.

Riess: That kind of pathology work--is that part of your work?

Roderick: These are some of the things that you have got to watch out for, because most gardens are in heavier soils. Almost all the good plants, native plants, are in very well-drained stuff. This is how come so many of our better *Ceanothus* come from Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, because where they planted most of this stuff was in the clayey soil, and what survived were the ones that were adaptable or, I guess you could say, resistant to fungus. These are some of the things that a lot of people have not watched out for.

Riess: You mean people at the botanic gardens?

Roderick: Yes. And we found this one *Fremontia* that seems to be standing up to fungus with no problem and low and mounding and easy to grow. So instead of being a big tree it's going to be a small garden plant.

Riess: It's not *Fremontodendron*?

Roderick: It's a *Fremontodendron*. It's one of the *decumbens*, but instead of being very, very hairy--fuzzy, you could say--this is almost glabrous. Cuttings have been rooted in the spring. You always say "only in the fall," but these were rooted in the spring. So we think it's got good possibilities.

Riess: The fact that you say "we think" reminds me that you are really not in the least bit retired. You're not supposed to be thinking still! You retired in 1983! [laughs]

Roderick: I tell people I'm retarded. I'm too stupid to stop! [laugh]

Saving Natural Areas

Riess: In your vita you say that you've been involved in making a couple of areas into preserves. We've been talking about identifying all of these precious natural areas in California. What have you been involved in?

Roderick: Again, the Forest Service doesn't like me very well. Up in the Siskiyou Mountains there was the Cook and Green Pass. (I've always wanted to know who Cook and Green were, but I never have found out.) I kept seeing this on maps.

I was with Margaret and Loring Williams and Art Menzies the first time. Margaret had been to England in '61 to the International Rock Garden Society conference, and somebody asked her to find a certain form of Cassiope mertensiana. She found that it had been collected on Mount Eddy, in the Mount Shasta area.

Riess: Tell me who Margaret Williams is.

Roderick: Margaret is an amateur botanist, I guess you can say, and a good horticulturist up in the Reno area. In fact, she's the one who wrote The Rare and Endangered Plants of Nevada. When I go up to the mountains in that part of the Sierra I go to Reno and stay with her.

Anyway, we went up there, and we found out that there was a road. No cars had gone on it for years. A four-wheel drive once in awhile got up there. Well, I ruined a wheel, but we got up there. We found out we were in the wrong place. It was too hot and dry where the road ended. I kept talking about this place called Cook and Green, I wanted to go see it. So we went and looked it up afterwards. Turned out to be far more interesting than we ever had dreamed about. I kept after that.

Finally went up there one year, and here was a big sign saying that what trees were there were going to be logged off, most of them not usable, they were so gnarled and twisted and deformed from bad soils, and then they were going to plant trees. Well, they'd have to wipe out the whole area--a lot of interesting plants, some of them rather rare. By this time the CNPS was already started. We got Ledyard and a whole bunch of botanists to go up there and look around. They flipped over the area and started to write letters, and we got that stopped.

Let's see, there was one other place. Then eventually, again near Mount Eddy, was this place called Cedar Lake. In this area it's the Port Orford cedar, as it's commonly called-- Lawson Cypress. Found out a big clear cut sale was going to be on a side of Mount Eddy. Then a mile corridor and a square mile at the end of that was to be logged for these Port Orford cedars. And not for us: they were to be logged and sent to Japan for repair of the old shrines, the ancient shrines.

I decided, "To heck with Japan and their shrines. They can use something else." These are the only Port Orford cedars-- they are way out of place, and not diseased. I said that this should be preserved. Not only that, but around this little Cedar Lake there are seven genera--not species, genera--of ericaceous plants and a big bog of Darlingtonias, the cobra plants.

My letter put the monkey wrench in the gears for that. [laughs] There were enough other people screaming about that, and I got John Sawyer to write the letter that really did the work. He was supposedly such a brilliant botanist, but he said, "Seven genera? That's a common thing!" I still can't believe that anybody could be that naive. But anyhow, he wrote the letter that this was a genetic pool that should be saved for the future. That was enough to make the Forest Service stand up and take notice. They have set that aside now, and it is going to be a preserve for a certain area.

Also, it was Margaret Williams that showed me Winnemucca Lake up off of Carson Pass. I took lots and lots of different groups up there and showed them this area. That now is more or less of a preserve. There's something else I got my nose into. I can't remember now what it was.

Riess: It sounds like you didn't meet with a lot of strenuous opposition.

Roderick: Most of the time, no.

Riess: That's good. You're not welcome in Japan anymore, probably, because of the shrines [laughs].

Roderick: I don't know, because I didn't say "darn"; I used quite strong language. They can use other timbers.

Since all of this went on about these Port Orford cedars in Del Norte County, and also a little bit of Siskiyou, the government now has gone through and chopped down every last Port

Orford cedar in the surrounding diseased area to stop the fungus from getting to Cedar Lake and affecting those trees. They were trying to make a wider place. It was about a hundred miles, and they were trying to make a wider place to make certain that we don't lose those trees, because we're going to have to get seeds from there to reforest all of western Oregon and northern California.

Riess: Fascinating, really. That reminds me of what I read about something called the "Franciscan strategy" of collecting. That was James Roof's notion? You collect from the fringe of an area so that you're collecting specimens--"resulting in a collection that features more plants now rare or extinct in their native habitats." (You should be explaining this to me!) Also there was the idea of collecting plants at the southern limit of their range to have those genetically better adapted to warmer conditions.

Roderick: Things that are coming down from the north. Things that come from the south, southern plants, you collect from their northern edge to try to get them more adapted to our climatic conditions here.

Riess: What would be the reason for collecting on the outer range of a plant's habitat, rather than where a plant is growing most lushly?

Roderick: I can't quite think on that myself. When I'm into a patch of something, I look for the most vigorous plant to get my cuttings from. It has the best wood; it means it has less fungus diseases or things that way around it.

Riess: There might be a philosophy that would say that you should get the least vigorous that is surviving; that there is something in the genetic makeup of the one that is surviving under the most adverse conditions that should be saved because it has what it takes.

Roderick: The only thing is that there the cuttings would be much more difficult to get them to root. That's the thing I keep thinking about. If I know something is very rare, and I'm taking cuttings, I'll take from as many different plants as I can, hoping to find one that is a little bit genetically easier to propagate. I try my best never, unless there's some precise reason, to take from only one plant.

• For instance, I keep thinking of this one manzanita that I just flipped over that Roger Raiche has collected and called 'Myrtle Wolf'. It's a real pink flower, and of course Myrtle

[Wolf] loves pink. I keep thinking of that one. That was such a magnificent color combination of bluey-green foliage and these beautiful pink flowers that I'm hoping it's going to be easy to grow and propagate. I'll try to get it onto the market, because it would really make a fine garden plant with that beautiful show. That's why that particular one was collected.

But over all, when I go into an area, and I'm taking cuttings, I generally look for the most vigorous. Or if it is something rare, you take anything, but never chop the devil out of one plant. This is why I like to take from various plants: I don't hurt one, but also, you'll find one of them, maybe, is genetically more easy to propagate.

Riess: Have you studied genetics?

Roderick: I've got books somewhere around here where I've had my nose into them.

I only recently got a T.V. Before that, when I didn't have that, all these periodicals that we got at the UC Botanical Garden, I'd bring them home, and that's what I did in the evening. I read those and tried to keep up on all those things.

Carl Purdy, Theodore Payne, and Lester Rowntree

Riess: Bob Ornduff said that Lester Rowntree and Carl Purdy and Theodore Payne were three who stood out as being interested in the horticultural value of California natives.

Roderick: Unfortunately, though, Carl Purdy was not only interested in horticulture, but also in the mighty dollar. If he only collected bulbs for horticulture it would have been great. But he collected them during the Depression, and I can remember as a kid, "If you buy a box of my Post Toasties, you're going to get a free bulb." Or, "If you take a subscription to our magazine, we'll give you ten free bulbs." That's how the biggest share of his collecting went.

Riess: Who was he? Where was he from?

Roderick: He was up at Ukiah, up in the hills behind Ukiah. Exactly how he got started, I can't quite tell you. I've never taken time to read his book. I don't even have his book because I'm so disgusted with him and the way he over-collected. In his book-- I did have this xerox given to me--he told in there how he

trained his collectors [so they went] from collecting from three to four thousand bulbs a day to ten to twelve thousand bulbs a day per man.

Riess: That's impossible! You mean he would just go and dig up the whole place?

Roderick: He sent a crew--.. Up at the little village of Comptche in Mendocino County I talked with an old lady--I think her name was Thompson, if I remember rightly--who was born and raised in that village and that valley. She says that as a young girl, shortly after the turn of the century, the hills were pink with Erythronium revolutum by the millions. She said it took his men about ten years to completely wipe that population out. You cannot see but a very few in a couple spots. Purdy dug them by the millions and sold them by the millions, but not for horticulture, mostly for giveaways. And those were people that didn't know what they were getting and how to take care of them.

Riess: Who is Theodore Payne?

Roderick: Theodore Payne was an Englishman who absolutely loved the natives. I don't know his background completely, but undoubtedly he was a good businessman and made a lot of money--something like Louis Edmonds. I would add this Louis Edmonds in that list of persons. Louis Edmonds was the engineer for C & H Sugar Company, chief engineer. The native nursery was a hobby more than anything else.

But Theodore Payne started this nursery, and seed collecting. When he died he had a lot of friends following with him, and they kept the place going and they are still in business [Theodore Payne Foundation, in Los Angeles area]. They hardly do any seed collecting. They buy almost all the seed that they sell. But they do propagate a lot of plants for their nurseries that they have.

Lester Rowntree--she was mostly seed. She was a tiny, little thing. She went with a burro all through the Sierra. When she had her pack on that burro you couldn't see her, the burro's head and ears were above her head. [laughing] I've seen pictures of her and the burro.

Riess: Did you encounter her in your collecting?

Roderick: No, no. She was already eighty before I met her. I got acquainted with her--.. ###

Roderick: I think it was her eighty-seventh birthday, and a group of us went and had a birthday party for her down on the preserve down there in Carmel, the Hastings Preserve. She said she would not have a birthday in a house. She would go out to the Hastings Preserve and have a birthday party underneath the oak trees. No frills at all--a couple pieces of dried fruit and some water and that was it. And we spent the whole three or four hours with her there sitting in the grasses.

That was the first time that I really enjoyed her. I had talked with her more than once, but this was the most informal way. I used to, then, go down and see her every so often. That's where I got such a kick out of her. When they destroyed her Lewisia rediviva spot she said, "I said strong words for a Quaker! I said strong words!" And I heard that she could say "hell" and "damn" as good as anybody else when she got mad.

Taxonomists

Riess: Ornduff also said something about taxonomy being developed on UC campuses, Stanford, and Rancho Santa Ana. What does that mean?

Roderick: I don't know what he meant by that, because taxonomy goes way back. [Edward Lee] Greene was the one who started it.

Riess: He started the Botanical Garden at Berkeley, on the campus.

Roderick: Yes. Then they had several other persons. Of course there was Alice Eastwood, too, in on this. Between Greene and Alice Eastwood they were splitting everything up. A lot of people didn't like them.

In fact Marcus Jones with his sharp tongue was the one that said two things. The first thing was, "All botanists are fools; there's only a degree of difference between them." Then, when Greene died, he published, "Since my last publication, several notable botanists have died. Greene, the pest of all botanists, died. If they dig a hole big enough to hold him and all of his trivia, it's going to be a gigantic hole"--or something like this.

Riess: Botanists spend too much time over trivia?

Roderick: A lot of them would take and split down till it was very difficult to try to identify a plant.

There was also the Brandegees, Katherine and Townsend Brandegee. The saying goes that Katherine Brandegee would be happy if they could lump all species into one species in California. Yet her husband is going on and describing new species all the time. In fact it was Katherine Brandegee, before she was a Brandegee, that hired Alice Eastwood in the California Academy of Sciences.

There was a fellow--Gustaf Eisen, I think his name was--that was the head of the botany department [at the California Academy of Sciences]. He's the one that brought in the *Carpenteria*. Fremont had discovered it, but it was Eisen that brought it into cultivation. He was only at the Academy for a short time. He left, and then Alice Eastwood took over.

Riess: I wonder why it is that there are so many fine women botanists. Do you have any observations on women in botany?

Roderick: Most of them didn't go in for other things. Botany way back, I think, was considered man's work, but then the men wanted to be outdoors, and the women were more willing to stay in the herbarium and set down and take the time of working things out. I think this is more the way it is, rather than anything else. I think it's just that they were willing to stay in and set in one space and work with something until they got it finally down.

Irja (Mrs. Walter) Knight and Wayne Roderick on a trip to the Fort Bragg dunes area, 1965.

Photograph by Walter Knight

V TILDEN PARK BOTANIC GARDEN

Jim Roof

- Riess: Lets get more specifically into your tenure at the Regional Park's Botanic Garden, 1976-1983. Before you got up to Tilden, had you been exchanging plants with Tilden when you were at UC?
- Roderick: To a degree. Jim was a very difficult person to get along with.
- Riess: Tell me about Jim.
- Roderick: Well, it finally turned out that he had a brain tumor, one of those very slow-acting ones. And I think this is one of the reasons why he was such a strange person. For example, when we went out on field trips together I just got cussed every time I'd even look like I was going to take a cutting. And I mean dirty cussing, not just plain cussing, but dirty cussing.
- Riess: When was this?
- Roderick: The first time would be when I started to work for UC--probably not later than 1961, because I started in 1960.
- Riess: You would have been taken along by him?
- Roderick: No. We'd go together. I learned right away that he was such an unusual, strange person that I just didn't want to get too close. There was something about this that I just couldn't get too close to him. It was worse than I ever thought it was going to be.
- Riess: But it sounds like there was a good arrangement between Tilden and UC.
- Roderick: It was great, but you couldn't do too much cooperating with him. You never knew which way he was going to go or how he was going to react to anything.

Riess: Did that change over the years?

Roderick: Yes, for the worse. When I took over I tried my best to keep still and not to say very much, trying to keep friendly. Even then, we couldn't--.

Riess: What were his strengths?

Roderick: Stories.

Riess: No, I mean in the garden.

Roderick: The one thing I didn't like, he did not design his paths well. A lot of them--they still have them--are very difficult. You start out heading the direction you want, and before you know it, the path is going the opposite way.

Riess: And that was deliberate?

Roderick: Yes, from what he said. He had set out there for hours trying to figure out a trail. But still, it never worked too good.

His ideas of horticulture were horrible. For instance, one of the first things he told me was he never, ever left a needle, a twig, a leaf on the ground. They had to be always raked up from around the plants. The plants did very well for about fifteen, twenty years, and all of a sudden he said that he noticed they weren't growing so very well. And at the same time he was getting ground washing away and getting gullies and so forth. This is when he started putting the banks covered with cement with rocks in them to stop the erosion.

He never figured out that the reason the plants were doing poor was that there was no fertilizer from the decomposed leaves and twigs and so forth, and that it was the leaves and twigs that were stopping the rain from hitting the ground and stopping the erosion. He never figured that out.

Also, he knew there were two kinds of soil in the garden, but he never figured out clay and loam, he didn't know that.

Riess: We have some stories about him from [A.E.] Wieslander, the soil scientist, who got involved in a controversy about whether to put a new botanic garden in Chabot Regional Park.

Roderick: That's right. Over at Chabot the soil was much better. But it was very slippery, and whole hillsides were just slipping down. That was the thing that was wrong with that. But Jim never

figured out--. He wrote about this. He brought down the bristle cone pines, and he knew they grew in rocks and gravelly soils, and yet he put them in clay. They grew for a little while and then died.

Riess: I enjoyed my trip up to the Botanic Garden at Tilden so much the other day. The Sierra meadow area is just wonderful.

Roderick: Did you notice that more or less in front of that is a pond? That was one of the places he couldn't get anything to grow. After I had been there for a year I found out why, right away. It was this gooey clay. It was a little bit of a low spot, and the water sat there all winter. Even the quaking aspen couldn't take it. They died, and they moved up onto the hill.

Riess: "Moved up onto the hill?"

Roderick: Root suckers shot up on the slopes when the trees died. They moved up onto the hills where there was drainage.

The low spot was mud puddles, so why not make it into a pond? That's how come we dug it out.

Riess: When you came up there, did you replace him, or did you come up to work for him?

Roderick: I replaced him.

Riess: Was there a transition period?

Roderick: There was supposed to be. But there was just no way that anybody could get along with him. One of the things I found out was that the men were cussed up one side and down the other side for no reason at all. He would rather tell them that they were every kind of a dirty word he could think about them, and "Go do this," and he wouldn't tell them why he wanted it done that way. Never would tell them any information, just so he could be the boss, the top, the brains. He had so many weird, strange ideas, people can't believe that he got plants to grow some of the strange ways that he did.

Riess: What were the main problems that you had to deal with right away?

Roderick: The worst of all, I would give orders when I wanted certain things done. Then when I got out of there he'd come around and tell the fellows to do the opposite.

Riess: But didn't he leave when you came?

Roderick: He lived there! He lived in a one-room shack. No running water. He had an extension cord from the back office through the wall to his shack to have electricity.

The other thing that I didn't realize was that he had keys. He loved padlocks. Everything was locked. I unlocked everything. In fact, my orders were to get the Visitor Center open and exhibits up and lectures going. That was my first priority. I left everything unlocked so the staff could see what was going on.

I found out finally, too, that it was all open to Jim Roof, and he was going into my personal papers and taking them to the main office and making little remarks and trying to get me out of there. In fact, he took my first draft that I made for my letter for volunteers up to the main office and said that this was what I sent out. They stupidly, even up there, believed that. And you could see all of my corrections and making new paragraphs and correcting the spelling and so forth. I had just sat down one morning and typed out a letter, and then saw what I liked and what I didn't like. Scratched down a few things.

Riess: And what did he do with it?

Roderick: Took it to the main office and said this is what I sent out all over the countryside for trying to get volunteers.

Riess: By the main office you mean what?

Roderick: I mean the Regional Park office up at Skyline.

Riess: You did finally triumph. How?

Roderick: I'm still not quite certain. One of the things I think that really helped was that he tried to tell everybody he was pushed out. And, of course, he always told about me destroying the place.

He got the newspapers and T.V. and radio and all of this to listen to him. They'd come up with these different stories, like that Mr. Roof had been pushed out and all this and that. They would hear all this and they'd have to investigate, to look into it.

These people would come up and look around and say, "Well, we've never been here before, but, gee, this looks great!" Invariably it went against him every time he opened his mouth.

We got a lot of nice people that started to come to the garden that way.

Records and Numbering System

Riess: You said that you had a letter to volunteers. Had there been a volunteer program before?

Roderick: No. Some of these young people that he had met, he would get them to come and work a few days. But then they'd get sick and tired and move out.

Riess: You were trying to get the same kind of arrangement you had had at UC of docents?

Roderick: Yes. I had thought about that, but at that time I didn't dare think too much, because there were so many things that I had to try to get organized.

Jim had never got the place so it could even be called a botanic garden. There were no records of any kind. Nothing had ever been done that way. On top of that, he had this number system--different colors for different parts of the state, like desert was one color, the Sierra was another color.

Riess: And that is still there?

Roderick: That's still going on. I think, eventually, they're going to have to change that a little bit.

Anyhow, in his book that he had produced as a guide to the garden it said that number such-and-such was one certain plant. Well, it wasn't there. Then I found a record saying that same number was something else. It wasn't there. It was a yucca with the same number.

You don't do that. You've got to have something that you can go back to, because dead records are just as important as live, growing plants. It gives you information. Maybe it tells you what kind of conditions you planted it under, or maybe you might have collected it, say, from the northern part of its range, while the southern part of the range would have been a better collection area, and done better.

You never know for certain on these things. And those dead records are important. Every once in awhile something dies, but

part of the root is still alive, and up comes a shoot from it, and so you resurrect it again. It's a very interesting thing when you get into this.

Trying to figure records--. Finally, I worked on the normal accessioning numbers of everybody else. When we traded back and forth with other botanic gardens, then we worked out that we put a "T" in front of ours, which means Tilden; and "UC" is UCB; over at Strybing, it would be "S" or "ST"--this is how they generally do it for Strybing. So our numbers will be all the same, except we'll have these letters in front of it when we trade back and forth.

We finally had to more or less use his old number system for the existing plants, trying to compensate for all the headaches of getting these other things going. Then trying to map the garden and get the plants onto the map and the beds numbered--all of that I had to work out.

Riess: He had the colored labels, but he didn't have the same kind of information?

Roderick: He had practically nothing. Also, when he left the garden he took all the records that he had ever had and held them up for ransom. The Regional Parks had to pay him money to get those records. When I finally got my hands on them, I couldn't believe it. It was just practically the same thing that was on the labels. No information at all, except for three. On them were plants that had died after I had taken over, "killed by the hands of Roderick." [chuckles]

Riess: Oh, poor guy, sounds miserable.

Roderick: I can laugh about it now, but it was horrible, hell.

Mapping, Thinning (Ted Kipping), and Digging

Riess: You had to map the place, you say?

Roderick: Yes. I got May Blos to take and lay out the general layout of the place. They weren't too accurate, but at least from that we could then go on and get accurate maps and then get the plants all laid out on those maps so that we can keep up to date on things and find things. Say an airplane crashes into the building and kills everybody at work there, the next persons that could come on would at least have something and could find

everything and know where to find things and try to keep the records up. That was another thing.

I still say one of my most important things--. Jim would plant, but never thin. The trees were planted about six feet apart, and the surplus ones never removed. The seven, eight years that I was there, I took close to three hundred trees out in that little seven acres, most of it all for free. Ted Kipping--this is when he was really training a lot of persons on tree work--he would send over a couple of good, trained men with a whole crew of trainees. They removed practically every one of those with no cost to us.

Riess: They would ball them up and take them off?

Roderick: No. This is just cutting them down.

Riess: I thought maybe they were taking them out for a garden.

Roderick: No. They were too big. But taking out trees where things are crowded, which is like in a private garden, you've got to be very careful so that you do not destroy other things around. This is where he trained his men. He did this at UC and at Strybing. At Strybing he did so much that he's given a room once a month. Because he's a magnificent photographer, he shows pictures there once a month. Half the time it's him, and half the time it's other people's pictures. They gave him that expensive room once a month forever.

Riess: I wondered about those Ted Kipping evenings. Is it a very select group of people that attend?

Roderick: That is a potluck always. He invites everybody, and if you've got a friend that you think would like to go, tell him to come along!

Riess: He does it because he loves to show the slides?

Roderick: Yes, and he likes people to know more about plants. Well, not necessarily all the time plants, but 90 percent of the time it's on plants. It's just a nice little evening thing. I would imagine that he did over \$75,000 worth of tree work at Tilden.

Riess: You first met him at UC?

Roderick: I'd known him for many years. First I had known his brother, John, and through John I met Ted. This is when John was still teaching at Strybing, and Ted came in as a worker in the garden

and then got into the tree work. So I've known him for a couple of decades.

Riess: Was there a great hue and cry when you started taking the trees out?

Roderick: Oh, my God! You've never heard such screaming in your life!

Riess: From whom, besides Roof? Who else cared about the garden?

Roderick: Other people. They couldn't see it. Finally in the redwood forest, when you could see into the forest there, people then started getting their eyes open. But it took an awful lot of heartbreak and me getting screamed at.

Then, one time--. The ponderosa pines were so crowded. They were just all misshapen. Ted's crew got out there, and they had taken out the excess trees, and they were trying to shape up the remaining ones. Jim came in and raised so much hell that the foreman, Al Sinares, finally thought that Jim was correct, and he just raised hell with the guys. They finally got up and walked out and said they were never coming back again.

Yes, one of the five or six remaining trees looked like hell. But forty years of growth--you're going to have to figure that it's going to take a few years to come back, and it wouldn't look like hell. Now it's a beautiful tree. It took about ten years, but it's a beautiful tree now.

Riess: I can see how you had to be really strong in that situation. People resist tree removal. Did you have to get permission for all of that tree work from headquarters?

Roderick: I took it on myself. On my monthly report I would report that "we had so many trees removed," and "it was starting to look better already"--things this way.

Riess: What did you do about the soil? What could you do?

Roderick: The main thing that I had said when the guys were bringing some good soil in was to work some of it down into the clay so you have a transition. Jim never knew this, and this is why he made these mounds, and planted the things on them. The roots would hit the clay and go out into the better soil. Then they had to water to keep the plants alive. I tried to make the transition in the soil.

The other thing, also, when I did the old original parking lot, got it fenced in, I got piles of soil deep enough for desert plants. It had been a parking lot, and it had a lot of rock already moved into it, so it didn't have to have a transition zone there. Things have been doing very good on that. I did get, I think now, so all the persons will work some of the new material into the old for a transition.

Staff and the Public##

Roderick: [talking before the recorder is on about training helpers in the Regional Parks Botanic Garden]--the foreman there, Al Seneres, I would take him out and show him how to collect, and how to record the field notes that I wanted for every plant that was brought in. I took him out two or three times and showed him this. Here, about two or three years after that, I brought in some plants and gave them to him. He said, "Not good enough field data. I want more information!" That was a great thing to hear.

Riess: That's wonderful. As director at Tilden you weren't doing the collecting anymore?

Roderick: [laughing] You can't keep me from doing this. But it was better for the men to learn from the beginning, just let them go and bring in everything, and try to show them that regardless of what you bring in, say ten things from one spot, that some of them are not going to grow, and some of them will grow, and one of them will probably become a horrible pest.

The foreman still can't quite see all of this yet. He still likes to go out and just grab everything he can, good stuff as well as things of no value at all for a botanic garden, things we already have. He still doesn't quite know this.

Riess: What kind of training does he have?

Roderick: Nothing in horticulture. Just a very little bit that he's taken at night school and what he's picked up.

Riess: I would think that the educational level of the people that you've been working with over the years would be rising.

Roderick: This fellow has learned unbelievably. But he has so much to unlearn from Jim.

Riess: Oh, it's the same person?

Roderick: Yes.

There is one fellow that's very good. He's had horticultural training. I think that eventually he's going to be very, very good. I give him a bad time all the time and tell him he's no good [laughs], but I can see the things that he's done, and he's gotten some good results.

Riess: How did you change or improve on the policy of interpretation and the way the garden related to the public?

Roderick: I encourage all people to come unless, once in awhile, we have somebody that is bound to cause problems.

Jim always considered it his private garden. If he didn't like you, "Get the hell out," and then stronger than that. They told me that if somebody was being chased by the police that he knew, and they got in the gardens, he locked the gates so the police couldn't come in. A lot of these kind of strange things went on.

The Bad with the Good

Riess: All in all, you were there that six or seven years and got done what you wanted to get done up there?

Roderick: I saw to it that a lot of the chaotic hell was gone. I was just getting to the good, pleasurable things, and I decided I could retire. Then Steve Edwards took over, and now he's getting a lot of the nice, glorious things going.

Steve's got time that he can see about getting lots of different kinds of interesting lectures going. I just kept more or less the same thing going every year, just to have lectures, trying to get all these different little things figured out and done, and get some ideas and directions going and things this way. Now Steve has gotten three-and-a-half or four acres more added to the garden. He's getting all those paths in now, and water into the area so it can really start expanding.

Jim also had one other bad thing: he thought small. Never would think big. Never figured for expanding or anything like

that. Where the present office sets, you can still look down out the window and see this great big chunk of cement.

Jim was going to build a lecture room and so forth, which was great, in the shape of the state of California, with a raised map of California built in it. By the time that he got all this done, there wouldn't be enough room for twenty people in the room. He built out in the middle of the garden what we call the "lodge." Again, it was going to be a lecture room. But he was a very small person, and the door to get into the main entrance, you had to duck to get in it. It was about five-and-a-half feet high.

Then he built--I don't know what it was, just big masses of water-worn rock outcrops. It looked very unnatural. In the middle of it he started to make a pond with a waterfall in it so that no person could come in the door. They could walk one way or the other around this, but it was only wide enough for one person. Well, of course, that was absolutely against all public building codes, like a fire hazard. There were just a lot of these funny kinds of things.

He never figured how to really work cement. That was another thing that had to be worked over and fixed up, a lot of that cement work he did. In fact, at the interview I had when I was accepted to take over the job, I said I would not take any cement out for a long time. I kept my promise. [laughing] It was about two o'clock the afternoon of the first day before I had a sledge hammer working on some cement. It was, again, bad cement work. You couldn't get the truck down for emergency work without knocking off the corner of this. We couldn't get the truck around.

Riess: He does sound like a character. It's almost unfair to go on about him anymore.

Roderick: He had a lot of good things. He did get a lot of the rarer plants. He brought in so many rare plants and got them established. He did a lot of good things. He wrote beautiful. He wrote beautiful. He had a degree in literature.

Meeting Fellow Botanic Gardeners

Riess: People who were associated with the other big botanic gardens in California: Maunsell Van Rensselaer at Santa Barbara; the man at Rancho Santa Ana; Denys Rowe who worked at La Purisima in

Lompoc. Were there organizations of botanic garden directors, and were you a part of that?

Roderick: When I started at UC Botanical Garden I tried to coordinate the different native plant botanic gardens. I got Percy Everett and Bob Thorne from Rancho Santa Ana, and Dara Emery at Santa Barbara, and of course Art Menzies, whom I had known for a long time at Strybing, and Roman Gankin and those from over at Davis, and of course included Jim Roof.

We had our first meeting up here. We took everybody around. Some of them didn't come. I think it was Santa Barbara that never did make it. Percy was pretty mad at Jim at that time because of him screaming so badly. But we did have a great time.

We had a second time. It was up in the Lake County area, and that came to a grinding halt all at once because of [John F.] Kennedy being assassinated. We saw flags at half mast, and we stopped to find out. That ended that one. Percy Everett said later, "Don't ask us anymore to come up here." And he said, "I'm not going to ask the group to come down there because I have to ask Jim Roof. I won't have it." That's how that stopped.

Riess: But you had hoped to create a kind of network?

Roderick: --a kind of network, and to coordinate our work and make sure that we got all these rare plants, and things of beauty, too. I like to have some showy things, as well as botanical stuff.

Riess: How does CNPS work specifically with the botanic gardens? Do they create the network so that this group that you wished that you could have put in place in fact isn't necessary? Does CNPS make sure that the botanic gardens have specimens of everything?

Roderick: Generally speaking, we don't say anything to CNPS when we get an idea to go out and see about some of these rare plants to bring and start in. But when we show that we're growing, CNPS is always very happy. I think that without even saying anything, all of us agree that the more rare and endangered plants we can grow, the better it is for everybody; if something should happen to the things in the wild, we know we can get starts again from the botanic gardens.

This is now becoming a national thing, and all botanic gardens are trying to work together to get starts of everything that's really rare and endangered, just in case something becomes extinct. The only place here in the Bay Area that's

done anything about this is Tilden. They've planted out two things that were extinct on Mt. San Bruno: one manzanita, and the false lily-of-the-valley. Both of those have been planted back on the mountain. I think that Steve said he's got two or three things more that are just about propagated enough now to get replanted.

Riess: Would they be planted in secret places? Is that the idea?

Roderick: That I'm not quite certain on. I know that some of the manzanita was planted on the original place, and then a couple on another spot. What they did with the *Maianthemum*, I'm not sure, but it's somewhere planted right in the same way.

Regions and Zones

Riess: The nine regions of California that Jim Roof designed the Tilden garden around, was this system of zones in place before Jim Roof? I mean did Jepson, for instance, look at California in that way?

Roderick: Yes. They all kind of look at--like in the Sierra you have different elevations. Of course, the top one is Hudsonian, and so on. Jim never thought that way. He just thought of it as more of a semi-degree of geographical system. Even then, it was still not quite perfect the way he had it laid out. He followed counties, and some counties--. For instance, Kern County not only was Sierran, but it was also desert. So that was another thing that we worked on that I thought out and thought out.

We got the staff together, and we worked on that. Finally we worked it out so we tried to cut--like Kern County, we cut it in half, or something that way. It's very tricky, and it's very difficult to do that. UC now has more or less as the botanists have broken the state up, like the Hudsonian and those kinds of things. It makes it a little bit more easy way of planting things.

The other thing that Jim did very poorly there was he gave the foothill conditions very small space, and that's one of our most important things and biggest areas. One of the reasons why we want to enlarge the garden is to give a larger area for those kinds of plants. The Sierran area he did give plenty of room. But the foothill is, oh, I guess, about a hundred by a hundred foot. We really needed at least a full acre for that. Eventually that's going to be moved. It's going to be a short

time, twenty or thirty years from now and we'll have it all done. [laughs] That's one thing about botanic gardens: you work over centuries, not today and tomorrow.

Riess: That's right. Well, maybe he knew something about the foothills that you don't know. Maybe he expected they would disappear. [chuckles]

How about Strybing's California section? How is it set up?

Roderick: It's been worked over again. Art Menzies set that up originally. Originally they had spots already made, but then Art went and kind of tied them together.

Riess: Which model is it based on? On the elevation zone model or on the--?

Roderick: I don't think it's too much made out that way. They have the redwood section, and that's about the only one that is really kept to a geographical or botanical way, because it was so badly mixed up originally. They have quite a bit on riparian, because they had a drainage area through there, and they had the rock. It's just kind of general, and not very much of any kind of a real good layout.

Riess: They don't have the same botanic garden ambitions?

Roderick: No. In Strybing they are more interested in ornamental than they are in botanical. If you go through there, you'll see that there is a lot more of horticultural. They've got these demonstration gardens to give persons ideas of what they can do in their own gardens. More that way.

Marge Hayakawa and Wayne Roderick, Sonoma Coast State Park, 1986.

Photograph by Vaclav Plestil

VI THE BIG HORTICULTURAL PICTURE: INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

[Interview 4: June 6, 1990]##

Wildflowers. Floras. Keys. Terminology

Riess: We're looking at your library of garden books, and your stacks of magazines and so on. Do you save everything?

Roderick: Oh, I've also got piles and piles and piles of letters from different people from all over the country and the world. I can't throw them away, and yet they're old and no good at all, and I've got to go in one day and just start tossing out.

Riess: Do you think they belong in some kind of archives?

Roderick: I don't know. I did take about six, eight, ten boxes five or six years ago and gave them to Strybing Arboretum. They had the grandest time going through and saving what they wanted and tossing the rest.

Riess: Well, isn't that a relief? You can continue to do that.

I want to get a question off my chest right now. I have here A Field Guide to Pacific States Wildflowers [Theodore F. Niehaus, illustrations by Charles L. Ripper, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976]. What's the difference between "wildflowers" and "native plants?"

Roderick: They are all the same. This is Ted Niehaus's book? Yes. That's a very good book. I use it a lot. In fact I have two copies of it, one that he gave me pre-publishing date. That one--it's all written in there--never gets out of my house, but the cheap one goes everywhere with me. If nothing else, like with the sunflower family, where you've got such a tremendous number of them, and you're not quite certain what group of the sunflower family it belongs to, just looking at the line drawings, instantly you can get into the right area. Then it's

so easy to go to Munz or Jepson and figure it out quickly down at least to the genus.

Riess: And Jepson is a complete flora for California?

Roderick: It's a flora for California, and it isn't quite complete. No flora can ever be complete because you keep finding more things.

Now, the Jepson Manual is being revised, and it will be out supposedly in fall of '91 or early '92, probably '92. Even with the new flora, it's still not going to be the easiest thing in the world to use. There are a few things that are going to be rather difficult for people. But the technical terms are being broken down into easy English for the amateur, and they're trying to eliminate, as much as they can, "more or less." Munz used that a tremendous amount, so many species, that there's just no way that you could get down to a species without knowing the plant itself. [A California Flora, by Philip A. Munz, in collaboration with David D. Keck]

Riess: What do you mean by "more or less?"

Roderick: The term they use is "more or less"--plus or minus. So you get a species that the flowers are lavender to purple on this one, "more or less." The next species, the flowers are purple to lavender, "more or less." [laughter]

You're into difficulties. I mean, especially like beyond the desert, where things are not too familiar, you'll find--well, Gilias, there are about twenty or thirty species of them, and it's "more or less" on them. Up here are lupines, and lupines are again "more or less," and to really identify a lupine you almost need a chromosome count. There's so many of these plants that you have to have so many different things to try to identify them. This is what Jim Hickman is doing in doing the editing. He's trying to get so that you can take and do this.

Riess: He's the new editor of the Jepson?

Roderick: Yes. Nicest guy you'll ever want to see in your life.

Riess: Are they in fact doing chromosome counts?

Roderick: I think from the pieces of the manuscript that I had, I haven't seen or really noticed any chromosome count numbers. They will probably be put in, but as far as for identifying the plants, each genus has a key to all the species in that genus. They are trying their best to get simple things. I had the fritillarias

to go over, and I'm still screaming bloody murder. A big percentage of those you've got to dig up the plant and look at not only the bulb, but at the roots. That's just too destructive. I don't like that.

Riess: Back to the general question of books and keying things, is Helen Sharsmith's, for instance, a totally separate system?

Roderick: No. With Sharsmith and all those smaller floras, generally speaking, the keys are quite simple, and they have kept them to their areas that they wrote on. For instance, like with Mary Bowerman on Mount Diablo, you can use her book for other areas around that, but it is written strictly for Mount Diablo. Her keys are more simple, so you are in deep trouble if you try to use it, say, over in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, because there are different species over there. It doesn't go into detail enough to break it down for the whole state. There's a lot of these floras that way that are just elegant, but they are strictly for their one little group area.

Riess: I guess that's kind of a godsend.

Roderick: It's heavenly when you go into a given area and you've got a book for that area. You don't have to go through dozens of species, like in Munz or Jepson, till you get to what you're interested in finding.

Riess: On my earlier question, why did they end up being called California natives rather than called California wildflowers?

Roderick: I never stopped to think about that. I don't know. Do you want me to call Jepson Herbarium? I'd get an answer right away from them!

Riess: I won't let you get away from me right now. I don't want you on the phone. They'll have twenty questions for you if you have one for them! [laughs]

Do other states call their native flora "natives," or in fact do other states even look at their flora in such a way?

Roderick: I think one of the reasons maybe that we call this "native" is because we are the only place in North America with a Mediterranean climate. We've got summer drought. This brings our endemics up to such a high number that they're found no other place in the world. In a good percentage of the other states, their florals go from one state to another and are widespread that way, while here so many are restricted.

Riess: I wonder if it was some of those early English collectors, in fact, who maybe first designated these as the native plants of California.

Roderick: I really can't tell you. I've never gone into that. You're going to cause me trouble. I'm going to get my nose into everything now trying to find out something about it! [laughs]

Riess: Good! I like that attitude. That's great.

You showed me a picture of you reading what looked like a new copy of Hardy Californians [by Lester Rowntree, Macmillan, 1936]. Does Lester Rowntree do a key in that?

Roderick: No, she doesn't. She wrote about them, and she was very good at that--her beautiful descriptions.

Styles of Writing and Speaking about Horticulture

Riess: That reminds me of a question I may have brought up earlier, but I'll bring it up again, and that is about horticultural writing styles, how to write about flowers, and use restraint with the adjectives. There are varying schools of thought about that, I gather. Some people want the writing pretty cut and dried.

Roderick: With me writing is very difficult. If I get information down, that's good. If I get flowery as well, it's unbelievable. I have a hard time using a lot of adjectives.

Riess: And that's what Lester Rowntree was good with?

Roderick: She wrote beautifully. Beautiful prose, as well as good adjectives. I wouldn't say flowery, but very nice, easy reading, and with good enough adjectives that helped you really see the plant.

Riess: Is it a way to tell the professionals from the amateurs?

Roderick: No. Generally speaking--now I'm thinking in botanical terms again--most of the professionals that I know, the ones with master's degrees seem to write much more beautifully than the ones with Ph.D.s. But again, I think they're thinking in very fine details rather than a good overview of the whole thing. But there's also a lot of variation in that.

For instance, with Bob Ornduff--. I'm absolutely wild over that guy. He not only knows his botany, but he also knows how to take care of the plants--his horticulture is very good. When he was director at UC Botanical Garden, the only difference between his thoughts and my thoughts were that I had to think small of what I could do, and he had always thought big of what would look nice. We had a big joke out of it. In fact, the other day we mentioned something like this, and we were laughing again about it. I had to think of what I could do, rather than what would be nice to have. He writes quite well, too.

I think the greatest of all these writers was John Thomas Howell, his lectures as well as his writing. Whenever he would use a technical term he would explain it. "That means--."

Riess: How does he fit in?

Roderick: He was head of the California Academy of Sciences Botany Department. He came in under Alice Eastwood in the early thirties, and he outlived her. He's still alive. Very, very ill, very unhealthy, hardly gets out of his rest home now at all. Elizabeth McClintock took over from him. But what a gentleman! He was the botanist on the Crocker Expedition to the Galapagos in the early thirties. So he has a great deal of information and things he can tell you about.

Riess: Maybe slides have become a kind of crutch for people. "Worth a thousand words."

Roderick: That could be. It definitely would be me, because I'm so poor at writing.

I had to write an article years back for the California Horticultural Society--some of us at the UC Botanical Garden were asked to write articles for one issue they were going to have on the Botanical Garden. The editor, who was a very nice, I guess, editor--something came up after the journal had been published, and I said, "Piro Caro, I certainly feel sorry for you having to have my stuff to work with compared to Dr. [Helen-Mar] Beard."

He said, "Her writing is so perfect, it's dull! Yours is so horrible, it's magnificent!" I've never forgotten that. I used to be told how horrible a writer I was, and that I didn't have the education, and "You can't do this, you can't do that!"

Riess: You were probably pretty traumatized by being told that too many times.

Roderick: Yes. Then, to have Piro Caro telling me it was delightful.

Riess: Who was he?

Roderick: Piro Caro. Owen Pearce was the head of the Horticultural Society's Journal, but Piro did the actual work, I think. I think he cleaned it up and gave it to Owen. I think that was the way it worked. I'm not sure about that. Gosh, that's going back a couple of years!

Know-How

Riess: In your experience, is there a traditional, not enmity but a sort of turf war between the botanists who would head these arboreta and the horticulturists?

Roderick: Well, Dr. Herbert Baker was a very poor director for the one reason that he didn't know anything about horticulture, and you couldn't get anything over to him. [Watson] Laetsch--you know my thoughts on him. Then Ornduff--that's why I like him so much--all of a sudden, here's somebody that can see all these different things.

Riess: I wondered if you heard about it from other people in your profession who felt that they were always having to educate the botanists.

Roderick: I'm thinking of so many different ones. Roy Taylor, he's way up in Chicago with a botanic garden. He was awful nice. He seemed to have a good idea, a rounded idea, on horticulture, as well as the botany. I'm trying to think of a couple of the other persons that I have met.

Riess: How about the people at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden or Rancho Santa Ana?

Roderick: Those all seem to be very good. One time many, many years back, Percy Everett, who was the head of the horticulture, said that here he thought he knew it all, but that the Mexican help would not like the spot he had pointed out to plant--he said they always planted in dozens or hundreds, they like to plant in masses down there--and they'd sneak out two or three and plant them where they thought they could do better. He said that invariably they did better.

He said that he got to the point with his Mexicans, especially the foremen, where he'd say to them, "This is where we'd like to have them. What do you think about the soil?" He said he learned a whole lot from those Mexican people.

It was more or less the same way with Myron Kimnach at the Huntington. I never really talked to him about this, but he said that when he figured out where something should go he'd then tell the Mexican help there that he'd like to see these here and, "What do you think?" They'd go over that a little bit. He had third generation help there at Huntington Gardens. He was quite proud of this.

When Myron Kimnach took the job of director down at the Huntington, his mother was getting quite elderly. Myron and I had hit it off good, and I got to meet his mother. I had dinner there several times before he got the job down there. When she got so ill and had to go to the hospital and fell and broke her hip and was never able to take care of it, I watched out for her for ten years in rest homes and everything till she died. I'm very pleased that I was able to help Myron out some.

England: E.B. Anderson, Chris Brickell, Alice Moore

Riess: Before we had the tape recorder on you told a story which in maybe an abbreviated form you should tell again, because it opens the door to your foreign connections. You were talking about Marge [Margedant] Hayakawa and some seeds from Czechoslovakia. So my question is, when did you become international, and how did that happen?

Roderick: I think it started instantly after I went on my first foreign trip.

Riess: When was that?

Roderick: That would have been in 1963. Margaret Williams had gone to the International Rock Garden Society Conference in England in '61. She met E.B. Anderson, and she invited a lot of these people over, and he took her up on it. He came over in '62. I had collected a lot of our native bulbs for him. That meant I had to help take him around and show him California, and of course he wanted to see mostly our native bulbs.

Riess: You were up at UC then?

Roderick: Yes.

Riess: He had contacted you ahead of time saying, "Please collect--"?

Roderick: No, I told Margaret what I would do for her I would do for him. He thought I was going to just have one thing for him, but I had quite a few.

After he left California he was a guest of the Agricultural Department of the United States, and they took care of his bulbs and everything for him while he was there with them in Washington, D.C.

Riess: E.B. Anderson--what was his position?

Roderick: He was a great, great plantsman of the world. He had a Victoria Medal of Honor, which is the highest honor that the Royal Horticultural Society can give out. It has to be only to an Englishman, and there are only sixty-three of these persons, which is the number of years that Victoria reigned. It's the highest honor in England you can get.

Riess: Now, a plantsman--is that the same as a horticulturist?

Roderick: Yes. But he specialized mostly in bulbs. This one friend--he died quite a few years back--he said he never was to E.B. Anderson's garden, except in the wintertime. Mr. Anderson always gave him hell about this, and he said, "Where in the world can you go and see so many labels per square inch of rare and unusual things!" [laughter]

Riess: You had been collecting, and when he came you had dry bulbs for him?

Roderick: No. I had them mostly in pots in loose soil so they could easily be dumped out. I had about, oh, thirty, forty different collections.

Of course he was interested in bulbs. What Margaret did was to bring him up to UC Botanical Garden. This is when I had so many big batches of bulbs already going. He said that my boxes were drier than his desert plot. I said, "It is fine, more or less, and the boxes are still moist." After he went home--he lived in the Cotswolds, and of course they had Cotswold stone walls all over--he tore off the top of one wall, cut the stones in half, and laid them back up there so there was only about a three-inch space in the center. He filled that with loose soil, and he planted a lot of these up there, and they were growing very well from then on.

Riess: How beautiful. Did you ever get to see that?

Roderick: Oh, yes. I was his house guest about three different times.

Riess: After that visit over here in 1963, you say--.

Roderick: I went over there in '63. He was here in '62.

Riess: I see. And that was the beginning? What happened? Do you still trade? Do you go in your own interest?

Roderick: All of my foreign trips have been made on my own time, my own money. That first time I went over I wrote to the Royal Hort saying that I had all these different kinds of woody plant seeds, as well as other plants, and were they interested?

They had never heard of this person [me] before. They called from the main office out to Wisley. The fellow out there said, "Gosh, arriving here on a Saturday! What are we going to do? We'll get that new employee, whatever his name is, the botanist, Chris Brickell. Tell Mr. Brickell to meet this fellow." Well, now he is the general manager of the whole organization, the highest paid person of the Royal Horticultural Society. We went out. He took us around a little bit to show us some of the garden.

Riess: Who were you travelling with?

Roderick: We had here at UC Berkeley Alice Moore, one of the world's authorities on cement. One of our scientists in the Hearst Mining Building had made a new cement, but couldn't control it. It was expanding and not contracting and was not stable. She was brought over to control this. Well, she loved lilies. She arrived in Berkeley on a Friday night. Saturday she found an apartment. Sunday she furnished the apartment. And on Monday morning she went up the Botanical Garden to see lilies, and this is how we met.

We're still very dear friends. She's retired now. But she also loved acacias, because they couldn't grow them, and before she retired she bought a nice chunk of land on the Isle of Wight where the acacias have already gone wild. She had to clear the garden of a lot of them.

Anyhow, she picked me up at the airport and took me to Wisley, and we went out and looked around the garden. Goodness, here was the most beautiful Pulsatilla in full bloom. I got down with my camera to take pictures. I took two or three

pictures. I guess there must have been a startled look on Chris's face. I started to stand up and I heard Alice say, "Well, you know, this is something I guess they can't grow in California." I said, "No. We can get one flower at a time on a plant, and here you have about twenty flowers on this one." He said, "Well, it is a poor, wishy-wash color, and we haven't pulled it out yet."

This told me that yes, I'm in a completely different kind of a climate, part of the world, everything. So from then on we got to talking on plants, and I would tell him what I thought, what we did here, and then he would tell me what they did there. This is how we got acquainted. Doors started to open up a little bit. Nowadays I have to go to England without letting anybody know if I want to have some time to myself.

Riess: Is there so much they can learn from you? Is that it?

Roderick: Well, I have sent so much seed over of all these different things. Like yesterday, I got a package of cuttings sent off to the Royal Hort of things I knew that they wanted. I'll get a letter in a couple of weeks saying, "Gee, what a surprise! I got cuttings from you today."

Riess: When the English took California plants back to England did they call them "California natives?" When you go to Wisley can you see a whole stand of something identified as California natives?

Roderick: They try to grow them in a spot where they think that they can give them certain kind of conditions. For instance, at Wisley they have a special hothouse for alpiners, for dry growing. Same at Kew. At Kew they have big hothouses just for the dry things. This last spring when I was there, the fellow that was over that had one section for Calachortus and another section for Erythroniums and another section for something else. But there is wet growing as well as dry growing of these, so most of these things have to be, in fact, two places so they get the attention and that particular kind of a growing condition that they require.

It's such a pleasure to go to those big outfits and see the care that they're giving the seed I sent over.

Collecting and Sharing Bulbs##

Riess: When you're over there, do you consult with Thompson and Morgan or any of the British seed companies?

Roderick: No, I don't. I have nothing to do with them because I won't collect that amount. You know, if I collect a teaspoonful of seed I consider that a quite a batch. Yes, in the past I have collected, say, bulky seed--a cupful. That sounds like a tremendous amount, but when you break it down to match up a small seed, it isn't. I try my best never to take more than one percent of the seed in a given patch.

Riess: They have their own seed fields?

Roderick: They probably have their own seed fields, or more likely they have small amounts, and they are getting that from persons that have grown the seed themselves. This is quite often--. I know my friends now that come over here, we've collected, or I've sent seed to them or bulbs. To these special, special persons I like collecting two or three bulbs of something and sending it to them. And then I know they're going to get the special care that they need, and then they will hand pollinate to make sure they get good seed. It takes only a tiny pinch of seed to give somebody else a start.

I like three bulbs when I'm collecting bulbs, for the one reason that that way you've got a chance that one might not grow, you've got the other two. As I've said, if you can't get one bulb out of three to grow, you might as well stop. The other thing is, if you do get three, then you can get better cross-pollination, more vigorous plants from seed.

Riess: It's rare that I let anything go to seed because I keep removing the old flower heads. Why don't people plant bulbs by seed?

Roderick: Because they take time. You've got to figure for most bulbs four years for the first flower, and generally five and six. With trilliums it takes two years to get the seed to germinate, and then it takes anywhere from five to fifteen years to get them to bloom. Most people don't like to wait that long. This is one of the reasons I try and send the two or three bulbs to different ones, especially like Kath Dryden and a few of those.

Riess: Where is she?

Roderick: She lives just outside of London, north of London. She's a character of the first quality. She's a long bean pole. She says that she was born in the poorest part of London--they didn't even have a toilet, they lived on the third floor, no running water, no electricity. But she has a Victoria Medal of Honor, she's such a great expert on bulbous plants. She tries to grow everything she possibly can in the bulbs of the world,

especially *Fritillarias*. She also is the number one *Lewisia* person.

Over there they have this organization trying to keep a collection of all these different plants. Different persons take and try to grow them. Plus, Kath also tries to keep the collections: anybody that wants to do any research, she can give them a collection or at least plants to just look at if she only has one of such things. If she can find a young person that's going to try to grow these, she'll somehow get divisions or starts off of them to give them to him.

Riess: Don't people do that here, too?

Roderick: To a degree. I'm considered the wild one in that respect. My plants never get too big because I keep giving away too much.

Riess: But that kind of generosity is not a tradition here?

Roderick: No. The way I look at it--finding these young people and forcing things onto them--is they're the horticulturists of the future. Get them hooked as fast as you possibly can.

Riess: George Waters says he used to send any visitors from England to see you. He refers to somebody named Halliwell from Kew.

Roderick: Oh, yes, Brian Halliwell. Brian just retired last year. He is a difficult person to talk to. I guess he is really more of a shy person, and a very precise person. If you said anything that was kind of humorous that could go two ways, he'd take the wrong way invariably.

A young fellow, Tony Hall, who has taken over from him most of his work, couldn't have his job because he has no hearing whatsoever. Tony Hall is a fine plantsman but could not give the lectures or anything like this because he has no hearing. So they've hired somebody new, and I've met the fellow, but I can't even tell you his name now. We were more or less passing.

I get the run of the back area there. But those real plantsmen, you can't hardly tie them down for a minute to talk with them. They're too interested in their work.

Riess: When you're talking about the "back area," are you talking about Wisley again?

Roderick: More of this was at Kew. They have lots of hothouses that are off-limits to the public. At Wisley they have only a small range of hothouses that are off to the public.

- Riess: Why would people have contacted George Waters?
- Roderick: Well, that was through Pacific Horticulture.
- Riess: They would write to him as the editor of the magazine?
- Roderick: Yes.

Garden Climate and Colors

- Riess: Have you spent time at Sissinghurst?
- Roderick: I've been there quite a few times. For some reason or other, I've never been able to get acquainted with the woman that's over it, but everybody else says that this is nothing unusual. But I've been there from fairly early spring to early fall. I have not been there in fall coloring at Sissinghurst.

The middle, the biggest part of the garden, has never been developed. It just kind of looks like a big lawn with a few old fruit trees. This is what the average public sees. But early spring, say, first week of April, there are just great drifts of daffodils with Fritillaria meleagris. Just drifts of them. The most gorgeous sight you ever saw in your life.

In October--I've only been there in early October, not mid-October, which I think would be better--the big patches of Colchicums come in that lawn area. Here are these big pink and lavender blobs of colors throughout, and you can see why they would never let anything else be planted in the area. It's absolutely breathtaking. Vita Sackville-West and Nigel Nicholson--you can see why they kept that so plain, and you can see how they really loved plants and how they knew what they were doing.

- Riess: They have those beautiful stone walls setting it all off.
- Roderick: And they blended their colors so beautifully and kept their different little gardens to certain colors so they wouldn't clash with other areas. It's a miracle how they worked out things.
- Riess: I think about color in California as orangy-yellow and blue, blue sky and poppies and lupine.

Roderick: Another thing, too, are your climates. It seems in the hotter, drier climates you also have a lot of hot colors. In your more mild climates you do have more delicate colors. England would correspond, say, to the area from Eureka on north where you have the damp, cool climates.

Most cool growing plant flowers fade in hot sun. There's a lady in San Francisco that lives right out practically on the beach. They have dahlias. With dahlias you can take one variety, a main variety, and you can plant one of those at Elsie Mueller's house and then plant one here at my house. You pick flowers at their prime and bring them together, and you'd swear they were two different varieties. Just that intense fog all summer long makes all the difference, where we only get a little fog once in awhile.

The same way with fuchsias, and a lot of the annuals are this way. There will be much more intense color here in California on the immediate coast where there's heavy fog than just a few miles inland. But the zinnias are better inland.

Riess: So the sun just--

Roderick: --bleaches out all of the color on most common ground plants.

The other thing is how the acid soil works on, among other things, hydrangeas. Here we can only have pink. Up in Eureka they do everything they can to get pink ones--they can only have blue, the soil is so acid. And again, the climate is so mild.

Turkey

Riess: You've gone further afield than England. You were recently in Holland, and in Turkey. Is it always bulbs?

Roderick: I like bulbs. The one thing I wanted to see--and I was in Turkey at the right time--I've always wanted to see hyacinths in the wild. We finally got high enough on one mountain to find *Galanthus*--your snow drops--still in bloom. Just four flowers we saw, but that was enough to satisfy me.

I think I got four hyacinths. They were everywhere, but never in mass. They were scattered. Some places they'd be up to a foot apart. Other places there would be one here, and you'd go fifty feet before you'd find another one. They were

almost every place that we went, but more on the Anatolia Plateau and into the mountainous areas to the western part of Turkey. I can see where they got color variations in cultivation right away because there's quite a variation in color in the wild.

Riess: Are there Turkish horticulturists who are avid, or is this an underdeveloped interest?

Roderick: There are a few, but I've never met up with any of these. The only thing I can tell you is that with Crocus the Turks dig them like mad, not for beauty but to eat as food.

The first time I went to Turkey, which was with the Alpine Garden Society, we had Brian Matthews, an expert on Turkish bulbs who wrote the book on Turkish bulbs, with us. He found a Crocus--he wrote the book Genus Crocus, so he knew what he was talking about--he found a Crocus that did not belong in that area whatsoever. It was completely different from the regular Crocus. He could tell by the coating on the bulb. Instead of being like paper, it was like a fishnet.

He called everybody together to show them what he found. He was so excited. It had a seed pod on it, and you could see the seed on it. He was so excited about finding it. It was about two to three hundred miles out of place. He held it up to show this netting-like covering over the bulb, and there were a bunch of Turkish around there, and this one fellow reached over and grabbed the bulb and put it in his mouth and bit it in half. At the same time, of course, Brian was reaching over trying to save his bulb. At least he got the seed pod and the seed, and he now has about five or six seedlings up. In another three or four years he'll be able to find out if he was right or not.

Riess: What a ferocious story!

Roderick: You get into a lot of those crazy things when you go to foreign countries.

Riess: I always think of Crocus as little, low plants. In Turkey are they bigger?

Roderick: No.

This last trip, another reason we went when we did was to see Crocus in the wild. I have seen pictures of fields up in the mountains of Europe solid with the color of Crocus. We never saw that. They were scattered. There would be a little clump here, there would be a flower here, a flower there,

another little clump. When I mean little--not over ten flowers.

Riess: And all down around a three and four-inch height?

Roderick: Yes. Some of them were maybe up to three inches. The littlest one that we saw was the cutest little thing. A nickel would completely cover the flower. Little, pale yellow. It was about an inch-and-a-quarter, maybe an inch-and-a-half tall. It was a cute little thing. I wouldn't touch any of those. They were all up in the snow country. Now, in Greece--.

Riess: Why wouldn't you touch them?

Roderick: You couldn't give them the snow covering.

In Greece I found them clear right down to almost the sea. I did bring back a few of those, and I've had three or four collections bloom. I've got seed, of course, and I'm waiting for the seed. It will take another two or three years.

Coming Through Customs

Riess: Are the restrictions on mailing seed and plant material a problem for you?

Roderick: I let my import permit run out, and I haven't taken time to renew it. I generally bring my stuff home with me, but I didn't do that for Greece or for Turkey. I was in Greece too long, and some of these plants were still pretty green. I needed to get them to be potted up as quickly as possible, so I shipped them by mail.

I take my U.S. Customs label with me and put that on them. I wash everything carefully and make sure there's no soil, and check for any kind of pests. So far, everything has come through. Last year, coming back from Greece, I brought the seed with me because there's no problem getting seed in.

Riess: You don't have to declare it?

Roderick: I declared that I had plant material and seed.

Riess: They have a huge list of things that--?

Roderick: Well, I knew what to keep away from. I have that list of what you're not supposed to bring in. I declared this, and they

called the plant inspector, and in the first package of seed they opened, here was a beetle. I said, "Oh, my God!" Here I went through everything and thought I had everything so clean. The fellow said, "Well, we're going to have to keep it." I said, "No problem."

It seemed that I came back about the time that they were having vacation, too, and they were short in the agricultural department over at the international airport. So I gave two weeks, and then I called the fellow, and I said, "Well, I'll come over."

I came the next day. He still was so swamped that he wasn't able to get to them. So I sat there and helped him. I undid my packages, handed them over to him. He inspected, and I folded them back up and had the next one ready. This is the way it went.

I got to like the fellow very much, and I see how he works, and he sees how I work, so I'm not afraid if I have anything, especially seed. I'm just so happy if he'll take care of it. We've got enough pests here without getting anymore.

Riess: Do you know insects very well?

Roderick: No. Of course, anything that's diseased I won't even touch over there. There's so much nice, interesting stuff that generally speaking, if you find one thing and you can see it's diseased, if you look around, you're going to find others that are not.

I just hope that there are a couple of the seeds that I brought back that I will get germination on. It would be nice botanically, but some of them would be nice for home culture, too.

Seed Exchanging

Riess: Once you have seeds from them here, what do you do? Do you take them to the rock garden group, or do you just take them to special friends?

Roderick: No. The first thing I do is for the three botanic gardens: UC Davis, UC Berkeley, and UC Santa Cruz. Those persons have been so nice to me, why shouldn't I do something nice to them?

Riess: You keep up a working connection with all of them?

Roderick: I can go to UC Berkeley, and they say to me, "You know where the keys are. If you want to go in that hothouse, go get them and don't bother us." Up at Tilden: "Damn it all! You have that set of keys. I don't want anything to do with them. You keep them and come and go as you want." I think it's awful nice to have that. I just can't hardly believe that those people have been so nice.

Riess: What are you most actively working on as a plantsman these days? I know you're weeding a lot! [laughs]

Roderick: Of course seed collecting. I love seed. I put out a little seed list. I have Ron Lutsko on my list now for the one reason that he is young, and he wants to get a lot of rare and unusual things from different parts of the world. We have this little seed list that we sent around, and those botanic gardens send their list in exchange. We have Ron's address on it, so all those things go to him. That way he can get some of the seed of plants that's he trying to find.

Riess: He's a landscaper, isn't he?

Roderick: Landscape architect. Goes mostly for dry or drought-tolerant gardens. Nicely designed.

Riess: Are you saying that once a year you get out a mailing of what you have?

Roderick: We're trying to keep under a hundred people.

Riess: Do you sell or exchange?

Roderick: We exchange. Quite often we ask if they have a dollar. That covers postage. That's all we ask for. If they can do that, we're happy. We never say anything about the cost of going out and collecting. It would be absolutely unbelievable, the prices that we charge.

We had a couple here last year that made my house their home address for the four months they were here from England. They go to different parts of the world every year and collect and have this seed selling. They get up to five pounds sterling per packet, and they can tell you about how many seeds you're going to get per packet, too. I know there was one that was four and a half pounds for the one packet. That's getting close to eight dollars. I think they said they got fifteen seeds. But they have to figure out to make their living.

It is fun to have some seeds that you know that somebody in the world just would love to have and, oh, how thrilled they are!

Riess: Do you write descriptions of your seeds, or do you just list them by name?

Roderick: We put our list down by the scientific name. For those that are in a botanic garden, then we do give them field data and let people know. Some of those things we go back year after year for, the same thing, more or less just to fill space, nothing else. But a lot of people ask over in their parts of the world, "Where did this come from precisely?" They'll have a map so I can point it out to them.

Awards

Riess: You've gotten many awards. From the American Rock Garden Society, the Le Piniec Award. Why did you receive it?

Roderick: Le Piniec was the one that founded a famous nursery up in Medford called Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery. He started that, and then he was too old and turned it over to two persons, and then they have turned it over to two more persons. He was a Frenchman and quite a plantsman for the Siskiyou Mountains. He loved those plants up there.

The [Le Piniec] award is for persons that have continued trying to get more plants into cultivation from such things as this, or just distributing cuttings or writing about them and taking people out and showing them. It was all these kinds of things. That was Owen Pearce's fault that I got that.
[laughter]

Riess: Then, the Rixford Award from the California Horticultural Society?

Roderick: That's for all the little things [one] did behind the scenes, for persons that weren't on the board. That was before I was ever on the board, or council, as they call that. I did the seed. I was on the plant discussion. I'm still on the plant discussion, they can't get rid of me. They say I'm nosy about plants: "As long as you've got to get your nose into it, at least get up here and talk about it, if nothing else!" [laughs]

Riess: Do you go regularly still, and take plant material?

Roderick: Yes. I'm now starting to slow down. I'm having problems now. I'm getting too old. Car lights hurt my eyes. I'm not going as much as I used to. But up until, say, two years ago, in the fifty years I've gone to Cal Hort I've only missed maybe fifteen, twenty times. That's one of the ways you learn.

Native Plant Study Group: Publication Plans

Riess: Linda Haymaker told me about your native plant study group. How did that start?

Roderick: It started originally with California Horticultural Society and eventually went to the Native Plant Society. It was started by Lester Hawkins.

Riess: And that was about 1974?

Roderick: I think it was December '72. I could go look up in my records and tell you precisely. The first meeting or two I had commitments and I couldn't meet with them.

That was a whole group of persons. There were about twenty of us that would meet and talk about plants of horticultural value that were native to the state of California. We went from the book from A to Z.

Riess: What do you mean by "from the book?"

Roderick: I mean Munz. It was Roman Gankin that went through the book. At that time we only would look at perennials on up to trees and woody plants. He went and eliminated everything of the annuals. That saved a horrible amount of work alone.

We had these discussions. We started at A, and we'd take each genus, two or three. Sometimes there would be one genus that would have one species. That only took a few minutes, so we'd keep on going on the list, and we'd keep knocking them off.

Riess: What was the intention in doing this?

Roderick: Having a book eventually on the plants of horticultural value. Now we're down to just about ten of us that meet quite regularly. They meet at my house most of the time, here or Jenny Fleming's. We are finishing up on the monocots, and we're

ready to publish our first book. We've got to get money. We've had a heck of a time--.

##

Riess: When you started out you had a book in mind?

Roderick: Yes, just for all the plants in California. But we found out that we had so much information that we decided we had to break it down into parts. Unfortunately, I was gone in Turkey when they had their last meeting on what they're going to go on to from this one. I think it's going to be on some of our perennials, like the penstemons and a few of those things.

Anyhow, we're still working on illustrations. We've got an artist. We've got to get our line drawings done, and we're going to have about four pages of pictures from colored slides. We've got, we think, a darn good book. In fact, from what little bit I've said about it in England, the Alpine Garden Society wants two hundred copies right now for their book sales.

Riess: The monocots will be one volume?

Roderick: Then we're going to start on perennials. This is what we talked about in the past. Then, we're going to have woody plants.

When we get into woody plants, we think we're going to have to break it into two volumes: trees--that's probably one volume there. But we don't really know. It's according to how ambitious we get.

Riess: You take the plants one by one and describe them?

Roderick: Yes, and what we think about them. Some of them, it might say they're too rare and endangered and they shouldn't be tried. Some of the flowers are so zero that they're of no economic value, but only of botanical interest.

Riess: Of course you can only talk about them in California.

Roderick: Yes. But enough of our members know our climates or are from distances that we have enough information for, say, over in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley, or coastal areas. We are having a difficult time trying to bring in information for, say, the Los Angeles basin area. That makes it more difficult.

Riess: So, what about these people in England who buy it? What are they going to do with it?

Roderick: Just to find out for sure what we think of different ones and how good they are. Then probably they'll haunt me to try to get seed. [laughter]

Riess: I read some of the minutes of the group. [looking at paper] Here's a meeting held at the Academy of Sciences.

Roderick: We've met all over. For quite a while we met at such places as that, and at the library at Strybing, because of our large group.

Riess: "Cultivars of California Natives"--that is what you were then calling the group?

Roderick: Various names that way. But we kind of kept that word "cultivars" because so many, like Ceanothus and manzanitas, we have so many different plants. For instance, in the Arctostaphylos densiflora there are about four different varieties in that one species. So, these are cultivars.

Riess: The list of people who attended meetings: Elizabeth McClintock, Betsy Flack, Suzanne Schettler--.

Roderick: She's still with us.

Riess: Ernest Wertheim.

Roderick: He's dropped out a long time ago.

Riess: Tom Bass.

Roderick: He's dropped out.

Riess: Alan Bhrubaker.

Roderick: I haven't seen him in a long time.

Riess: Nancy Page.

Roderick: I don't remember that name.

Riess: Nancy Page from Arnold Arboretum

Roderick: Yes, we had a little correspondence with her.

Riess: Bill Day, Jim Hickey, Leo Gallegos.

Roderick: All long gone.

Riess: Mike Smith?

Roderick: Mike was forced to drop out because of his business.

Riess: Marshall Olbrich, and Lester Hawkins.

Roderick: Marshall doesn't drive at night anymore, and of course Lester is dead.

Riess: Dick Hildreth.

Roderick: Dick is in Utah now.

Riess: Judith Skinner.

Roderick: I don't remember that name.

Riess: Kathy Kipping and John Kipping.

Roderick: It's just too far for them to come.

There are a few others that are not on there that are still active.

Riess: That was a list from one meeting. At that meeting you looked at sixty slides from the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden cultivars.

Roderick: At that time there was also a Robert Smaus from Sunset Magazine from southern California that would bring either the specimens or slides up from Los Angeles. When he sent slides it was probably that he couldn't make the trip. That's when we were on Ceanothus and some of those big things that way.

Elizabeth McClintock comes up from time to time.

Riess: Roman Gankin is on this list. Also Jake Sigg.

Roderick: Yes. Jake has written the introduction to our thing, and it is the most magnificent thing you've ever read. Short and brief, but, boy, it tells everything!

And how exciting it was to have Lester Hawkins around. Lester could really get things going, but he'd get frustrated thinking of other things and forget what he was supposed to do. But he was a great person.

Riess: David Takahashi?

Roderick: David dropped out a long time ago. He was here just for, oh, a year or two at the most.

Riess: At this meeting a hundred copies of each of the meeting notes had been printed for distribution. Each person was asked to make additional notes on the plants discussed by the group.

Roderick: I did all the reproduction. I had an in with one of the copy outfits here. I could have it done for about half. There would be pages and pages of these things, you know. I could get them done cheaper than anybody else.

We used to send a lot of these to southern California. They'd keep them, and we never did get any information back from them. Nobody ever sent us anything back. Bob Smaus was the only person. He came up.

Riess: Beecher Crampton.

Roderick: Yes, on grasses.

Roz [Rosamond] Day was the one that took over. She's the one wrote up our grasses, sedges, and rushes for the book. She still comes. She's another one of our dolls. And we have Caroline Spiller from Marin County, too, that comes. Caroline writes gorgeous, and she gets carried away and gets way, way too much. She's so great that we can tell her, "No, we can't use that, but we can use this, we can use this." She's still just as happy when we cut down about 90 percent.

Riess: Are you going to get a professional editor?

Roderick: Oh, everything is all ready to go.

Riess: You are your own editors.

Roderick: So far we're our own, but we have all this final putting-together. Again, I know about it, but I can't tell you precisely who. A good help is Harlan Kessell, who used to be with UC Press. He's got it set up for who we're going to be working with for this book, and it's a fellow that only works with scientific work, or something of this nature. The fellow seems, from what they've been telling me, absolutely just thrilled to death to be able to put our book together. But we have to first get money.

Riess: Where would you go to for money?

Roderick: This is kind of out of my field, but we thought we'd try maybe the state highways--the fancy license plates, you know. Then, there's an English outfit, Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. They have about two or three other ones that they're going to try.

There's a good chance that Jenny Fleming's husband can help. He's just newly retired. But before he can do anything, he has to finish a book for Kaiser Hospitals. Then he can have time. He knows how to write the specs.

Riess: You refer to Jenny Fleming often. Tell me about her.

Roderick: Well, she and her husband built their own house here in Berkeley. They have an all-California native garden. Scott Fleming isn't so wild on plant material. He's more sedate, I guess you could say. He likes the garden, he's very fond of it. Jenny gets carried away, and her arms are flying saying, "Oh, this is the greatest thing," and meanwhile he'll say, "Yes, that's a nice plant, isn't it?"

"Doing the Flowers"

Roderick: I got into all kinds of crazy things. Way back when we had the nursery I did three nightclubs--well, one of them was more a restaurant than anything else. They always wanted lots of decorations. I don't remember how it got started, but anyhow, the owners lived not too far from where I was born and raised. I started decorating that, and I got into more and more of this. Then, when I still had the nursery, I went in and did holiday decorations and demonstrations for the public.

Riess: How did you learn that, from your mother?

Roderick: From my mother. She was a professional florist.

When I came down here the University found out about this somehow, so I had to do all the flowers that went from the UC Botanical Garden down to the main part of the campus, like for the Friday seminar in the botany department and, once in awhile, special bouquets for something else. Then up at Tilden--I don't remember how I got started there, but somehow at the Nature Center we started to work up holiday decorating workshops.

Riess: Using natives?

Roderick: Well, roadside weeds, garden prunings, and natives. I still have a lot of that. In fact, my parking lot is partly covered up now with stuff drying for the holiday decorating programs.

Riess: I saw that heap. I didn't drive over it, I was very careful. But what's under there?

Roderick: Most of it is dock. It was just the perfect stage where they will hold their color, but the seeds aren't ripe and they won't drop. They drop so readily if you don't get them at the right stage. So, I got those Monday.

I'll be starting to head up into the Sierra and collecting cones, and certain things out of my garden I can take and dry and keep. This afternoon I'll go down to Ardenwood and see what kind of limbs have dropped off the trees down there and pick those up. They have interesting pods and things on them. Then I'll go up to UC and prune some of their trash--I go into their trash pile quite often. I'll go to Ruth Bancroft's and get into her trash pile. I do all these kinds of things! [laughs]

Riess: When you do the classes, you come with all of the materials yourself?

Roderick: Yes. We try to do our own collecting of everything. We go around for greens, and we prune in the parks. We've got everybody pretty well trained that certain plants, we'll take and prune them out over the road where the trucks are starting to hit them. We'll do the pruning for them so they'll have that. This way we keep the people from going out and doing destruction outside.

But my poor basement! You can't hardly get through it. I've got piles of stuff, and this year I haven't had the time to get it all stacked up nice and neat. It's just stacked, and the floor hasn't been swept. I've got to clean, but I haven't swept it yet.

Compost

Riess: Well, that brings us to the whole exciting question of compost! When is your pile a "collection of plant materials," and when is it "compost?"

Roderick: My compost piles are not so very good because I've got all these redwood trees. The only place where I can make compost more or less hidden, I guess you can say, is under the redwoods. Instantly the roots are all up through it. It just practically ruins it.

Riess: Because they are such shallow-rooted trees anyway?

Roderick: Yes. And they love getting up into needles and mulch. They love mulches. It's almost impossible to break it up enough to get the good stuff out. So what I do is go down to Wintergreen Nursery with all of my buckets and get into his dump pile and get his good stuff, which is just like perfect compost.

Riess: Who is Wintergreen Nursery?

Roderick: That's Mike--or Nevin--Smith. (There are too many Mike Smiths, so he had to use his middle name, Nevin.) He's in Watsonville. He takes lots and lots of my excess plants. Then I can help myself more or less to anything I want down at his place. That way we get together once in awhile.

Riess: Do you call yourself an organic gardener, if anyone were to bring that question up?

Roderick: I try to be as near as possible, but if I get bad pests in, I'm going to use some kind of materials to control them. Your organic gardening is great, but when you do get a bad infestation of a pest you've got to do something to keep it from going from your place to the neighbor's. I believe you've got to use common sense, with a lot of caution.

Riess: Do you do things like bringing in ladybugs, or are you talking about chemicals?

Roderick: Yes, you've got to use a little bit of chemicals. But if you use lots of humus to keep your plants well-growing you're not going to get too many diseases.

On top of that, if you've got lots of humus in your soil--my soil is at least a quarter humus, more like half--then you can use chemical fertilizers, because the plants can't absorb any fertilizer unless it's broken down to the simplest components, which is what the humus does to fertilizer anyhow. So, if you've got plenty of humus, you don't have to use cow manure and horse manure, you can use chemical.

But I don't hardly use chemicals except, like, on my cymbidium orchids. I use these little pellets that slow-release called Osmaccoat. It's expensive, but it lasts. I'm using a three-month release one. Boy, it saves from having to go around every week or two and give a soaking with chemicals in it. If you've got lots of animal fertilizers to use, great. I've got plenty of humus that I'm getting from Wintergreen Nursery, and I don't even really hardly fertilize at all because I've got so much food value from that humus.

On top of that, I still have piled out here some old horse manure that I haven't gotten around yet. I've moved three-quarters of it, and I've still got about a quarter left of that pile. Which reminds me, my mother, when she was still gardening, for her birthday got her load of cow manure every year. That was what she wanted.

Riess: Your mother sounds quite wonderful.

Roderick: She was a character of the first quality.

Riess: Why?

Roderick: She was determined that she was going to have a darned good garden, come hell and high water. And for her neighbors she'd quite often take her wheelbarrow, and some of her compost pile, with a plant and a bunch of fertilizer and a shovel, and take them up and plant them. "Darn it all, you're taking care of it. This is what you need, and you're going to have it!"

Riess: Well, she sounds inspirational, and this sounds like a good point to stop. Thank you very much.

Transcriber: Caroline Nagel
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- B. "The 1989 SPCNI Spring Expedition," Spring 1989 issue of the Society of Pacific Coast Native Iris Almanac, pp. 7-10. 154
- C. "Wildflower Haunts of California," by Wayne Roderick, Bulletin of the American Rock Garden Society, Vol. 48 (1) Winter 1990, pp. 3-13. 158

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Native Plant Society, Volume 3, April 1975.

PROPAGATION OF NATIVE PLANTS WITH BULBS, TUBERS, CORMS, RHIZOMES, AND ROOTSTOCKS

by Wayne Roderick and W. Richard Hildreth

Although we enjoy them today for their colorful blooms, many of our native plants with fleshy underground stems were once an important source of food. Several Indian tribes in California made use of the bulbs, tubers, rhizomes, and corms of the monocotyledon families Liliaceae, Amaryllidaceae, and Iridaceae as part of their food supply. Today, however, if large numbers of people tried to live

off the land as the Indians did, the survival of many plant species would be seriously threatened.

In order for interested gardeners in California to enjoy in their gardens the beauty of these often difficult to grow plants, we offer suggestions in the present article for propagation and culture which may improve their chances for success. It should be emphasized that we are not advocating the heedless harvesting of bulbs (or other underground structures) in the wild to satisfy one's "green thumb" impulse. Many of these species are extremely rare, while some are endemic to a highly specific set of environmental conditions, and our goal should be to protect and preserve them rather than wantonly to destroy them. Opportunities often arise to rescue plants in sites of reservoirs, roads, and other developments. However, conservation can also take place by increasing the number and distribution of individuals through knowledge of the techniques of propagation, combined with an understanding of the plant in its natural habitat.

Rare and endangered species should be left alone—except when actual removal of a doomed population is approved by qualified experts—and even seed from such species should not be taken. In the case of non-threatened species, where collecting is permitted, only a small part of any population or its seed should be taken. Status of species can be checked in *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California*, recently published by the California Native Plant Society—an invaluable source of information.

Most of the species to be discussed in this article may be propagated from seed, but seed is not always available, viable, or easy to germinate. Furthermore, the time to flowering is usually much greater from seedlings as compared to vegetatively produced plants. Seed propagation is considered in detail later in this article.

The vegetative structures referred to are various modifications of an underground stem, and may be defined as follows:

Bulb — An underground leaf-bud surrounded by thickened or fleshy scales (which are food storage organs), and often covered by an outer coat of dry scales. Example: *Lilium pardalinum*.

Corm — A short, fat, bulb-like underground portion of a stem. The solid center portion of the

Zygadene (Zigadenus fremontii)
Drawings by Margaret Warriner Buck

Bulb
Lilium pardalinum
Drawings by John Kipping

Corm
Brodiaea pulchella

Rhizome
Iris douglasiana

corm is composed of stored food. Example: *Brodiaea pulchella*.

Rhizome — An underground stem or rootstock with scales at the nodes, producing leafy shoots on the upper side of the stem, and roots on the lower side. Example: *Iris douglasiana*.

Tuber — A thick, solid, short underground stem with many buds. Example: *Smilax californica*.

Rootstock — Prostrate or underground root-like stem, with herbaceous shoots appearing seasonally and bearing roots on the underside. Example: *Veratrum* spp.

Nursery Sources

Sometimes, by searching catalogs and visiting nurseries, a commercial source may be found for certain native bulbous plants. Be cautious about buying California native bulbs from European sources, particularly *Erythronium*, as they may suffer from the long transit and being out of the soil so long. A high percentage may even be rotted by the time they get to the sales counter. Bulbs or growing plants in containers from local nurseries are likely to be more successful—if you can find them. Native lilies, for instance, are rarely carried, because most gardeners prefer the more showy hybrids from the Oregon bulb growers; furthermore, most native lilies are difficult to grow. On occasion, *Lilium humboldtii* may be offered for sale. Unfortunately, it is usually packaged in a sealed plastic bag and, since this is a dry bulb, it deteriorates in just a few days. Reject any bulbs with soft or wet spots. If your favorite is not available from a nursery or catalog, you may wish to consider collecting it in the wild.

Collecting

Remember that permits are required to collect any plants from federal or state land and, even with permits, there are restrictions controlling the removal of plants or plant parts from certain areas, while some plants are entirely "off limits." On private property, it is advisable to have written permission from the owner before attempting to collect.

Trillium, *Scoliopus*, *Allium*, *Iris*, and *Brodiaea* species are relatively easy to transplant from the wild at any time, even when they are in bloom. *Calochortus*, *Erythronium*, and *Fritillaria* are best collected when the bulbs begin to go dormant, about the time that the seed matures.

Stout tools are suggested for digging, such as a small pick, a Combosco trowel (a long, narrow and

very sturdy implement), or even a screwdriver. The greatest difficulty in collecting these plants is in extracting the bulbs from the soil. Collecting suggestions for several genera and species follow:

Trillium — Rootstocks may be dug when the plant is in bud, in flower, or in seed with little difference in results as long as most of the root is collected. Rootstocks may be four to eight inches or more deep, and it is important to dig below this to recover as much of the rootstock as possible. Trilliums generally bloom in March, and they transplant readily at this time. Of the three species of *Trillium* in California, *T. chloropetalum* is most common in the wild, *T. ovatum* less so, and *T. rivale* is so rare that few people ever see it in the wild, especially in bloom. Perhaps fortunately, this latter species is next to impossible to pry out of the ground; it grows along wet stream banks, where the bulbs grow wedged between rocks and roots of nearby trees and shrubs.

Brodiaea — Most brodiaeas grow in heavy, gritty clay with much rock, and a pick would be useful for digging. Collecting can be done any time the plants are seen in April until the seed capsules disappear in July. The best time to collect is probably after the foliage has died down and the seed has matured, since the bulbs are going dormant at this time. If bulbs are dug earlier when foliage and flowers are present, be careful not to remove the foliage when transplanting; otherwise the bulbs may not bloom the following year. *Brodiaea appendiculata* is a wet-growing species and prefers to be kept damp in the summertime.

Calochortus — Dig bulbs in May and June, when the last flowers are fading, the seeds are maturing, and the stem has lost most of its green color. At this time the bulbs are mature and ready for collecting. Watch carefully when digging through rocky soil for calochortus; often bulbs will remain dormant for several years without producing foliage or flowers. When digging for a bulb, search through the disturbed soil for any additional dormant bulbs which may be present. Calochortus are notorious for lying dormant in the ground for several years without sending up even a single leaf. When digging for bulbs, closely examine the soil removed from a hole for evidence of any dormant bulbs. New plants for the garden can easily be started from these bulbs. In some areas of the Mother Lode, the senior author has dug a single bulb in bloom, only to discover seven or eight additional dormant bulbs in the same hole.

Calochortus uniflorus is found where it gets very wet during the wintertime, stays wet during the spring, and generally dries out in the late summertime. Little difference has been noted in gardens

where this species was never watered and where summer irrigation was practiced. Perhaps more bulblets were formed on the bulbs which were not watered in the summer. *C. nudus* grows in wet meadows near little streamlets or springs in the far northern part of the state. The bulbs grow in continually moist soils. Both species grow well in gardens in Europe, where summer rains are received.

Allium — Onion bulbs can be dug almost any time they are found. The best time for collecting would probably be at flowering time, since color variations are common, and if a specific color form is wanted it could easily be seen at this season. Vegetative propagation of the bulbs would ensure the perpetuation of the desired colors.

Erythronium — Adder's-tongues, or fawn-lilies as they are also known, are probably the most difficult to dig from the soil. The bulbs are exceedingly brittle and shatter at the slightest touch, the remains then being of little use for propagation. The best time for collecting bulbs is after the fruit matures. In digging the bulbs, start at the outer edge of a large colony of plants, working toward the center. Excavate at least six to eight inches down, digging carefully underneath the bulbs as well as around it, gradually working closer and closer until the full length of the bulb is exposed and somewhat loosened. Place four fingers beneath the bulb and lift upwards gently, hoping for the best. Any shattered bulbs may be left in place for possible regeneration. (Or take this opportunity to taste a piece to sample this article of the Indian's diet.)

Fritillaria — With the exception of *F. agrestis*, *biflora*, *liliacea*, *pluriflora*, and *striata*, most California fritillaries occur in soil from which the bulbs can be easily dug. The exceptions listed grow in exceedingly heavy clay, and a good heavy pick is a handy tool for extracting them. The clay-growing types shatter very easily and one must work around the bulbs with a delicate instrument like a narrow trowel or a heavy-duty screwdriver. Gently pry away chunks of clay from around the bulb, being careful not to crush it.

Bulbs are best collected during the month of May when the seed is mature. At this time the foliage and stems are drying up, the bulb is fully mature and ready to go dormant. Quite often when the stem is bent or touched even slightly, the whole top of the plant separates from the bulb. No harm is done; however, if the bulbs are dug while in flower, it may take two or three years to recover strength enough to bloom again.

Fritillaria purdyi is almost impossible to collect as bulbs in the wild, because the bulbs are wedged in between layers of rock and are easily damaged if

the rock is moved. It would be much wiser to collect a bit of seed, rather than risk damaging the bulbs. Garden requirements for this species are very difficult to duplicate and the plants tend to be rather short-lived in cultivation. Fairly good results have been obtained by planting bulbs or seedlings in a combination of a basic soil mix (equal parts of sand, redwood sawdust, and leaf mold) supplemented with an equal portion of road rock—crushed pieces about one-inch in diameter.

In the same general areas where *F. purdyi* is native one will find *F. glauca* growing also. Even when native soil has been brought into the garden, results with this species have been very poor. Out of many separate collections, only five or six bulbs remain, generally with only one flower a year. South of Livermore, growing in a very loose scree soil, one

may find *F. falcata*. The bulbs may be dug very easily, but their survival in the garden, even with native soil, has been disappointing. Seed propagation of this and the previous two species may be a better means of obtaining plants.

Seed Propagation—Collecting

During the season when mature seeds may be collected in the wild or from a garden, it may be difficult to recognize the desired plant. Rather than the lush foliage and beautiful flowers so familiar in the spring, only shriveled-up leaves and dry stalks may be visible in the arid summer. However, plants may be labeled or even mapped during full bloom, so that seed can be easily collected on a later visit when the same location looks so changed. The fruit containing the seeds should be harvested before the capsules dehisce; otherwise the seeds will be scattered by the winds or devoured by birds or mammals. Often the capsules may be inhabited by hungry larvae of various insects. It is possible with some species to pick a stalk containing immature fruit, place it in water in a container in a sunlit spot, as on a windowsill, and within a few days to obtain fresh ripe seed.

Storage and Germination

Although seeds of certain native bulbous plants may remain viable for a number of years, one's chances for successful germination would likely increase by using freshly harvested seed. If it is necessary to hold seed for any length of time, it would be well to clean and dry the seed first, seal it in a container, which can then be stored for a year or longer in a refrigerator. Seeds of some species may require cold-moist stratification for periods up to three months before germination will occur (e.g., *Lilium humboldtii*). Most other species will germinate readily within a few days or weeks after planting in the fall.

Soil Mix for Seeds

A soil mix consisting of equal parts of coarse sand, coarse redwood sawdust, and leaf mold has been successful for germinating seeds of most species discussed in this article. This combination will provide a friable medium that crumbles readily in one's hand, while providing ample humus which will supply sufficient nutrients to the seedlings following germination.

Soap Plant (*Chlorogalum pomeridianum*)

Very sharp drainage from the soil mix is of paramount importance, and the soil mix described has this characteristic, although other materials and combinations may be equally suitable. Even sharper drainage may be obtained by putting a layer of coarse sand or similar material in the bottom of a seed flat or pot prior to adding the soil mix. The seed may then be broadcast over the surface of the soil and lightly covered with the same mix. A general rule to follow regarding depth of sowing would be to cover the seed no more than twice the diameter of the seed. Unless the seed is very coarse, a covering of ¼-inch of soil mix would be more than sufficient. A final shallow layer of very coarse sand may be added, which prevents the seed from being washed out of the soil mix by breaking up the falling raindrops and allowing water just to trickle through the medium.

Stratification

With the pots or flats placed outside, exposed to the elements, natural cold-moist stratification will occur during the rainy winter months. Protection from gophers, mice, birds, and other predators should be provided. An alternative method would be to accomplish cold-moist stratification in a refrigerator. Place the seeds in a mix of equal parts of sand and shredded peat moss, moistened but not dripping wet. Place in plastic bags or in small covered jars, in the vegetable crisper or other section of the refrigerator where the temperature is between 35° and 42° F. The see-through plastic bags or glass jars permit inspection periodically. If germination occurs remove and plant at once. Most seeds respond to stratification of thirty to sixty days. Some require ninety to one hundred and twenty days. After the prescribed time, the seed can be sown as previously described. (There are several modifications of this technique, using layers of paper towels or muslin, etc. and even placing some kinds of seeds in the freezing compartment.) Unfortunately specific information on the germination of various species is incomplete and scattered.

Post Germination Culture

Following germination, the cultural conditions necessary for continued growth of the seedlings may vary according to the species and the nature of its original habitat. Some seedlings must be maintained continually moist; others should go through a seasonal dry period, thus duplicating the arid summer months in the wild. However, it seems that

Checker-Lily (*Fritillaria lanceolata*)

most species of *Erythronium* prefer to be kept damp in cultivation, although quite the opposite condition prevails in the wild. Seedlings should be watered regularly to keep them moist in the summer, with probably one watering a week after the first of August. *E. tuolumnense* seedlings will perish in cultivation if allowed to dry out completely, although its home in the Sierra Nevada foothills of Tuolumne and Stanislaus Counties is absolutely bone-dry all summer long.

Seedlings of *Allium*, *Brodiaea*, *Calochortus*, and *Fritillaria* should be kept moist until about the first of July, or until the edges of the tiny leaves start turning yellow. Watering should then be halted and the pots turned on their sides to make sure the seedlings receive a complete summer's rest. Bulb

size may be more than doubled in one growth cycle by keeping them moist until this late in the season.

With the exception of the slow-growing *Lilium humboldtii*, which should be kept only slightly moist, lilies must be kept damp at all times. Quite often some of the wet-growing lilies will not show seedling leaves above ground for some time; nonetheless, bulbs are forming under the soil mix. Even if germination is not observed, it may be better to assume it has occurred and maintain a high moisture level without disturbing the soil. Growth of lilies is quite often upset by disturbing them the first year

after germination. It may be desirable to delay transplanting seedlings until after three years of growth; however, to avoid overcrowding at this stage, the seed should initially be sown rather widely spaced.

Transplanting

It is generally preferable to allow seedlings of all the species mentioned, especially those of *Calochortus* and *Fritillaria*, to remain in the pot for two years after germination. When the young leaves

Trillium (*Trillium ovatum*)

have died down the second year, the bulblets can be transferred to a larger container at a wider spacing to encourage more rapid growth. *Calochortus* and *Fritillaria* often die if the seedlings are disturbed much the first year.

During the first two years in cultivation, growth of several species of *Fritillaria* (*F. agrestis*, *biflora*, *liliacea*, *pluriflora*, and *striata*) is superior in a light, loose soil mix, compared to their growth in the stiff, heavy clay native soils. Later on, however, these bulbs can be transplanted to clay soils. Similarly species of *Brodiaea* and *Calochortus*, which usually grow in clay soils in the wild, perform far better in our gardens in a light, porous soil mix, with little or no clay. One exception to this generalization seems to be *Fritillaria recurva*; seedlings of this species persist only a few years in cultivation regardless of the soil mixtures or cultural techniques applied. Perhaps planting seedlings in soils obtained from areas where the species grows naturally will lead to success.

Dry seeds of slink pod (*Scoliopus bigelovii*) germinate readily in the fall, but little is known about transplanting this species in cultivation. This coastal inhabitant has a slender rootstock which taps underground moisture from damp shady spots.

Time to Blooming

The time before a seedling will reach flowering age may be considerable and one should be prepared to be patient. This time span may vary from one species to another; for instance, trilliums may take ten years to bloom from seed, whereas brodiaeas may bloom in three years, and alliums in two or three years. *Calochortus*, *Erythronium*, and *Fritillaria* generally flower in the fourth season from seed, as do most lilies; however, *Lilium pitkinense* often blooms within eighteen to thirty months after germination. In any case, in spite of the long delay, when flowering does commence, the display certainly justifies the wait.

Garden Culture

The most important factor to remember in growing most of our native bulbous plants in the garden is the requirement for summer drought in order to produce the best flowering. These plants have evolved under natural conditions that have led to the development of specialized underground root structures which are adapted to the summer baking they receive in the wild. These conditions can be more or less duplicated in our gardens by planting

on a hot, south-facing slope. Most species of *Allium*, *Brodiaea*, and *Calochortus* would succeed well planted here, as well as those fritillaries which grow in clay soils. *Fritillaria lanceolata*, however, would do better under cooler conditions.

With the possible exception of *Calochortus*, most of the species considered will adapt to almost any garden soils without additional preparation. *Calochortus* are generally much superior if they are grown in large containers in a very light loose soil mixture. Following flowering, the plants may become untidy as the bulbs go dormant. Simply move the containers out of sight, and withhold water during the summer.

Bulbs of *Brodiaea*, *Calochortus*, and *Allium* can be stored out of the ground for several months prior to planting without harm. An easy storage method would be to bury clean, healthy bulbs in dry sand in a flat or box, which could then be placed in the sun without irrigation. Thus exposed, the bulbs will become summer-cured. A screen placed over the flat will offer protection from hungry birds and mammals. *Calochortus* and some species of *Allium* seem to be able to stay dormant until one gets around to planting them, but most of these bulbs should be planted in the garden as soon as possible in October, not later than the first part of November. Brodiaeas will start to grow promptly as fall approaches, and these bulbs must be planted by October or November or they will shrivel up and die.

In the garden a top dressing of good leaf mold with hoof and horn meal or bone meal may be added about the first of October. This may be supplemented with liquid fertilizer, particularly on potted bulbs, once the leaves appear above the pot. Monthly applications of a weak solution would be sufficient to obtain lush, even growth. If directions for a liquid type of fertilizer call for *two* tablespoons per gallon of water for example, it would be desirable to reduce the concentration to *one* tablespoon per gallon of water. It may be possible to use the newer slow-release type of dry fertilizers in place of monthly applications of a liquid fertilizer.

If the annual rains do not commence by mid October in California, pots or beds of bulbs should be thoroughly soaked and kept moist until the onset of the rainy season. Additional irrigation may be necessary if prolonged dry periods occur during the winter. The blooms of *Trillium*, *Scoliopus*, *Disporum*, *Smilacina*, and *Clintonia* are much improved if the plants receive ample supplemental watering during the summertime.

Insect pests, other than aphids, are not generally a problem on these plants in the garden. When encountered, they can simply be washed off with water or controlled with a light dusting or spray of

Iris macrosiphon

an appropriate insecticide. Often in gardens a fungus will damage the foliage of *Fritillaria*, *Allium*, and *Lilium*, while species of *Brodiaea* and *Calochortus* are rarely attacked. Control can be accomplished by treatment of the foliage with a suitable fungicide, with additional fungicide applied to the soil and soaked down into the container or bed. Most of the troublesome fungi are soil-borne, and it is easier to control them at their source.

This precaution cannot be stated strongly enough: *The manufacturer's directions for the safe use of any pesticide should be strictly followed.*

Uncommon Garden Genera

Several species and genera which also have quite showy flowers have not yet been considered in this discussion. Although they are not commonly planted in the garden, the results obtained may be quite worth the extra effort required.

Clintonia species, for some unknown reason, are very difficult to transplant into areas where they are not normally found. Similarly, the sand lily, *Leucocrinum montanum*, is not happy when brought down into low, damp areas, usually fading out after two or three years in the garden. *Xerophyllum tenax* (bear grass) will transplant if the deep, long, fine roots are retained undamaged in digging the clumps of this grass-like plant. At lower elevations, where winters are less severe, the clumps of bear grass must be burned in order to initiate flowering. If burning is accomplished carefully in the fall, flowers will usually appear the following year. The plants should be allowed a rest period for a year or more before the process is repeated.

A challenge to gardeners is presented by the magnificent desert lily, *Hesperocallis undulata*. The only recorded instance of this beautiful desert plant blooming in cultivation was in the 1880s. Duplication of its native habitat under garden conditions is difficult; flowering fails to occur under mild weather conditions where there is too much moisture in the winter.

Veratrum species are very difficult to transplant, and some of them are quite spectacular in flower. The corn-lily, *V. californicum*, of the Sierra Nevada has been transplanted successfully. The showy north coast species, *V. fimbriatum*, is less amenable to moving, and perhaps should be enjoyed only in its native habitats. In one trial, only six out of 200 seedlings survived transplanting.

Although they have quite showy flowers, it might be best to forego species of *Zigadenus* if small children are in the garden. Some species may be poisonous if the leaves or other parts are ingested. Cattle and sheep-poisoning cases have been documented.

The bulbs of some species of soap plant, *Chlorogalum*, have found use as a soap, food, and fish narcotic by early Indians. The flowers are generally small, nocturnal and, with two exceptions, not exceptionally showy. Two quite rare but showy species should only be admired and enjoyed in their native habitats. *C. parviflorum* occurs in Riverside and San Diego Counties, while *C. purpureum* grows in Jolon Valley, Monterey County. Both are very difficult to establish in gardens.

Camassias are comparatively easy to grow, and they can occasionally be found for sale in nurseries.

Fawn-Lily
(*Erythronium californicum*)

in the fall. *Camassia* species grow naturally under wet conditions, and they make good garden plants, provided they are put near a lawn or where summer watering is adequate. Their flowers are quite distinct and showy. The main consideration is that they must grow where there is a lot of moisture. *Camassia* bulbs should not be allowed to dry out, and should be planted soon after purchasing or obtaining them.

Maianthemum dilatatum (false lily-of-the-valley) makes a delightful foliage plant for the shady garden. It is a fine, delicate groundcover which must be kept watered at all times or it will perish. The flowers

are anything but showy. It is found from about San Francisco north, becoming a very common plant further north in the damp areas of the redwood forests.

Still less common garden subjects for various reasons are the following genera: *Nartheceum* (bog-asphodel), *Tofieldia*, *Smilax*, *Streptopus* (twisted stalk), *Stenanthium*, *Odontostomum*, and *Schoenolirion*. *Schoenolirion* species are easy to transplant, but not very showy. *Odontostomum* is so rare and grows in clay soil, which is extremely difficult to penetrate when dry, perhaps it should

be enjoyed only in the wild. Similarly, *Stenanthium*, although a delightful little plant, is very rare, and duplicating its natural environment in a garden would be difficult.

Streptopus in California is rather rare and somewhat similar to *Disporum* (fairy bells), although the latter is very plentiful and has showy flowers. *Smilax* would be quite at home in most gardens, except that objections might be raised to the spines occurring along the stems, the long deciduous period, and the size of the plant, often twining twenty to twenty-five feet into nearby trees. It transplants with difficulty, and deer readily browse it right down to ground level. *Nartheceium* and *Tofieldia* may persist for only a short time in the garden, even when transplanted

into black muck-like soil transported from their native high-elevation habitats.

For most of these bulbous native plants, with the exceptions noted, we encourage your garden experimentation and enjoyment. Particularly do we encourage conservation attempts through propagation by seed and transplanting of those native plants, especially rare ones, which may be threatened by imminent road building, construction, or development. It can be hoped that some plants may thus be preserved from the path of onrushing bulldozers for future generations of Californians to study and appreciate, even if just in our gardens.

MISS BUCK'S DRAWINGS

by Gladys L. Smith

Slink-Pod (*Scoliopus bigelovii*)

The illustrations accompanying the article, "Propagation of Bulbous Native Plants," in this issue are the work of Margaret Warriner Buck. They are a small selection from a total of 150 illustrations prepared by Miss Buck for one of the most popular books ever written about California native plants, *The Wild Flowers of California*, by Mary Elizabeth Parsons, first published in 1897.

Little is known about Miss Buck's life today. Her family home was apparently in San Rafael. She and Elizabeth Parsons shared an interest in drawing and painting and for a time were members together in an art class given in San Rafael by a Mr. Latimer. As the wildflower book took shape in the 1890s, it was only natural for the author to turn to her talented companion of the Latimer class for assistance with the illustrations.

Elizabeth Parsons offered altogether six printings of her book from the first edition in 1897 to the last in 1930. Then a few years after Miss Parsons' death, a seventh edition was brought out in 1955 by the California Academy of Sciences. This was made possible largely through the cooperation and permission of Mrs. Thomas T. Kent of Marin County who is today the legal owner of all materials left by Miss Parsons, who was a cousin of Thomas T. Kent. This material includes the original pen and ink plates prepared by Margaret Buck.

The plates were originally designed for coloring. It will never be known how many owners of *The Wild Flowers of California*, as they identified their plants, filled in with crayon or watercolors the beautiful and accurate black and white illustrations drawn so long ago by Margaret Warriner Buck. If she is remembered for nothing more than these drawings, it is enough.

This partial text of the Spring 1989 issue of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris Almanac describes Wayne Roderick as teacher, and guide to the great out of doors.

THE 1989 SPCNI SPRING EXPEDITION

Forty three intrepid and dedicated irisarians braved the ominous threat of stormy weather and the uncertainties of a harrowing bus ride over tortuous logging roads of the southwest Oregon mountains, just for the pleasure of seeing their favorite iris species growing and blooming in the wild. Actually, the weather was ideal, the bus was comfortably equipped with modern conveniences, its driver congenial and cooperative, and everyone had a memorable experience.

So it is that the first (annual?) SPCNI-sponsored trip to view native iris has become history. Historically, this was by no means the first PCN trek, people having explored hillsides and gardens singly and in groups looking for native iris ever since the times of the earliest botanical collectors. Modern day treks date back to the late 1950s, some 15 years before the establishment of SPCNI, when a dozen or so irisarians from Washington and Oregon got together each year for 4 different years to explore Oregon and Northern California iris stands. In April, 1977, 4 years after the SPCNI was founded, members from Southern California organized a trek to visit the gardens of George Stambach and the McCaskills in Pasadena. Last year a group of SPCNI members and others from the Santa Rosa area organized a visit to iris stands around their area and westward to the coast. They reported having such a good time that others, perhaps out of sheer jealousy, wanted to do it, too. It was from this beginning that our SPCNI-sponsored tour became first a goal and eventually, largely through the efforts of Adele

Lawyer and the help and advice of friends both in and out of SPCNI, a reality.

As planned, the group gathered at a motel in Roseburg, Oregon on the evening of Friday, May 12, arriving by air and surface travel as suited their circumstances. After dinner, everyone met in the motel conference room for introductions, a briefing, and a slide presentation showing pictures of the species and means of identification. Introductions revealed participants from Oregon, northern and southern California, and, notably, Dora Sparrow, who had come all the way from New Zealand just for this trip.

The bus left the motel promptly at 8:30 am Saturday and made the first stop a half hour later on a little lane off Highway 42, which leads from near Roseburg to the coast. There we had our first view of *I. chrysophylla* and *I. tenax*, growing among ferns and evergreens. Here, also, Wayne Roderick started what was to become a major feature of the trip; for while everyone else was looking at iris, Wayne was gathering samples of the surrounding plants to identify for us as we proceeded in the bus toward our next stop. Wayne is well suited for this role, having managed both the University of California and the Regional Parks Botanic Gardens, and collected extensively not only in the region through which we were traveling, but also world-wide for both gardens. He is an authority on Indian uses of the native plants and was able to share some of his knowledge with us.

Our next stops were along a logging road a mile south of China Flat between Powers and Agness. Here we saw *I. innominata* in all shades of bright orange to yellow and in many configurations of petal shapes and markings. It was easy to see why *I. innominata* has been such an important genetic source by hybridizers of our modern cultivated clones. Here, too, we experienced our first confrontation with what was to become the most difficult part of the trip: tearing people away from the flowers and getting them back on the bus.

At the summit of the Powers-Agness road where we stopped for lunch, we found more *I. innominata*, but this time in pale yellow to cream colors.

Pale yellow form of *I. innominata* seen near our lunch stop

Three more stops were made on our way down to the coast. As we came closer to the coast *I. innominata* merged into *I. douglasiana* colonies, and on the final stop in a large area which was being reforested, we found clumps of pure *I. douglasiana*.

Saturday night was spent in a motel at Brookings, Oregon, where Gigi Hall made attractive and colorful name tags for everyone.

In the morning, we made a short stop at Azalea State Park to see fragrant

native azaleas, some of which were said to be over 300 years old. That and a second brief stop at a Redwood State Park along Highway 197 in California, were the only non-iris stops of the trip.

The first iris stop of the day was to have been on a road off Highway 199 at Gasquet, California; but before we got there someone on the bus yelled, "Irises!" The bus driver found a wide spot on the highway and everyone poured off the bus to brave the very real danger of 60-mile-an-hour traffic on a major state highway with only 4 or 5 feet of flat space between the pavement and the bank on which the iris were growing.

The highway department left little room along state route 199 for Wayne Roderick to tell us about the plant he is holding

Fortunately no one was killed, and when we did arrive at Gasquet, we turned left off Highway 199 on a road which circled in back of town. About a mile from the highway the bus driver found a good place to stop. Here we found irises similar in color and configuration to those seen earlier along the highway, that is a pale cream-yellow background marked and washed with purple. These correspond to the interspecific crosses between *I. innominata* and *I. douglasiana* known to occur in the area and formerly called *I. thompsonii*.

Swallowtail butterfly contemplating
the pollination of *I. thompsonii*
during our stop at Gasquet

From there we cruised back into Oregon, turning left on a logging road out of the little town of O'Brien. This road, the second scheduled stop of the day had been recommended by Jon Splane, a SPCNI member from Eugene, Oregon; however, Wayne Roderick also knew of the road, having previously collected there. This was fortunate because

Wayne knew of a wide place on the gravel road about 5 or 6 miles from the highway where the 50-foot bus would be able to turn around. This "wide place" also proved to be a delightful spot where the logging road crossed over Whiskey Creek, and we quickly chose it as the ideal place for lunch.

Wayne conducting a "Botany 1A Class"
in the wide place on the road near Whiskey
Creek. Whiskey Creek bridge is in the background.

Here we found our first *Darlingtonia californica*, (pitcher plant or cobra lily), in a little bog area a few feet from where the bus had stopped. There must have been a hundred or more of these odd cobra-shaped, insect eating plants and everyone went wild snapping cameras and crowding to get a better look. Of course, we later found them by the thousands in swampy seepage slopes, not more than a hundred yards or so down the road, but that first sight was a real thrill.

Mass of *Darlingtonia californica*

Cream-yellow flowers of *Iris bracteata* rising above a clump of brilliant pink phlox

We took our lunches where our fancy dictated: to the edge of the rushing stream or into the woods, and everyone felt the magic of the surroundings. Some nice plants of *Dicentra oregonum* were much photographed and Wayne identified surrounding plants and trees at a roadside gathering.

From there we traveled back down the road for a couple of miles, either on

Lacy, white *Iris chrysophylla* on Cow Creek Loop

Wildflower Haunts of California

by *Wayne Roderick*

In California there is so much diversity in climate and topography that it takes nearly a lifetime to see all our interesting plants. For those who have a few weeks to explore there are many places to visit. If you are here in July, it is too late in the year to visit the deserts, to see fields of the annual wild flowers, or flowers of most of our bulbous plants. It is the higher areas of the state that are in full flower at midsummer.

Rock garden people are fortunate that there are still a lot of our plants left in the wild. We never had a Carl Purdy digging these plants by the millions, as happened with the bulbous plants of California. And then there are billions of humans building houses, roads, highways, and bringing ever more acreage into cultivation. Our list of rare and endangered plants is more than 160 pages long. If this is not enough to activate the conscience and discourage the collection of plants from nature in California, consider that we have a long, dry summer. This means that

plants must produce a long tap-root to survive the dry period, and this in turn means nearly certain death to any plant dug. So remember, I shall bring the wrath of California down on your head for digging any plant! But California will bless you for taking a little seed. Many of the places I describe here are in plant preserves or wilderness areas. Some of these areas I have personally fought to have set aside, and I will personally hate you, too, if you use this information to exploit them by digging plants.

Highway 395 south from Reno is one of the scenic drives and every road that turns up into the mountains leads up to natural rock gardens. A short ways up Monitor Pass on Highway 89 one can find masses of *Eriogonum wrightii*. This white-leaved mat does not bloom until fall, but what a plant to see! The flowers are not the main attraction, but the foliage is wonderful. On south along Hwy. 395 into Bridgeport Valley there are sheets of *Iris missouriensis* in the meadows, and the

©1989 Kristin Jakob Primula suffrutescens

everywhere. Mat plants are to be seen at every turn. Eriogonums are perhaps the most common plants. In Grand View campground one drives over or camps on *Phlox couillei*, eriogonums and drabas. The road is paved to the Schulman Grove, but above this on to the Patriarch Grove are the most fantastic plants and scenic areas. There is so much to see, plan to spend two days or more. Most important, remember to spend the mornings up in the high elevations, in areas like the Patriarch Grove, because bad thunderstorms are frequent in the afternoons. Of all the areas to look at dwarf plants I think the best is a little pass about half a mile past the turn-off to the Patriarch Grove. At the road summit at 12,000' on Sheep Mt. is the greatest variety of species. This is a nearly flat area, and plant hunting is fine in nearly every direction. But best is the area west and slightly north of the pass. Here are *Castilleja nana*, *Eriogonum gracilipes* (see photo, p. 20), a few *E. ovalifolium* (see photo, p. 19), *Townsendia*, *Phlox*, *Draba*, and *Potentilla* species, just to name a few.

And then back down to the desert proper. (It is really desert all the way to the top in these mountains.) From the campground on down there are no fewer than four species of *Pentstemon*, interesting eriogonums, *Argemone munita* (prickly poppy), and *Mentzelia laevis* (blazing star), all in bloom in July. Growing in shady cracks in the Narrows can be found a *Heuchera* of the *H. rubescens* persuasion. In hot rocky areas on down to the valley are three species of cactus, *Stanleya elata*

Wildflower Haunts 5

high, snow-covered mountains above can be quite spectacular in June. From Bridgeport south all little roads lead to campgrounds, good fishing and good plant hunting. Just south of Lee Vining the Tioga road takes off to Yosemite and all the many things to see in this park. But just short of Tioga Pass is the road to Saddlebag Lake at 10,000' elevation. Park and walk across the dam, and it's a short walk to the alpine zone. About 200 yards beyond the parking area are masses of *Phyllodoce breweri* with some good color forms. Then there is a glorious meadow of *Aquilegia pubescens* and its hybrids. These are so beautiful that they alone provide enough reason for coming to this location. *Aquilegia pubescens* is white, while the other parent here is *A. formosa*, with red and yellow flowers. In this population the flowers are lovely shades of pink and soft yellows with an occasional pure white. On up the trail are more little lakes, some with golden trout, and then Mount Connors and its glacier. Fine plants abound all the way up.

Still farther south on Hwy. 395 is Bishop, from which lead many interesting roads. But before you explore these, first load up with gas and water and head south to Big Pine and there turn east on Hwy. 168 into the White Mountains and up to Westgard Pass. Then up to the Ancient Bristlecone Pines Preserve. From the time one turns up off the desert floor until White Mountain Road at 7,000' on up until one turns around to come back at perhaps 12,000', there are billions of pictures to take, so make sure you have lots of rolls of film. There are choice rock garden plants

(prince's plume), and *Encelia farinosa* (brittle-bush). From Big Pine south on Hwy. 395 the desert is getting darn hot this time of year, but to climb Mount Whitney one must go south to Lone Pine and drive up to Whitney Portal. Climbing up from here you can find *Primula suffrutescens* (see photo, p. 37). At the end of the road are campgrounds that could be full in midsummer. At such elevations there could be frost every night, so make sure to bring warm clothing. About two and a half miles out of Lone Pine toward Mount Whitney is a turn-off up to the right. This road goes into the Alabama Hills, which is where all wild west motion pictures are filmed. In fact the road is called Movie Road, and the sage meadows are Movie Flat. Just south of Lone Pine is the turn-off to Death Valley, a hundred miles away. It can be near hell getting there in July. Once in the Valley you are in hell. On July 4, 1989 the temperature at Furnace Creek was 122°F. The National Park Service asks visitors to stay out of the Valley at this season.

If there is time and coolness is desired, I would suggest a trip from Lake Tahoe to Carson City and Reno, then north on Hwy. 395. Go on to Susanville and then west on Hwy. 36 and north on Hwy. 89 to the entrance to Lassen National Park. Lassen Peak is an active volcano. From here north all roads will be scenic. On this drive in moist areas are carpets of *Phyllodoce* and *Kalmia polifolia*, to mention only two good plants. Nearly every parking area along this stretch of road has interesting plants. Then farther north the only questions are how much

time the traveler has and which direction to choose—up Mount Shasta or Mount Eddy, to Castle Lake or Cedar Lake, or on to other fabulous spots.

In the middle of the town of Mount Shasta is the road that leads up onto the mountain. There are few good rock garden plants here, but those few are not just good, but great. The road ends at the old ski area, and just short of the end is a parking area off to the right. Park here and walk over the little rise at the end. Veer off to your left into the swale. Here are carpets of *Pentstemon davidsonii* by the acre. A few other good plants are phlox, anemones and ferns.

West and over the freeway on the road to Lake Siskiyou (with a good campground) take the road to Castle Lake (with a tiny campground of the finest class, but without water). This is one of the most picturesque of lakes. From the parking lot to the top of the mountain you find one plant after

another of great interest. Several species are rare elsewhere but common here, and there are at least three species counted as rare and endangered by the California Native Plant Society and now listed by the State of California. At the lake follow around to the left and watch for the trail up the hill. When you leave the pavement, there will be *Calyptridium* (*Spraguea*) *umbellatum* (see photo, p. 42), and then at the stream, *Dodecatheon*. The first steps up will lead to *Fritillaria lanceolata* (see photo, p. 44), *Delphinium*, *Hackelia*, and more. After climbing a ways, more choice plants will be found. Near the top of the climb out in the open areas note the rock outcrops off to the right. This is where you want to be. Between the outcrops are the best color forms of *Lewisia leana* I have ever seen, plus masses of the rare and endangered (and protected) *Erythronium klamathense*. In the rocks are penstemons and small ferns, and on the far side is to be found *Brodiaea modesta*, again an endangered plant. Veer a little to the right of the straight ascent and watch everywhere, and you may find the rare *Dicentra pauciflora* here, there, and everywhere. The extremely rare and highly endangered *Campanula shetleri* is found in a few granite outcrops along the crest of the hill above the faint trail (if you have gotten into the right area and can find the trail). This blooms in late July, but even without flowers the lacework of the leaves in the crevices of the rocks is nice to see. The trail continues on along behind a small hill to a tarn. Here are masses of *Phyllodoce empetriformis* and *Leuco-*

thoe dauisiae. On the north side of this little hill where the snows persist until midsummer, there may be quantities of *Erythronium* in bloom. Now take a long look at the magnificent view of Mount Shasta. Then back to the trail and back down to Castle Lake. This walk is only a little more than two miles, but the day is nearly gone, and so back to camp and a nice glass of wine before dinner while we contemplate all the wonderful plants of the day. Going down the road from the lake the next day you will have to stop many times to look at the *Xerophyllum tenax* (bear grass), *Linnaea borealis*, iris, lilies, phantom orchids, and much more.

At the bottom of the hill, turn left up the south fork of the Sacramento River. After three or four miles the road crosses the river. Here watch for moist areas with mats of *Mimulus primuloides* var. *linearifolius*. This is a very free-flowering, easy-to-grow plant that does well in gardens. Generally there are a few ripe seed pods. Ten or twelve miles farther along this road watch for the sign to Cedar Lake. The turn-off to this lake is about a mile short to Gumbroot Lake. It is much faster to walk the short mile than to take the car over this "road." There are ten species of conifers along the so-called road. At the lake turn left. There are seven genera of ericaceous plants along the lake's edge, not to say anything about *Gentiana newberryi*, plants of *Darlingtonia* here and there, and *Drosera rotundifolia* making red patches. If there is time and you are a good hiker, follow the "road" to Cliff Lake and try to find the trail up (and I mean up) to Upper Cliff Lake. Here

grow two more species of ericaceous plants. There are thousands of plants of *Lewisia leana* here making masses of bright-colored lace. This little lake is privately owned, but the owners are very kind to plant persons as long as they do not dig. After coming back to your car there is time to go on west and up over the top into Mumbo Basin. This is one area where *Lilium washingtonianum* still grows on the dry hillsides. These fragrant white lilies are a sight to see. This species is nearly impossible to grow outside its native range, and these lilies have become rare because of people digging them and bringing them home to die. Down in Mumbo Basin along streams can be found yet more interesting plants, but nothing so spectacular as the combinations at Castle Lake.

Back out to the freeway and on north past the town of Weed. Watch for the off-ramp to Gazelle and Stewart Springs. Take the road to Stewart Springs but do not go through the gates. Instead turn and keep going up. By early July the snow should be gone from the road, so it is passable over the summit. Along this road there are many places to stop and spend time, so plan on not less than a full day. Every moist area and stream has some interesting plants, such as *Darlingtonia*, *Potentilla fruticosa*, *Dodecatheon*, *Adiantum pedatum* var. *aleuticum*, *Polystichum lemmonii*, lilies, orchids, and on and on. But the best appear at the summit where the Pacific Crest Trail crosses the road. Many choice plants had to be bulldozed to make the road and parking lot. Regardless of where you leave the car, ten steps

will have you walking on plants you would love to grow at home. There are brilliant blobs of *Castilleja*, two or three species of penstemons, no fewer than three species of *Eriogonum*, including the rare, tight rosettes of *E. siskiyouense*. *Anemone multifida* is here, along with *Allium siskiyouense*, *Fritillaria atropurpurea*, sedums, and more and more, until you are out of film.

The next day come back and continue on down the hill to the switch-back with a parking lot. From here make the climb to Mount Eddy. This is an all-day hike. Going up through the wet meadows there are masses of gentians, *Darlingtonia*, and *Dodecatheon*. It is interesting that at Deadfall Lakes there are not so many plants of interest, but as soon as the trail starts up the south side of the old crater this changes.

Here is *Campanula scabrella* in the rock scree, found on this mountain at the southern limit of its range. At the top of this scree is a bewildering community of eriogonums, *Gentiana calycosa*, and some fine specimens of *Pinus balfouriana*. Near the summit of Mount Eddy is *Hulsea nana*, a lovely, short, golden daisy (see photo, p. 41). The eriogonums are mats with heads of flowers—white, pink to nearly red, and some yellowish ones—among other low plants and grasses on a stable scree area. The *Hulsea* grows in gravel with scarcely any other plants. The *Gentiana* grows in moist places and forms mounds up to 2' across covered with dozens of light blue trumpets.

After returning to the car continue down the Trinity River to Hwy. 3. Along the road there has been too

much mining on the river and too much logging on the hillsides, and not many undisturbed areas remain. At Hwy. 3, turn south to Coffee Creek and go up into the Trinity Alps Wilderness or turn north up to Scott Mountain Summit. In the northwest section of the summit is the rare endemic, *Phacelia dalesiana*. This wee phacelia with its white flowers and black anthers was discovered and named only about twenty years ago. In the wet meadows on each side of the campground are many nice plants, including *Calochortus nudus*, in shades of pink. From here the road drops down to Scott River and Scott Valley. There turn right and go to Kangaroo Lake, where there are many interesting plants, or continue on Hwy. 3 through the old mining towns of Callahan and Etna to the edge of Fort Jones. Here turn left and down the Scott River to the Klamath River. From Mount Eddy to the Klamath River you have driven over or around many different mountain ranges all of which are grouped under the Klamath Mountains.

Then turn left to Seiad Valley. At the store at Seiad Valley is the last chance for supplies and gasoline before taking off to Cook and Green Pass in the middle of the Siskiyou Mountains. Just west of the store,

the store at Seiad Valley is the last chance for supplies and gasoline before taking off to Cook and Green Pass in the middle of the Siskiyou Mountains. Just west of the store,

Oenothera xylocarpa

cross a bridge and at once find the road up to Cook and Green. This road is paved for about five miles and goes straight ahead. There is a wide side road turning off to the right and crossing the creek—this you do not want. The road you want becomes a rather narrow mountain dirt road which most cars can make with no trouble. At this writing in July, 1989 there is logging of the burned area along the road, and for safety reasons the road is closed to cars Monday through Friday. But the logging should be over and the road open in 1990. Perhaps three-quarters of the way up is Horsetail Falls. The plants found here include the rare *Lilium wigginsii* in all its golden splendor.

Then on to the summit where three roads meet. The Pacific Crest Trail crosses Cook and Green Pass. In the area where you may park your

car, you may find tall *Lilium washingtonianum* plants with as many as 15 large trumpets. The trail east from the pass to Copper Butte leads up to one of the best stands of *Lewisia cotyledon* that I know. Here these plants grow by the thousands. About a quarter of a mile up, this trail comes out among rock outcrops

splattered with lewisias ranging in flower color from white to nearly red. But look up the slope to the large open area ahead and then climb up. Here are lewisias so thick it is difficult not to step on plants. This hillside generally is at its best late in June but in July there will still be a few flowers. Before the plants are finished blooming, seed is ripe, and by growing a few plants from seed, you may keep your memories of a magnificent sight. On your way back down to the pass note the Brewer's weeping spruce, two kinds of dwarf pines, the erigonums, penstemons, and *Eriophyllum*, the odd *Dodecatheon*, *Calochortus*, *Fritillaria*, three species of sedums, the dwarf ferns, and *Lewisia leana*. I

estimate there are over 500 species of noteworthy plants to be seen in and around the Cook and Green Pass area.

Once back at the car walk a quarter of a mile along the road toward Oregon to see even more species of desirable plants. The most noteworthy here is *Phlox adsurgens* displaying all its variability, with no two plants alike. Other good plants include more penstemons, *Linnaea borealis* in carpets, and a tiny *Rubus* that looks like a strawberry.

At the parking area there is a level trail to the northwest. Follow this to the spring with the best drinking water in all California. Unfortunately, this water may no longer be safe to drink. The only plant you will not find along this woodland trail is lewisia, but what a mass of exciting plants! Lilies, anemones, *Pyrola*, *Arnica*, *Vancouveria*, *Mahonia*, *Chimaphila*, *Phlox*, lupines, orchids, and then there are the dogwoods.

West of the pass the road very shortly turns into a poor four-wheel-drive trail that ends in about three miles at Lily Pad Lake on one side and Hello Canyon on the other. What wonderful plants can be found here and along the road! The road follows a ridge of serpentine for perhaps a mile and a half and then comes into an area of volcanic soils. Here in the good soil can be seen masses of *Lilium washingtonianum* var. *purpureum* and *Xerophyllum tenax*. In rock outcrops here the lewisias are on the yellow side. A short ways on should be a big snow bank, and around any snow bank is *Erythronium grandiflorum* var. *pallidum*. At the end of the "good" road look down

into Hello Canyon and see what was once a road that now ends at a large limestone outcrop. There are seven genera of ferns here with four species of *Polystichum*. At the very end of the road in among the large rocks grow large mats of *Epilobium obcordatum* var. *siskiyouense* (in some books listed under *E. o. var. laxum*). See photo, p. 42) and *Veronica copelandii*. If these two plants are at their prime, it is well worth the long hike to see them.

Returning to the car, should you still have energy and time, follow the Pacific Crest Trail to the west. Along this trail was once a fine clump of *Cypripedium montanum*, the lady slipper orchid; but after I showed them to a group, the plants were dug, so now I tell no one where to see any of these orchids. There is a carpet of pipsissewa under the trees near the parking area. I have not even mentioned all the interesting conifers or the rare dwarf Sadler oak, but time keeps us moving to see more.

Back down to Seiad Valley and farther down the Klamath River to Happy Camp, turn north up over the Siskiyou Mountains to O'Brien, Oregon. Just over the summit are to be found the finest mats of *Phlox adsurgens* I have ever seen. There is so much to see plan on three hours for this short drive of about 30 miles. On arriving at Hwy. 199 at O'Brien, cross over and take the road along the side the store, which will become the Patrick's Creek Road back into California. When the paving ends start to slow down, as soon many interesting plants will appear. Along this 20- to 25-mile stretch of road each month from early spring until fall brings new

combinations of good plants into bloom. By mid-June the *Erythronium*, *Trillium rivale*, *Phlox speciosa*, *Darlingtonia*, *Dicentra oregana*, and *Vancouveria chrysantha* have finished blooming, but there remain many beautiful species. Not less than three species of lilies can be found where the bridge crosses Whiskey Creek. An odd lily of the *L. pardalinum* type (see photo, p. 44), as well as *Narthecium californicum*, which should be in full bloom in July, are both here. At the summit, which is also the state line, keep left as the right fork becomes nearly impassible. But first stop at the summit and spend some time as there are several good plants to be found in the serpentine scree areas. Here are *Lewisia oppositifolia*, *Epilobium rigidum*, *Erigeron*, and sedums. On down the road grows *Lilium bolanderi* in bright red. From time to time, one can also see a plant or two of *L. kelloggii* (see photo, p. 44). About three-quarters of the way down the main road turns left, but keep to the right for about half a mile. This is the Old Gasquet Toll Road. After crossing the bridge, go on to a small stream and stop at a large parking area, which is never used except by crazy plant people. A few paces up this stream look for *Lilium volleri*. From here the road becomes rather poor, so it is best to turn around, return to the left fork, and continue on down to Highway 199. About 10 or 15 miles down Hwy. 199 one comes to the first redwood forests.

Farther on is Hwy. 101, the Redwood Highway, and turns southwards towards home. South of Klamath River is Prairie Creek

Redwoods State Park. Here ask where to find Davison Road to see Fern Canyon. This is not much of a canyon, but what a sight to see! The 30' to 50' walls are covered with five-finger ferns. This is the typical subspecies of *Adiantum pedatum* and not the variety *aleuticum*. There is no place like this in all the rest of the world.

On south, in Eureka, is the Carson Mansion (closed to the public) just a short block or two off the highway on the north side of town. This Victorian house was built of redwood by the first redwood baron. One can not believe that wood can be used in so many ways—scrolls, rosettes, pillars, fans, arches, and any other wood form one can think of. On south the countryside becomes hot and dry and has very little for the rock gardener, and so on to San Francisco.

There are many other interesting places to see, but at other times of the year. Visit Death Valley in late March or early April. Go at the same time for the Joshua Tree or Anzo-Borrogo parks. All the desert can be a carpet of color at this time of year if the rains have been good. The Mother Lode area, where gold was mined in 1849, is great in the spring, say from Grass Valley to Mariposa (be sure to go to Columbia, a town restored back to the gold days). From mid-May to about mid-June *Calochortus kennedyi* is in bloom in the Mount Pinos area where the color is in the wildest flame red (see photo, p. 39, cover painting). You will have to brave the heat of the San Joaquin Valley down Interstate Hwy. 5 to the small town of Gorman and there turn

west through Frazier Park and on to Lake of the Woods. Beyond Lake of the Woods the road climbs up a side valley, and where the road forks, keep left up onto Mount Pinos and watch closely for spots of the bright red of *Calochortus kennedyi* and the white of *C. venustus* (see photo, p. 39). At the end of the pavement at the ski area there is a bad dirt road onto the top of the mountain where one can find natural rock gardens filled with many wonderful rock plants.

I have left out so many good places that some people will think there is something wrong with me, but most visitors will have less than a month's time, and exploring all the places mentioned here will keep them going for much longer. Yes, if you have years to play, there are still the Mt. Hamilton Range, the San Benito Range, the Warner Mountains, the High North Coast Ranges and on south to San Diego County, all filled with wonderful and intriguing plants.

Wayne Roderick began his horticultural career with his first plot of ground at age 5, progressing to operating his own nursery for 14 years, heading the University of California at Berkeley Botanic Gardens' California section for 16 years, and serving as director of Tilden Regional Parks Botanic Garden for 7 years, before retiring to a full-time career as ambassador of western petaloid monodels and dean of California horticulture.

Drawings by Al Stavos.
Map by D.D. Hall.

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