

BROMELIANA

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IMPORTANT BSI HISTORY FOR AFFILIATE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

by Herb Plever

In conversations with attendees at the 2018 World Bromeliad Conference in San Diego, I discovered that most of them did not have a clue about the history of the BSI in the first three decades after its founding in 1950. They were surprised to learn that affiliates had no voice in shaping policy and decisions during that period, and asked me to write a history of that period and of the events that led to the adoption of new by-laws in 1980 that gave substance

to the word “International” in BSI. They were unaware that I had done just that in the February and March, 2015 issues of BROMELIANA, and I will reprint those articles in this issue. I am also reprinting an earlier article on “California Problems” from the January, 1979 issue. (Despite Victoria’s apparent dominance over the Board of Directors, it was undermined by her close friend and colleague, Kathy Dorr.)

The Bromeliad Society Needs Unity and Understanding

by Herb Plever

(From BROMELIANA, January, 1979 with some modification)

During the past few years there has been an explosive proliferation of new Bromeliad Society affiliates springing up throughout the world. This has been accompanied by a rapid increase in local membership and activity. Despite this healthy state, we have heard serious rumblings of sectional discontent and personality problems amongst our leaders which bode ill for our future unless they are resolved.

Most of our New York members are relatively uninformed as to the administrative operations of the National Bromeliad Society in California. (*At the time I wrote this, I was oblivious to the growing bromeliad activity down under in Australia and New Zealand.*) Our Bromeliad Journal is only published bi-monthly and cannot be expected to devote much space to this.

Hence it is up to individual directors to report the current doings on a national level.

Under our present national structure, however, meetings of the Board of Directors necessarily take place in California. Non-Californian directors are rarely able to attend Board meetings, though they all receive advance notice with the agendas and then copies of the minutes of each meeting; they can communicate their views in writing before the meeting. (*The advance notice was inadequate - I usually received the meeting notice on Friday for a meeting the following Tuesday.*) I write in the belief that it is healthier to publically wash our dirty linen and openly confront problems.

In November, Kathy Dorr, our International Corresponding Secretary resigned from that position

NEXT MEETING - Tuesday, November 6th, 2018 **promptly** at 7:00 pm at the Ripley-Grier Studios, 520 - 8th Avenue (betw. 36th & 37th Ave) **Room 16M**.
REVIEW OF THE 22 GENERA of sub-family *Tillandsioideae* with photos of habitats, typical species, cultivars and growing tips.

and as a Director in a bitter, critical letter sent to each Board member. Those who have attended previous International Conferences may have already gleaned that a serious clash of personalities has existed and clearly has impeded cooperative effort. (This was certainly evident to those of us who went to the 1975 Conference in California.)

Mrs. Dorr's resignation was accepted (effective immediately in view of the intensity of the emotions) by Elmer Lorenz, our President, who defended the current administration's record of achievement. Kathy Dorr made no specific proposals for changes in our operations.

Essentially, her letter dealt with her complaints about the Board's alleged insincerity and pettiness, its lack of appreciation for her contributions and the Bromeliad Journal's expressed disappointment at the failure of three California directors to win election and against whom she perhaps harbors some animosity. (See Victoria Padilla article in the Sept. 1978 Bromeliad Journal. It contained some inappropriate descriptions of the contributions of three newly elected members and some unfortunate post-election comment.)



BSI officers, 1952. Top l to re: Morris Schick, Dir. Russell Seibert 2nd V.P., Frank Overton, Treasurer, Bottom - Victoria Padilla, Secy, Mulford Foster, Pres. David Barry, 1st VP, (Journal, V. 32, No 6 All Californians except Mulford Foster from Florida). Photographed at Padilla's house by Jules Padilla.

I have great affection for Kathy Dorr - she is one of the hardest working, effective Bromeliad activists I've met. But the achievements of other California colleagues also cannot be gainsaid; they should be likewise appreciated and supported. If this were only a personality problem the matter would be laid to rest with Kathy's resignation. But her criticism was clearly restricted to the California officers and directors as being insensitive to and divorced from the affiliates. In this area lies the danger of divisiveness and sectionalism. (A regional feeling can be sensed today in Florida and Texas.)

But bromeliad interest is an international phenomenon. There is much that we can learn from each other. An international organization is essential, and its administration must be centered somewhere. It already exists, and is functioning in California. Now we must strengthen cooperation and mutual confidence. To this end, we need to reappraise our organizational structure with innovative changes which can build unity and understanding. Then egoism and incipient narrow sectionalism can be deflated. □

February, 2015

Volume 52, No.2

Early Legends, and Some BSI History

by Herb Plever

At our Holiday party I was asked how our New York Bromeliad Society was organized, and I told about our first organizing meeting in 1962 at the Long Island City apartment of Dr. George Milstein; that the famous Mulford B. Foster had flown up from Florida to welcome our group into the BSI. I was surprised to find that nobody at our holiday party knew who Mulford was, though I had written extensively about him in Bromeliana.

So it is appropriate that I write again of the contributions of the brom pioneers. In February, Americans will celebrate the birthday of George

Washington, our first president and often known as the father of our country. But there are not many people left who remember Mulford Foster, the first president of the Bromeliad Society and the man we often called the "Father of the Bromeliads" or "Mr. Bromeliad".

The story of this incredibly talented, intrepid naturalist-explorer is intertwined with that of other bromeliad legends: his wife Racine and his friend Lyman B. Smith. I add to this triumvirate the name of Victoria Padilla. I also think of Charles Wiley of California, Nat DeLeon of Florida, Walter Richter

(from what was then East Germany) and pioneers from “down under” who followed Mulford: Muriel Waterman and Bea Hanson of New Zealand and W.B. Charley and Grace Goode of Australia.

Mulford B. Foster (Dec. 28, 1888 - Aug. 28, 1978) was, to quote from Victoria Padilla's 1978 Journal obit (V. 28, No. 6, pgs 243-244), an "explorer, writer, artist, lecturer, botanist (with no formal training as such Ed.) naturalist, horticulturist, hybridizer, photographer, raconteur, bromeliad grower, collector, gardener, Co-founder, President from 1950 to 1959, Director and Honorary Trustee. Mulford and Racine settled in Florida in the 1920s, and he "discovered" bromeliads in the Everglades while looking for snakes and again in 1934 while traveling in Mexico. His growing interest in the Bromeliad Family led him to travel (often with his wife Racine) over 150,000 miles through Brazil, Mexico, Columbia, Honduras, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Peru, Dutch Guiana, Ecuador, Trinidad, Cuba, Venezuela and Jamaica.

Mulford discovered and collected about **200 new species** of bromeliads, about one-eighth of all the species then known and identified in taxonomy!

He also rediscovered and collected almost 100 old species that had been found and described by 19th century explorer-naturalists but which subsequently had been lost to horticulture.

Mulford Foster was the first person in the United States to hybridize a bromeliad. His *Billbergia* 'Fantasia' (*B. pyramidalis* x *B. saundersii*) is still my favorite, most frequent flowering billbergia. He also crossed *Tillandsia ionantha* x *T. brachycaulis* to make *Tillandsia* 'Victoria' - named for Victoria Padilla.

Mulford Foster was the Editor of the BSI's Bulletin for its first seven years.

Racine S. Foster (1910-1991) was a legend in her own right. She roughed it with Mulford on many of those trips through forests, mountains and deserts. She kept a journal with catalogued notes of the flora, fauna and terrain, and she made the herbarium specimen pressings for all the collected plants which were later sent to their friend Dr. Lyman B. Smith for identification.

All the collected plants were brought home to Florida and she had more than equal responsibility for growing them on and creating and maintaining

seedlings and pups from the collections, especially when Mulford was away. In 1945, Racine and Mulford wrote a widely read book called: "Brazil, Orchid of Tropics" which described the adventures of their collecting trips in Brazil.

They were such enthusiastic supporters of the BSI that they paid for the costs of printing and publishing the Bromeliad Society Bulletin. She wrote many articles for the Bulletin and for the BSI Journal as it was later called. Racine succeeded Mulford as editor of the Bulletin for Volume 8; she was a copy editor of the Journal, on its editorial advisory board and a Trustee of the BSI.

The Fosters first lived within the city of Orlando, but they bought property out of town "in the country" in a forest of century-old live-oak trees where they established a home and a 12 acre bromeliad sanctuary for all of the collected plants and hybrids, called **Bromel-La**.

Racine's 1973 description (BSI Journal V. 28, No. 5, pg.172,) is most apt: "...it took us six years just to move the plants before the house for us was built...When people say: 'You are so lucky to have this place', we remind them that it took forty years of experience with plants and many sacrifices to buy, build and move from town. We wanted seclusion and privacy, so we made a perimeter around this property, a screen of *Ligustrum*, *Yuccas*, *Podocarpus*, *Rhapis* Palms, Cycads and various shrubs...

"The natural clusters of trees determined the shape and location of the walks and ways for people as well as for the areas for bromeliads near trees, so they could climb up trunks, or so they could extend themselves in the sandy leaf mold open areas; this they did and now are growing in great masses crowding the trees...In town, we had raised thousands of seedlings from the collected species; this gave us the opportunity to bring many plants to Bromel-La in minimum space, and only now, years later, have some of these seedlings reached maturity; they are flowering and ready for identification. They are acclimated now, some happier on one side of a tree than the other...Bromeliads have an amazing adaptability...They do not mind being transported, dried out or starved; they can take abuse, half of which would kill many other plants."

Bromel-La was a fabulous mecca for those who were fortunate to have seen it. I had met Mulford in 1963 and had visited Bromel-La in the early '70s,

in 1979 and in 1980 at the time of the WBC in Orlando. I had a good relationship with Racine as snail mail correspondents; she was a subscriber and avid reader of Bromeliana. By the late 1970s Racine felt she was no longer able to maintain Bromel-La. We had corresponded about raising funds to make Bromel-La a BSI educational center. Unfortunately this did not happen and Racine was forced to sell the property.

Dr. Lyman B. Smith (1904-1997) - In every field of human there are only a few people whose contributions to the advancement of that field are so important that progress would be inconceivable without their work. Such was the contribution of Dr. Lyman B. Smith. Lyman spent some years studying the *Bromeliaceae* as a member of the staff of Harvard's Grey Herbarium and later as Senior Scientist at the Dept. Of Biology at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. He was not content to merely analyze herbarium specimens, but he made many field trips to Brazil, Columbia, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Argentina and Cuba.

Spurred by these studies and the species and rediscovered species sent to him by the Fosters, Dr. Smith published hundreds of titles and descriptions of bromeliad species in books and botany journals. This work led to the publication of his monumental 3 volume Monograph of the *Bromeliaceae* in Flora Neotropica from 1977 to 1979, covering first the sub-family *Pitcairnioideae*, then the *Bromelioideae* and finally the *Tillandsioideae*. It was later revised and updated by Lyman and his colleague, Dr. Robert Read.

In the early years of the New York Bromeliad Society we were fortunate to have Lyman as a speaker, teacher and writer for Bromeliana from 1963 to 1968. During that period he maintained a working office-lab at the New York Botanical Gardens in the Bronx where he could study the bromeliad specimens in their extensive Herbarium.

Thus Lyman was able to join us at pre-meeting dinners and at our monthly meetings. And it was during this period that many of us were introduced to bromeliad taxonomy in Lyman's talks

and articles in Bromeliana, and we had Lyman around to answer our questions.

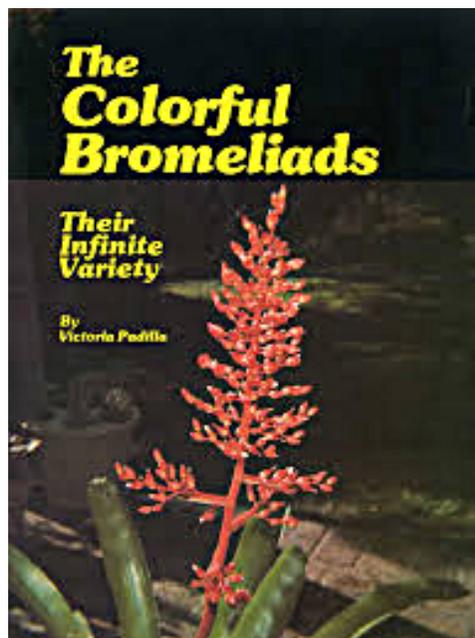
Dr. Smith continued his research preparation for the Bromeliad Monograph after he moved from Harvard's Grey Herbarium and became a Senior Scientist at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. At that time I was acquiring a large collection of Tillandsias from Central and South America, and when plants did not seem to fit the Tillandsia Key, I would send them to Lyman for identification. He called them "stinkers", but he would respond by post card or letter within a week. (This discipline of prompt response was carried on by the late Harry Luther while he was the Director of the Bromeliad Identification Center in Marie Selby Gardens, in Florida.)

Lyman was warm and witty, a man with many contrasts and interests. He was a mild and modest scientist who spent his entire life among plants, but few people know that he was a champion light-weight wrestler while in college.

Victoria Padilla, a co-founder of the BSI in 1950 was a vital force in the bromeliad world until her death in 1986. She was its Secretary until November, 1959 when she became Editor of the Bulletin. Within a few years Victoria had transformed the Bulletin to our BSI Journal, more professional with glossy paper and color photos and with the same high quality of material as its predecessor. She personally reached out to growers and scientists for articles of interest - and she was very persuasive.

Victoria was not only a great editor, but she also wrote two basic books on bromeliads that greatly contributed to members' education: "Bromeliads" and "The Colorful Bromeliads". She was totally dedicated to the BSI, but she was somewhat elitist - well intentioned but benevolently imperious. She and other leaders of the Los Angeles Guild were responsible for the formation of the BSI in 1950; that group remained the main local bromeliad society while other chapters were being chartered.

Despite Mulford Foster's towering contributions, the Californian officers and directors



looked down upon him as being a folksy, country bumpkin. (Mulford knew far more taxonomy than any of the Californians. Lyman Smith, in discussing Mulford Foster, once told me that Mulford sometimes disagreed with his identifications - and that he was often right. Racine once confided in me her deep resentment of the snotty attitude of the Californians toward her talented husband.) The Los Angeles Bromeliad Guild was an elitist - by invitation only - society with restricted and limited membership of about 30 people .

For too many years I have refrained from writing about some critical and controversial issues in our past that seriously affected BSI, because the highly emotional reactions to them left sores that never seemed to heal. I am now 90 years old and it is time for me to write of those events while my memory is still sharp.

Sometime in 1979 I received a telephone call from Sue Sill (then Dr. Sue Gardner). She told me that the Bromeliad Societies in Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas had become so incensed at being denied a voice in the BSI that they had met in secret to plan a secession from BSI and to organize an opposition society. The colorful journal called **Grande** which had published 5 issues was their trial Journal. (I found some resentment against Los Angeles when I visited members of the LaBallona Valley Bromeliad Society on one of my trips to California in the 1970s.)

Sue and I agreed that a split in the BSI would be disastrous and we decided to attend the next Board meeting in the hope they would take steps to democratize BSI when they were told of the southern societies' plans to secede. We met at the L.A. airport early on the Tuesday evening of the meeting which was called for 8:00 pm, rented a car and drove out to Victoria's house. When we drove past the house it was dark so we decided to park and wait for 8 pm. There were many cars parked across the street from the house and at precisely 8:00 pm all the car doors opened and out came the directors who had been waiting for the appointed hour (and not one minute before). When we came in, Board members were shocked at our presence - "What are you doing here?" We asked that we be given a place on the agenda, and Sue then detailed the decisions to secede taken by officers of southern societies at several secret meetings she had attended.

The response of the officers and board members to Sue's presentation was mocking hilarity and derision. They laughed at the idea that affiliate societies would secede. "They will have nowhere to go", they said. Sue and I drove back to the airport highly offended and determined to take steps to prevent a coming catastrophe. We decided that as directors we would move to amend the BSI bylaws to provide voting rights for the election of directors to all the societies from all regions around the world - and make the "International" in the Bromeliad Society International a reality.

We needed to meet to refine the idea and to formulate the motion. We felt we could use the input from at least another director and decided to ask Eloise Beach of Apoka Florida to join with us in the work. Eloise agreed and asked Racine Foster to participate, and Racine invited us to spend a weekend at her Bromel-La home in Orlando to formulate a motion and plan strategy.

We spent an full weekend of intense work in which we finally all agreed on language for the motion that would entitle every region around the world to directors in proportion to the number of their BSI members. Copies of the motion were sent via registered mail to every Director and Officer, for the agenda of the Board meeting in Orlando, Florida in 1980 when the next World Bromeliad Conference was scheduled to be held. Then we assiduously contacted every officer and director asking them to vote for the motion to amend the by-laws. We knew the result would be very close.

Prior to the vote I received a letter from Victoria telling me she felt I had betrayed her friendship and how hurt she was over my actions, which she regarded as an attack on the BSI and on her personally. She was so blinded by her concern that outsiders might ruin her BSI that she was unable to see that the motion would greatly benefit the BSI.

BSI President Tim Lorman arrived at the WBC hotel in Orlando with only a few Californians, (most California directors rarely attended Board meetings at WBCs outside California), but he was confident that the Board would reject the motion because he was armed with written proxies from his supporters on the Board who did not attend this important meeting. (I don't believe there was any provision for proxy votes in the BSI by-laws.) The vote was conducted by secret ballot, and the proposed

new by-laws were adopted by the Board by the narrow margin of two votes. If just one vote for the motion had gone to the opposition, there would have been a tie and the amendment would have failed.

I believe the unexpected swing vote was cast by former BSI President Charles Wiley, of Palas Verde Estates, California, in favor of the amendment. He was the leader of the South Bay Associates Bromeliad Society, well respected, knowledgeable in both horticulture and taxonomy; he was later snubbed by his California friends when they worked out that he had cast a ballot for the amendment.

I am certainly not anti-California. I had and have many friends in that state whom I admire, but the emotional resentment engendered by the adoption of the new by-laws was so intense that I was snubbed by many California leaders. I had had a long friendship with Thelma O'Reilly (Sylvia and I had been privileged house guests), but she refused even to say hello for eight years when we would meet at the next 4 World Conferences. But I have no regrets, because I know that the work of Sue, Eloise, Racine and I prevented a disastrous split of the BSI and made a democratic BSI possible.

Racine died in 1986; Sue and Eloise are still alive and well, and at 94 I'm still hanging in (on). In addition to being a BSI activist, Dr. Sue Gardner (now Sue Sill) was famous for her research on Tillandsias in the field; her PhD thesis reporting on that work is still highly regarded as an important taxonomic resource. Sue also was and is a very talented artist, well known for her paintings and drawings of bromeliads and diverse Mexican scenes. You can see her work on line at <https://suesill.com>. Sue lives in Mcallen, Texas.

Eloise Beach still resides in Apoka, Florida. For many years, Eloise has been a highly skilled grower and master in bromeliad horticulture, and she has been the U.S. representative for the sale of the great hybrids of Chester Skotak of Costa Rica. I note that recently Eloise has turned her hand at creating new cultivars with Chester. She is without doubt our principal historian for the life and works of Mulford B. Foster and Racine Foster.

I will recount another serious controversy in our history in a subsequent issue. (See below. Ed.) It has been famously said that those who fail to know their history are destined to repeat the mistakes of the past. □

March, 2015

Volume 52, No. 3

SOME MORE BSI HISTORY WE CAN LEARN FROM

by Herb Plevier

(I note here that I should have included in my February article the names of Ervin Wurthmann and Julian Nally of Florida and Adda Abendroth of Brazil as important contributors in the early years of BSI.)

Implementation of New Bylaws - After the adoption of the new by-laws that provided for voting representation on the board of directors for every region in proportion to their BSI membership, it took time for a new voting procedure to be set up. This took place in 1982 and new officers and some directors were elected. (Directors whose terms had not expired continued to serve out their terms.)

In 1982 the new board elected Nat DeLeon of Miami as President, Edgar Smith of Fort Worth, TX as Vice President, Connie Johnson of Miami as Recording Secretary and David Gardner of Corpus

Christi, Texas as Treasurer. Committee heads were designated and committees were filled. There was a feeling of optimism, but it was dissipated with the eruption of a controversy over judging schools and judging rules. Entering plants in a show enhances participation by members in local affiliates; there was world-wide interest in creating judging schools and training and certification of judges, so it was important for us to resolve this dispute.

New Crisis on Judging - Valerie Steckler, a director from New Orleans (later from Texas), had been designated as head of the Judging Committee, and (supported by her committee) she arrogated to herself the position of sole and exclusive teacher for judging schools. She presented the board with a schedule of schools in different regions she would teach.

Needless to say, this caused much resentment and anger among expert growers in some affiliates (particularly South Florida) who felt they were equal to or better qualified than Valerie to teach judging.

Nat DeLeon and Connie Johnson demanded that affiliates be given authority to designate judging teachers and set up training schools that would be recognized by the Judging Committee. If their request was denied they would move to have Valerie Steckler removed as committee head. The Board of Directors was divided on this issue; Valerie was supported by Board members from Louisiana and Texas, her home base. Thus only a few short years after the previous crisis and potential BSI split, we were faced again with a similar problem.

Although we agreed that affiliates had the right to appoint qualified people to set up judging schools, David and Sue Gardner, David Benzing and I urged Nat to tone down the rhetoric and have patience while we attempted to get Valerie and the Judging Committee to be more flexible. Regrettably we were stonewalled by Valerie whose ego seemed to have overwhelmed her common sense.

After an impasse of about 4 years the conflict came to a head in 1986 and 1987. During this period local societies had begun recruiting judging teachers and were starting to organize unofficial judging schools, without seeking accreditation from the Judging Committee. So things were quieter though animosity against Valerie Steckler still simmered.

The Mulford Foster Award is given to a WBC host for mounting a standard show. At the board meeting at the 1986 World Conference in New Orleans, the Bromeliad Society of South Florida, offered to host the 1988 World Conference in Miami - and it was the only affiliate that was willing to host the WBC at that time. But the proposal was conditioned on the Board's agreement that the BSSF would receive the Mulford Foster Award even if the Judging Committee ruled that its show did not meet the requirements for a standard show. This presented a real dilemma: the board could either give up having a World Conference in 1988, or it would have to override the Judging Committee's insistence on strict conformance to the judging rules for a standard show.

A strong majority of the board felt that the continuance of World Conferences without a hiatus was more important than rigid adherence to judging

rules, and they voted to accept the offer of the BSSF and its condition about receiving the Mulford Foster Award. Those of us who supported the vote felt that at last judging rules had been put into the perspective that they were valuable but not indispensable. BUT - that was not the end of this saga.

A few days before the board meeting in 1987 Connie Johnson called me and advised that BSSF had been notified by Valerie Steckler that if they did not put on a standard show in strict conformance the Judging Rules they would be denied the Mulford Foster Award, notwithstanding the board's vote in 1986. Connie asked me what my position would be at the meeting. I replied that it was the first time I was hearing about it, and that we could both speak in opposition to that decision at the meeting. Connie told me that Nat DeLeon and several other officers were coming to the meeting and would ask to speak.

The leaders of BSSF did attend the meeting and Nat DeLeon did speak; he advised the board of Valerie's repudiation of the Board's 1986 vote. He said that if the Board did not adhere to its commitment, the BSSF would cancel the Conference - even it meant losing their substantial hotel deposit and having incurred other significant expenses. The chairman asked Valerie if Nat's report of her action was true, and she admitted it and said in justification that the Board had no right to infringe on the Judging Committee's jurisdiction. I then made a motion that the Board direct the Judging Committee to give the Miami show the Mulford Foster Award. I stated that the issue was no longer about the Judging Rules but that the very integrity of the Board in adhering to its commitments was at stake. The motion was seconded and before the chair could call for debate, a director said: "Call the question". A large majority of the Board voted for an immediate vote and there was no opposition, so there was no debate. Every director voted for the motion except Valerie who vote against it and Linda Harbert who abstained.

I must report that the Miami show in 1988 was excellent. What was different was that each class of judged plants was placed in small, simulated habitats that a lot of work had created, instead of the usual unnatural display of plants on tables. Craig Allen designed the presentation for the judged show. Some judges complained that it was more difficult for them to inspect the plants, but for the attendees and the general public the presentation was very educational -

and the plants were beautiful.

Of course there was chortling by some opponents of the by-laws change over our embarrassing brouhaha about judging. At the Miami 1988 World Conference a Californian who was still talking to me needed me about it, saying: "We never would have permitted such a controversy." It is true that when a small group of people at the top is in full control of events, such disputes are not allowed to break out publically, but in a diverse, democratic organization the thrashing out of different views benefits the organization - provided the participants respect each other's rights and avoid creating a war over issues. Also my friend was wrong about the facts. There were several embarrassing squabbles in those early years of the BSI.

The Paint Brush Scandal - Dave Barry was one of the founders of the BSI and he was its first Vice-President. He also was the owner of California Jungle Gardens, a large bromeliad nursery in Los Angeles. Ed Hummel was the owner of Hummel's Exotic Gardens, a large nursery in Carlsbad, California. Hummel was a fabled hybridizer of bromeliads; he had a great nose for selecting and growing strong species clones that he used in hybridizing. Hummel was paranoid about keeping the parentage of his hybrids secret from potential competition. His reputation was high and he was Barry's main competitor in California.

Sometime in the early 1960s, Dave Barry, then President of the BSI, a cryptic article about a certain hybridizer who he alleged walked around his greenhouses randomly transferring pollen to pistils with a small paint brush - without making any records of the parents. It was further hinted that the reason for the hybridizer's secrecy about parentage was that he had no records. It was clear to everybody that Ed Hummel was the certain hybridizer Barry was referring to. Hummel took the bait; he went into a deep rage and vowed that he would never again sell bromeliads to Californians. I don't know if Hummel later relented from his California embargo. Though Barry was acting as a businessman and not as BSI President, this scandal was an embarrassment to BSI.

The 1972 World Bromeliad Conference -

(I report on this event because I see it as a prelude to our efforts to get the BSI Board of Directors adopt democratic by-laws in 1979 that were finally

successful in 1980. As I recount below some history of the conflict in hosting 1975 WBC, I also report on that Conference to show that it followed the Houston Conference template - but not the show design.)

The BSI leadership had long talked about putting on the first World Bromeliad Conference in Los Angeles in 1975 to celebrate our 25th anniversary. But they were upstaged by the Houston Bromeliad Society which proposed hosting a WBC in Houston in 1972. The first WBC was held in Houston, Texas on June 3-4, 1972; it was an excellent, well organized conference with fine plants and a huge center display with a theme that stressed the international character of BSI. The display was designed and mounted by the indomitable Fritz Kubisch who was President of the then Southern California Bromeliad Society.

The conference was presided over by BSI President Bill Paylen and Houston BS President Merriel O'Neal. A number of notables from abroad attended, including Bea Hanson of New Zealand, Dr. Richard Oeser of Germany and Marcel LeCoufle of Paris, France. There were displays by affiliates and a garden tour. The guest speaker was Robert Wilson; Patrick Mitchell was the excellent conference chairman and the late Marion LeBlanc was Master of Ceremonies. The conference brochure contained the following welcome: "... As citizens of the host city, we Houstonians extend to everyone the hand of hospitality and friendship. We hope that each of you will return to your homes with something gained. It is your presence and participation that will lay the cornerstone for future meetings such as this and the fellowship which is derived from them." (I say amen to that hope. Please note that Houston will host the next WBC for the third time on June 13-19, 2016 when you can expect to enjoy their hand of hospitality and friendship and a great conference.)

The 1975 World Bromeliad Conference -

To coincide with our 25th Anniversary, Los Angeles now had three years to plan and organize a World Conference set for June 6-12, 1975. Kathy Dorr, BSI Corresponding Secretary and Assistant Editor of the Journal, was designated as the Conference Chairman and she quickly assumed full control in organizing the conference. Kathy chose Buena Park, California as the venue instead of Los Angeles; she stressed its proximity to Disneyland (2 miles) and Knott's Berry Farm located in Buena Park

and that Los Angeles was only 20 miles away. After the venue became known, a buzz started in bromeliad circles about a bitter, sub-rosa controversy between Kathy Dorr and Victoria Padilla about the site and program. At the conference I heard people expressing doubt that Victoria would attend. She did come and she graciously accepted a special award from the BSI.

I have always been fascinated at the very close bond between the two women whose personalities were different and opposite. Of course both were totally dedicated in their own ways to BSI and bromeliads. Victoria Padilla was formal, quite proper, charming and soft-spoken. Kathy was outspoken, occasionally slangy and humorous or sardonic and independent. She was a take-charge person - a smart, energetic organizer and officer, highly knowledgeable about bromeliad horticulture, and she wrote for the Journal - qualities that Victoria Padilla admired and needed in the BSI leadership.

On meeting Kathy you got the impression she was a sort of wild, gun-toting Oklahoman (where she was raised). She drove a pickup truck with a loaded pistol in the glove box that I saw the year before when she took my wife and me on a bromeliad garden tour including a visit to Victoria.)

Notable guests from abroad who attended the 1975 World Conference were the great hybridist Grace Goode from Australia and Bea Hanson and Harry Martin from New Zealand. It had many events that make a conference memorable: Excellent seminars were given by Ervin Wurthmann, Dr. David Benzing, Dr. Robert Read, John and Mary Bleck and a very well-attended Bromeliad Culture Panel held in a large room. The panelists were Sue Gardner, Bea Hanson, George Anderson, Herb Plever and Bob Burstrom. We also went on a nursery visit to Kent's Bromeliads, Fuchsia Land (run by Mike Kashkin) and Velco Imports which specialized in Tillandsias.

The judged show had a small number of entries. There were 4 or 5 modest displays by BSI and some local affiliates and a good display by Leonard Kent. An excellent pictorial display about Mulford Foster was mounted by Eloise Beach.

It seemed that the dispute had been resolved and relationships had mended. But when Kathy Dorr wrote a report of the Conference for the Journal (V. 25 No. 5 Sept-Oct, 1975) entitled "The Twenty-Fifth Birthday Party", Victoria inserted the following parenthetical, bitter note immediately under the title:

"(Editor's Note: Mrs. Dorr was in complete charge of this event, making all the decisions, appointing all her helpers, and setting up the program. We thank her most sincerely for putting on a beautiful display.)"

The Bromeliad Cultivar Registry - Don Beadle was BSI's first Cultivar Registrar, and in 1998 he produced a comprehensive registry of known cultivars with histories in book form and digitally on his computer. Don tried to get the BSI to put it on the BSI website to no avail. Thereafter, when Derek Butcher became Cultivar Registrar he again tried to get the Board to put the BCR on line but was ignored by the leadership of BSI. So Derek turned to Michael Andreas who had created a new website for the Florida Council of Bromeliad Societies. Derek and Mike jointly contributed to the creation of a BCR on fcbs.org. It soon became a primary source for cultivar information and photos.

BSI President Joyce Brehm was our first female President and her deep devotion to BSI cannot be disputed. But she had an obsession about the BCR and was determined to reclaim it for the BSI by any means necessary. She did not approach Mike to transfer the BCR as webmaster (she thought correctly he would not likely agree). Instead she attempted to undermine him and insulted his abilities. This enraged Mike and many Floridians.

Then Pres. Brehm led the Board to direct BSI Webmaster Nick Bethmann to quickly create a new BCR on our site. He did so but the Registry was inadequate in design, and it had limited data and no search engines. BSI Cultivar Registrar Geoffrey Lawn had primary jurisdiction over such actions, but his approval was not sought, nor was he even consulted. When he protested, Joyce impugned his competence. Michael reacted to Joyce's action by temporarily blocking sections of the BCR on fcbs.org and asserting that he, personally, owned the Registry. For many years this contentious issue persisted, roiling the Board and causing antagonistic factions and disunity.

I see no point in reciting the myriad details of this sordid history, because now the issue has been resolved. Thanks to Director Eric Gouda, Derek Butcher and Cultivar Registrar Geoffrey Lawn (and support from our current BSI leaders), we now have our own, official Cultivar Registry on the BSI website. It an excellent, right up-to-date resource for

data and photos and with good search engines.

The BSI has long been in disarray as a result of inept floundering on the part of previous administrations. The current officers and directors do understand the problems, but resolutions will take time. They are dedicated, unpaid volunteers and will do the job - with your help sooner rather than later. Some progress has already been made.

The BSI is the glue that holds all of us around the world together through the Journal and our WBCs and it enhances contact between affiliates. With your participation BSI will be able to better serve our needs. Everyone reading this article should do what you can to get your local members (and officers) to join the BSI. Tell BSI what you think it should be doing that it is not doing now. BSI is the only game in town. □

IN MEMORIAM - We regret to report the passing of three bromeliad stalwarts and good friends: Dorothy Berg of Sarasota, Florida, Society activist and wife of the late Wally Berg, Felipe N. de Carvalho, co-founder of the Brazilian Bromeliad Society and Nat DeLeon, of Miami, Florida. Nat was the founder and President of the Bromeliad Society of South Florida, and a long-time director and Honorary Trustee of the BSI. □

(Editor's Note: BSI officers and directors meet only twice a year, and attendance by directors in the past was sporadic at best. In the past an administrative executive committee conducted our affairs between such meetings. Thus it was difficult for our pro bono officers and directors to get adequate data and thrash out solutions to incipient problems in a timely manner. But for the past several years we have had a Board email Relay, so that our officers and directors are in continuous communication, working and voting on motions that address problems as they are identified every day.

Our officers and Board of Directors, led by President Lyn Wegner of South Africa, with financial guidance by Treasurer, Ben Klugh, are the best we have had in my memory. Thanks to the outstanding contributions of Derek Butcher, Webmaster Eric Gouda and Bromeliad Cultivar Registrar Geoff Lawn our Bromeliad Cultivar

Register, TAXON, BROM-L and BSI website are treasures of continuous, up to date data.

The instant email relay communication between officers and directors enables democratic interchange to shape solutions to problems as they are identified. The regular and constant activity of the Board of Directors and our officers, led by President Lyn Wegman of South Africa has been the best we have ever had in our history.

We have had a continuing substantial loss of BSI membership that was not seriously addressed until recently. Most membership organizations have the same problem. There is a world-wide malaise that has cost most organizations of every kind the loss of membership. When I joined the Bromeliad Society in 1962 the Journal had more than 3,500 subscribers world wide. BSI membership has dropped below 1,000 while affiliate membership totals many thousands of members, but probably less than 15% are members of the BSI. This dichotomy needs to be resolved. I believe our by-laws mandate that all affiliate officers should be members of BSI and it is up to them to persuade their members to join.

The annual membership fee is \$45.00. This is a lot less than most people spend for one evening out. It is not the fee that is keeping affiliate members from joining but lack of recognition of the importance of keeping our international organization alive and working for you.

ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY - Once again Michael and Francisco have generously offered to host our Annual Holiday Party. Save this date: Wednesday, December 19th, 2018. Further details will appear in the December issue of Bromeliana.

OFFICERS	DIRECTORS
President.....Ben Katz	Victoria Ehrlich
Treasurer.....Barbara Lagow	
Editor.....Herb Plever	
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