



July/August 1983

# LASCA LEAVES



Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

## BALDWIN BONANZA

**J**ACK SMITH, *Los Angeles Times* columnist, added his relaxed, low-key humor to the Baldwin Bonanza XIII raffle as he drew the winning tickets for the prizes on May 1. Mr. Smith, who often brings his wife to the preview party held on the evening before the Bonanza, commented that, although he enjoyed attending the public sale Sun-

day, it did present a problem. "This year it's going to cost me, because now my wife gets to come to the sale two days," he said when she stopped by to ask him for more money.

Other plant shoppers seemed as determined as Mrs. Smith to add unusual new plants to their homes and gardens. Intermittent showers that played across the sale area Sunday afternoon did not prevent them

from eventually making their purchases. Instead, the rain turned the sale into a hide-and-seek game between the clouds and the shoppers, said Robin (Mrs. Benjamin) Stafford, Bonanza chairman.

"When the rain really started coming down, the people would just go into Ayres Hall or the gift shop and wait," she said. "But as soon as the weather cleared a little, everyone would be back out among the plant



Hopeful ticket holders surround columnist Jack Smith as he draws the winning raffle tickets at Baldwin Bonanza, May 1. (Photos by James Johnson)



booths again."

Official attendance records supported Mrs. Stafford's impression that slightly fewer people attended the sale this year. She is, however, optimistic that sales which had not yet been tabulated by press time will show a respectable profit. "It looked to me as if the people who came, came to buy" she said.

John Provine, Arboretum superintendent, also noted the same purposeful approach among many buyers intent upon purchasing specific plants the *Los Angeles Times Home* magazine had mentioned in an article two weeks before the sale. "Some people came in with the article and used it like a shopping list," he said. "They'd refer to *Tabebuia* or *Brighamia* by name and ask 'Where do I find this?'"

Some of the most hectic activity

centered around the tree sales area. Unusual trees that are almost impossible to find in nurseries were requested most often, he said. "By Sunday morning we had only about 20 of the Chinese fringe trees (*Chionanthus retusus*) on hand. We also brought down all the small but well-started variegated hibiscus (*Hibiscus cooperi*) from the nursery, and they were gone before noon Sunday."

Although the plant list changes every year, a few of these more-sought-after plants will probably be available for Baldwin Bonanza XIV. Soon the 1984 chairman, Virginia (Mrs. C. A.) Stein, her crew of workers and the Arboretum staff will be out scouting for merchandise that will again arouse the acquisitive instinct in Southern California plant lovers.



Natasha Tiessen helps a customer choose his favorite from among the many brightly-colored gloxinias for sale.



A local Boy Scout helps move trees to a customer's car.





**Above** — *In spite of lowering rain clouds, plant shoppers carrying boxes, carts and plant lists wait for the annual plant sale to open.*



*Robin (Mrs. Benjamin) Stafford, 1983 chairman, keeps the sale running smoothly.*

**Below** — *Director Francis Ching (left) joins Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Ayres Jr. as they watch the 2,000 shoppers at the Preview Party Friday night.*



*A luxuriant *Tupidanthus calyptratus* almost hides the Boy Scout wheeling it.*





*This trio needs the help of a Boy Scout to carry away all the plants they purchased at Baldwin Bonanza XIII.*



*Cochairman Virginia (Mrs. C. A.) Stein will head the 1984 Bonanza*

## Ruth Mary Larson Named One of 10 Top Volunteers in County



AS PART of Los Angeles County Volunteer Recognition Week, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Michael D. Antonovich (right), presented a scroll to Ruth Mary (Mrs. Leland) Larson honoring her as Volunteer of the Year for this Department. Mrs. Larson's achievements at the Arboretum also placed her among the top 10 volunteers in the county, Mr. Antonovich told the luncheon audience April 18.

During the 15 years that she has been donating her time and talents to the California Arboretum Foundation, Mrs. Larson has done many tasks very well. But she earned the scroll for her outstanding performance as manager of the gift shop. In 10 years she increased profits tenfold until, with an annual gross of \$138,000, it became too large to be run part-time. Now that she has turned over gift shop responsibilities to a full-time professional manager, Mrs. Larson will be able to use her considerable administrative skills in other projects.



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# Department Notes

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## "100 YEARS OF STYLE" SHOWN AT ROBINSON GARDENS BENEFIT

FOR MORE than 50 years, Virginia Robinson held extravagant parties at her Beverly Hills estate, establishing her reputation as one of the most popular hostesses in Beverly Hills and Los Angeles society circles.

At the Virginia Robinson Gardens premiere benefit sponsored by Friends of Virginia Robinson April 9, the names and faces were different, but the event, "100 Years of Style," still bore the elegant imprint of the late Mrs. Robinson.

The spring benefit was held both to raise money for repairs at the gardens and to celebrate the 100th anniversary of J. W. Robinson's, the department store chain founded by Mrs. Robinson's father-in-law, Robinson's, a generous contributor to the gardens since Mrs. Robinson bequeathed it to Los Angeles County, underwrote the cost of the party.

"We feel strongly that there is a commitment to give back some of what our customers give us," Michael Gould, president of Robinson's, said during his welcoming remarks.

On the evening of the celebration, an enormous white tent covered the entire lawn between the house and the pool. Several alcoves led off the

main tent, one of which enclosed the reflecting pool and spotlighted fountain.

David Jones, a leading Westside floral designer and a Friends mem-

ber, augmented the foliage around the tent with potted trees and bushes used earlier at a party given for Queen Elizabeth. In the towering centerpieces that he created for



*Paul Selwyn (left) and his wife, Joan, (far right) president of the Friends of Virginia Robinson Gardens, welcome County Supervisor Ed Edelman and Mrs. Edelman to the Friends' premiere benefit at the gardens April 9. The gala event, funded by the J. W. Robinson department store chain, raised \$45,000 to be used in restoring the historic buildings and maintaining the gardens.*



each of the 48 tables, Mr. Jones combined bird's nest ferns, Japanese maples and English daisies borrowed from the Arboretum.

Before feasting on an epicurean dinner highlighted by chocolate horns filled with raspberries and cream, the 480 guests gathered around the pool for a show of fashions by Miyake, Perry Ellis, Rykiel, Armani, Versace and Jessica McClintock. Models in clothes ranging from bikinis to pleated gold lame' floats paraded on three lighted runways across the pool and a series of ramps that lifted them halfway up the facade of the poolhouse in the background.

County supervisor Ed Edelman, honorary Friends president, congratulated the Friends on their progress at the Gardens.

"The Gardens form an important element of the county's system of arboreta and botanic gardens," he said. "The Department performs unique research and educational

services at this historically important estate."

Friends president, Joan (Mrs. Paul) Selwyn, summed up the event when she praised the dedication of the 160 Friends members and thanked the guests for supporting the benefit. Their donations, she said, will help restore the historic buildings and assist in garden maintenance and development.

### FLOWERS AND SURPRISES FILL CAF TRIP TO ANTELOPE VALLEY

**S**PRING SUNSHINE was already warming the air when 150 people boarded buses April 16 for a day-long tour of wildflower fields in the Antelope Valley. Abundant spring rains set the stage for a dazzling wildflower display this year but delayed the curtain raising, according to leaders of the tour sponsored by the California Arboretum Foundation.

"Wildflowers need not only rain to leach out growth inhibitors from

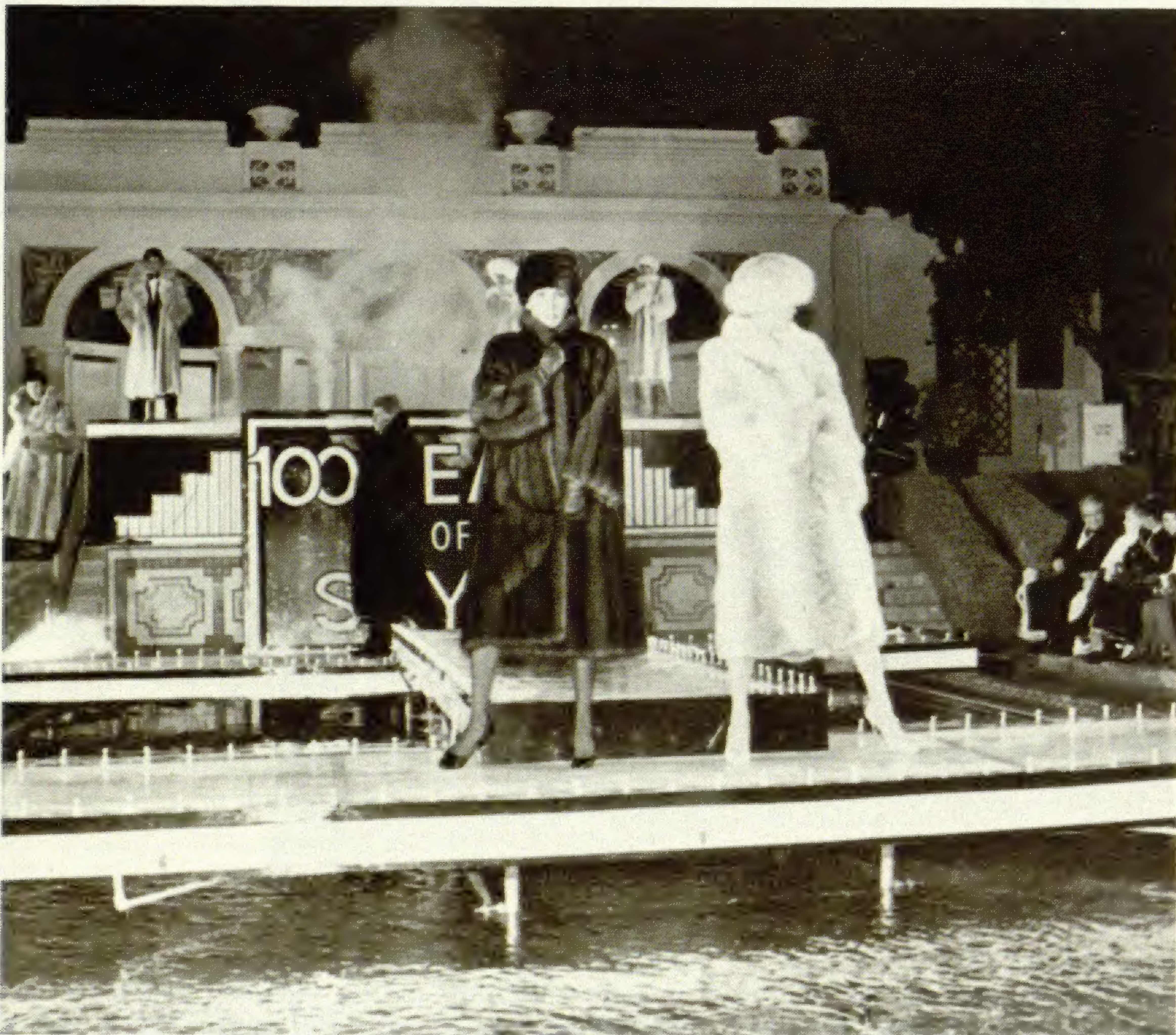
the seed coat but they also need sunshine to develop," said Suzanne Granger, Arboretum herbarium curator. Although the wildflowers were not as spectacular as they would be a week later, Ms. Granger considered this year's trip "a very nice show, nonetheless."

James Bauml, Arboretum senior biologist who led the other group, thought the display was impressive more for the wide variety of species blooming than for a profusion of flowers of any one kind.

The most unusual plant they saw was probably the squaw cabbage (*Caulanthus inflatus*). It is also called desert candelabra because the chartreuse stems look like tapering candles alight with intense wine-colored flowers at the tip. The only specimens of these eye-catching plants were seen near the Butte Valley Wildflower Sanctuary.

They did, however, find several widespread yellow carpets of common annual flowers during the 170 mile trip. Soon after entering the Antelope Valley they stopped to admire a field of tidy tips studded with the deep purple of wild hyacinths and heliotropes. The yellow flowers of tree poppies almost completely covered an old burn scar in the chaparral along the bus route. Later, near Saddleback Butte, they walked among golden coreopsis and goldfields. Just when all the strong yellow began to pall, a drift of delicate baby blue eyes appeared to cool the landscape.

Everyone had questions when, near Phacelia Wildlife Sanctuary, they caught sight of a series of floral bull's-eyes with clearly defined concentric rings of gold and purple around a center of waxy green. Ms. Granger explained that the creosote bush in the center releases a phytotoxin that poisons the soil around it, preventing other plants from crowding too closely and competing for water and nutrients. Since different plants vary in their sensitivity to



Models wearing designer clothes from J. W. Robinson pose on lighted runways over the pool with the poolhouse as a backdrop.



the poison, some, like the purple phacelias, can grow closer to the creosote bush. Goldfields are more sensitive so they form the outer ring where the poison affects the soil to a lesser degree.

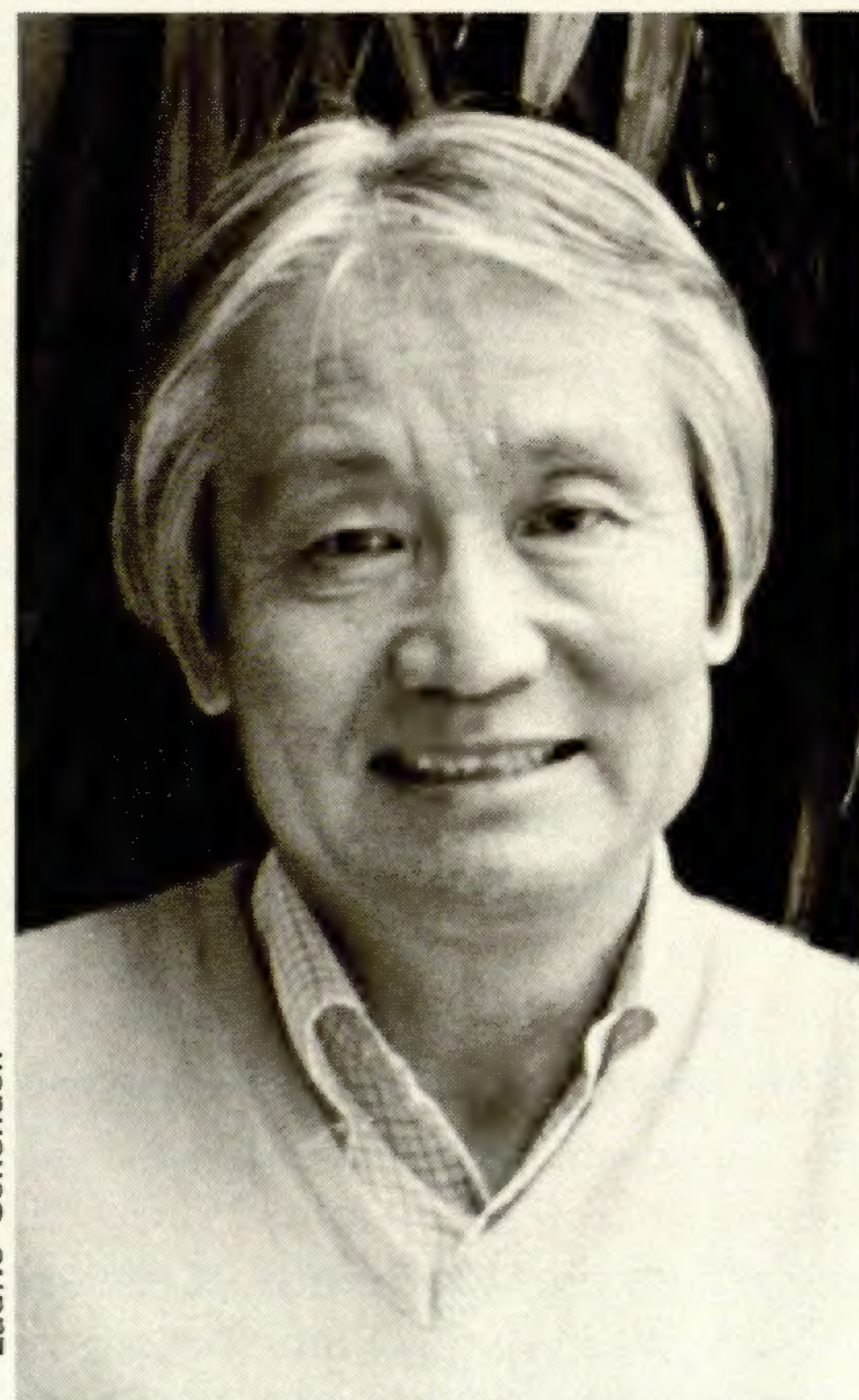
The ride across the flower-carpeted valley came to an unexpected stop among some relatively barren dunes when one of the buses got stuck in the sand along the road. As the drivers and nearby residents struggled with chains and tractors, tour members scouted the nearby creosote flats for wildflowers and then perched along the roadside to eat their picnic lunches. The lead bus eventually pulled the other bus free while the passengers cheered and the jaunt continued on to the Poppy Reserve near Fairmont. Surprisingly few poppies were blooming in the reserve itself, but near the old Fairmont Stage Station they found many perennial poppies with exceptionally large flowers.

As the buses traveled back over the mountains toward Arcadia, the late afternoon sun picked up the vivid red of Indian paintbrushes. The final show of the day came near Gorman where the hills were covered by a curtain of yellow coreopsis, tidy tips and fiddlenecks shot through with purple owl's clover and blue lupines.

Although mechanical problems with their bus ended the trip prematurely for one-third of the people who held tickets, those who completed it agreed that a day among the wildflowers had been a wonderful experience. "A real desert adventure," as one participant described it.

#### DR. CHEO, CHIEF OF RESEARCH, RETIRES FROM PUBLIC SERVICE

**P**AUL CHEO retired in March after 17 years as plant pathologist and chief of research at the Los Angeles



Laurie Schenden

Dr. Paul Cheo

County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens.

"I'm going to take it easy now," Dr. Cheo claimed.

A little time to himself is well deserved. Dr. Cheo worked for years on projects that today benefit not only home gardeners but all California residents. Projects that advanced during his tenure ranged from the development of fire retardant and drought tolerant plants to guayule rubber research that started here and may eventually provide an alternative to synthetic rubber.

Dr. Cheo was always ready to answer individual questions from the public. When home gardeners brought samples of ailing plants to the Arboretum, they relied on Dr. Cheo to diagnose the insect or disease problem and recommend a treatment. Occasionally, he admitted, he made house calls for unique problems or those of particular interest to him. Questions usually centered around oak, elm, and eucalyptus tree problems, said Dr. Cheo. In this area, people often complained of a pinkish discoloration on the stems of palm fronds.



Fred Hudson

Herbarium curator Suzanne Granger (kneeling) identifies one of the many wildflowers that dotted the hills in the Antelope Valley during a California Arboretum Foundation sponsored tour April 16.



This "pink rot" he explained, is caused by a fungus (*Gliocladium*) that can kill the palm if it is not treated.

Among his many research projects, Dr. Cheo's greatest accomplishments involved treatments for plant viruses like tobacco mosaic virus and oak root rot, a fungus (*Armillaria mellea*) that damages many woody plants but was first detected in oak trees.

Born in China in 1919, Dr. Cheo acquired his B.S. there. He came to the U.S. and earned a master's degree at West Virginia University and a doctorate in plant pathology from the University of Wisconsin. He taught in colleges around the U.S., including the University of Rhode Island, Washington State University and the California Institute of Technology before coming to the Arboretum in 1966. He and his wife, Helen, have lived in Pasadena since then.

From now on, the only research Dr. Cheo plans will have to do with history, particularly Chinese history, which always ran a close second to plant pathology in his mind. There was never time for it before, he said, but now he will finally have the luxury of time to spend on his avocation.

## POP SINGER JAMES DARREN STARS IN JULY 10 CONCERT

JAMES DARREN, the suave "Moon Doggie" of the '60s *Gidget* films and now a policeman on the *T. J. Hooker* television series, will perform at a concert picnic July 10 at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum.



James Darren

Sponsored by the Arcadia Chamber of Commerce and the California Arboretum Foundation, the picnic begins at 5:30 p.m. and the concert at 7:30 p.m.

Included in Darren's show are the recent "You Take My Heart Away," from the *Rocky* soundtrack; "Let Me Take You In My Arms Again," his

only country hit; and songs from his beach movie days.

Darren's mellow voice and smooth singing style, coupled with the boy-next-door lead characters he portrayed in *Gidget* and the *Time Tunnel* series, made him one of the young heartthrobs of the decade.

Darren made his singing debut in 1959 with "Angel Face," an instant Top 10 hit, and has worked steadily since then in Las Vegas and on tour. He also appeared in 16 films, including *Guns of Navarone*, *Diamond Head* and *Operation Madball*. Today, Darren divides his time between recording, acting, singing in nightclubs and hosting his own televised *Portrait of a Legend* musical variety show.

Tickets for the concert are on sale at the Arboretum Gift Shop and Hinshaw's Department Stores.

The chamber of commerce will award two prizes for the most elegant and two for the most original picnic spreads before the concert, to be held on the Bauer pool lawn. The picnics will be further separated into two categories: those for four people or less and picnics for five or more. Winners will receive gift baskets of fruit, wine and cheese. Beverages will be sold during the picnic and concert.

## LOS ANGELES STATE AND COUNTY ARBORETUM, Arcadia

JULY 1, 2, 3 — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Cactus and Succulent Show  
Cactus and Succulent Society  
of America

AUGUST 13, 14 — Sat. 1 to 4:30 p.m.  
Sunday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Begonia Show  
American Begonia Society

SEPTEMBER 10, 11 — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Cactus and Succulent Show  
San Gabriel Valley Cactus and  
Succulent Society

SEPTEMBER 16 — 5:30 to 11 p.m.

Queen Anne Frolic

SEPTEMBER 24, 25 —

10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Bonsai Show  
Akebono Bonsai Society  
All events sponsored by the  
California Arboretum Foundation

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JULY, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER, 1983

### DESCANSO GARDENS, La Canada

JULY 10 — 2:30 p.m.

Music on the Green  
Hal Towle and His Musical  
Friends of Descanso

JULY 17 — 2:30 p.m.

Concert on the Green  
Pasadena City College Swing Band

JULY 24 — 2:30 p.m.

California Repertory Ballet Company  
Directed by Jill Sanza

JULY 31 — 2:30 p.m.

Summer Shakespeare  
Charlie and Annie Star & Company

AUGUST 7 — 2:30 p.m.

Summer Shakespeare  
Charlie and Annie Star & Company

AUGUST 14 — 2:30 p.m.

California Repertory Ballet Company  
Directed by Jill Sanza

AUGUST 21 — 2:30 p.m.

Summer Shakespeare  
Charlie and Annie Star & Company

AUGUST 28 — 2:30 p.m.

Summer Shakespeare  
Charlie and Annie Star & Company

All events sponsored by  
Descanso Gardens Guild

### SOUTH COAST BOTANIC GARDEN, Palos Verdes Peninsula

AUGUST 6, 7 — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Bromeliad Show  
South Bay Bromeliad Associates

AUGUST 20, 21 — 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Dahlia Show  
South Coast Dahlia Society  
All events sponsored by the South  
Coast Botanic Garden Foundation