

With Superintendent of The Arboretum John Provine and Executive Director of The California Arboretum Foundation Judith S. Morse.



Morse: John, one of the questions I hear over and over is a simple one, I think, until I try to answer. "What exactly

is an arboretum and is The Arboretum of Los Angeles County different from other gardens?"

Provine: By definition, an arboretum is a place where many kinds of trees and shrubs are grown for exhibition or study. Over the years The Arboretum has introduced many plants into Southern California and continues to acquire and test plants from around the world. What makes The Arboretum unique might be the reference library, herbarium and plant information service, all of which are available to the general public. The Arboretum is also a popular site for plant shows, classes, lectures and seminars. And don't forget the historical park, bird life and specialty gardens.

Morse: Speaking of plants... we are often asked why the Garden doesn't have more annual color. What is your answer?

Provine: It's the peacocks! They are vegetarians and night feeders and quickly eat everything in sight. Especially annuals. We do have annuals mainly around the entrance, because we can control the peacocks in that area. Now, I have a question for you. This is the beginning of your third year as Director of the Foundation. Will you talk about changes that you believe are significant?

Morse: The most significant is probably the County's change of departmental administration. The Arboretum is now one of several

facilities operated by Parks and Recreation. This offers both strengths and challenges, for many reasons. One strength is increased access to large equipment for maintenance. The Garden looks particularly handsome right now. The Arboretum is currently challenged to compete for broadly allocated funds to support its very specialized staff and needs. Your staff, John, is remarkably committed, even though there are fewer County resources to support their endeavors. Increase of admission fees instituted one year ago has helped the Department revenue, but we now have fewer visitors. The Foundation is responding by developing more programs to attract visitors back. This is a romancing process that requires time. Do you want to add anything about how The Arboretum can offer so much with fewer employees and resources?

Provine: You are right about the dedication of our staff. They love what they are doing. And never forget the volunteer program, with so many willing and talented volunteers. Between the loyalty of the staff and the volunteers, programs and services exist beyond those that our resources can provide. The Foundation is working on stabilization of the future of The Arboretum too. Will you talk about that?

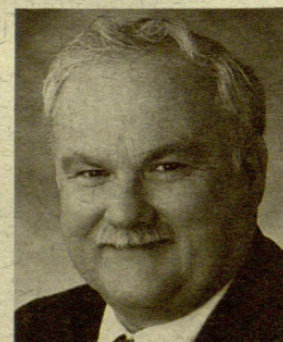
Morse: The Foundation is developing a strategic approach to revenue and program enhancement designed to capture both funds and new friends. Special events and annual fund appeals will be utilized to raise monies for operation, to support general Arboretum budget needs, to create more Garden staff positions and to develop new exhibits in the Garden. We currently get part of the operating budget through Foundation memberships, class fees, film location fees, gift shop and cafe profits and the Baldwin Bonanza Plant Sale, to name a few. We also have grant money for specific uses such as the Forest Area project. These are called "restricted" funds and must be

used as designated. Many of our long-time profit centers are dependent on attendance and weather, two factors we cannot control. Hence the other ideas which are more predictable. This can be tricky!

Provine: It is a good thing that we both have creative staffs! What would we do without them? The Foundation concept of having tours and supper in the Garden was successful last summer. What do you think about having the Garden open at other evening times?

Morse: The concept of twilight hours has been explored extensively. There is genuine interest in doing this. We are evaluating how to make it fiscally prudent. I hope that the summer of 1995 will find us in the Garden more often in the evening. I would like to hear more from people about what would draw them to visit during those hours. One last thing, John, you have been at The Arboretum for many years...I am a relative newcomer. Any advice for me?

Provine: I know that you agree with me that The Arboretum is important to the community both as an information



center and as a green belt with an historical site. I believe that as Superintendent of The Arboretum I have the opportunity to supply a service to many people by developing beautiful grounds for them to enjoy each day. Because I know you share that belief too, you probably don't need my advice.

Morse: I agree whole heartedly with your mission John. On a personal note, I would like to believe we are accomplishing that goal. When I happen upon that special glee when a child sees a peacock I am reminded how the Garden is, after all, a marvelous stimulus to the sense of wonder in all of us. ♡



Morse, Judy and Provine, John. 1993. "Can we talk?" *Arboretum News* 1994-1995:winter, 1.

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