

Mary Ann Arnett retires as Descanso Guild president

Escorting children on duck feeding expeditions to Descanso Gardens led to 20 years of volunteer service at the garden for Mary Ann Arnett. In the years since then Mrs. Arnett has witnessed and helped shape a host of improvements at Descanso Gardens.

"I first started visiting the gardens with my children and a neighbor in 1969," said the outgoing president of the Descanso Gardens Guild.

A year after those early visits, Mrs. Arnett's interest in botany prompted her to join the Guild and she was soon actively involved in the group's fund raising activities. What began as work on the forerunner of Day at Descanso committee expanded to positions as chairperson of the Red Carpet Tea committee, historian, cochairman with her husband, Jim, of the Christmas Show and election to the Board of Trustees in 1981.

As newly elected member of the Descanso Gardens board of trustees that year, Mrs. Arnett was involved in the most conspicuous recent garden addition, the building complex named after Georgia Van de Kamp.

"When I first started coming to the gardens the entrance was just a funny little building (Manchester Boddy's milking barn) with a turnstile," Mrs. Arnett reminisces. Now a sprawling redwood complex styled after designs by early Pasadena architects Greene and Greene welcomes visitors and also houses the classrooms, gift shop, exhibit hall and offices.

Another project Mrs. Arnett guided to conclusion was the gift shop expansion started during the term of her predecessor, Gloria Winkley. She also supervised a stepped up publicity campaign started by Mrs. Winkley. A new four-color brochure printed by the Guild is now distributed in racks all over Los Angeles.

The new roster printed during Mrs. Arnett's term documents a 100 percent increase in Guild membership--now more than 4,700--compared with 1,900 when she took office.

The cafe was put under new management and is now open daily and caters many events.

Since the Guild receives 10 percent of the profits, the new arrangement has made it possible to completely computerize the Guild office and purchase a new telephone system. New carpeting and room darkening shades were installed in Van de Kamp exhibit hall and classrooms.

The Hospitality House also benefited. The interior was repainted, awnings replaced, new terrace furniture purchased and the house was rewired with matching funds from Los Angeles County.



Mary Ann Arnett

Recognition for Mrs. Arnett has been both national and local; last year she was invited to Atlanta, GA, to accept the American Horticultural Society award for the handicapped garden program at Descanso, and her name is engraved on the commemorative plaque for past presidents in the Hospitality House.

Mrs. Arnett was also involved in early phases of projects that will be completed after she hands over the gavel to the new Guild president, Gail Boatwright.

Even after she leaves the office of president, Mrs. Arnett plans to stay active in Guild activities, supporting long range projects such as the master plan adopted during her tenure. The first phase of the plan, re-developing the lake area, begins this spring. Other plans call for renovating the rose garden and improving the entrance garden.



1990. "Mary Ann Arnett retires as Descanso Guild president." *Arboreta and botanic gardens : a publication of the Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens* 2(1), 4.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/139259>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/146407>

Holding Institution

Missouri Botanical Garden, Peter H. Raven Library

Sponsored by

Los Angeles Arboretum

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.