Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

California Horticulture Oral History Series

W. George Waters

ENGLISH GARDEN HISTORY, WESTERN GARDENING, AND CREATING AND EDITING *PACIFIC HORTICULTURE*

With an Introduction by
Susan M. Smith

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1998

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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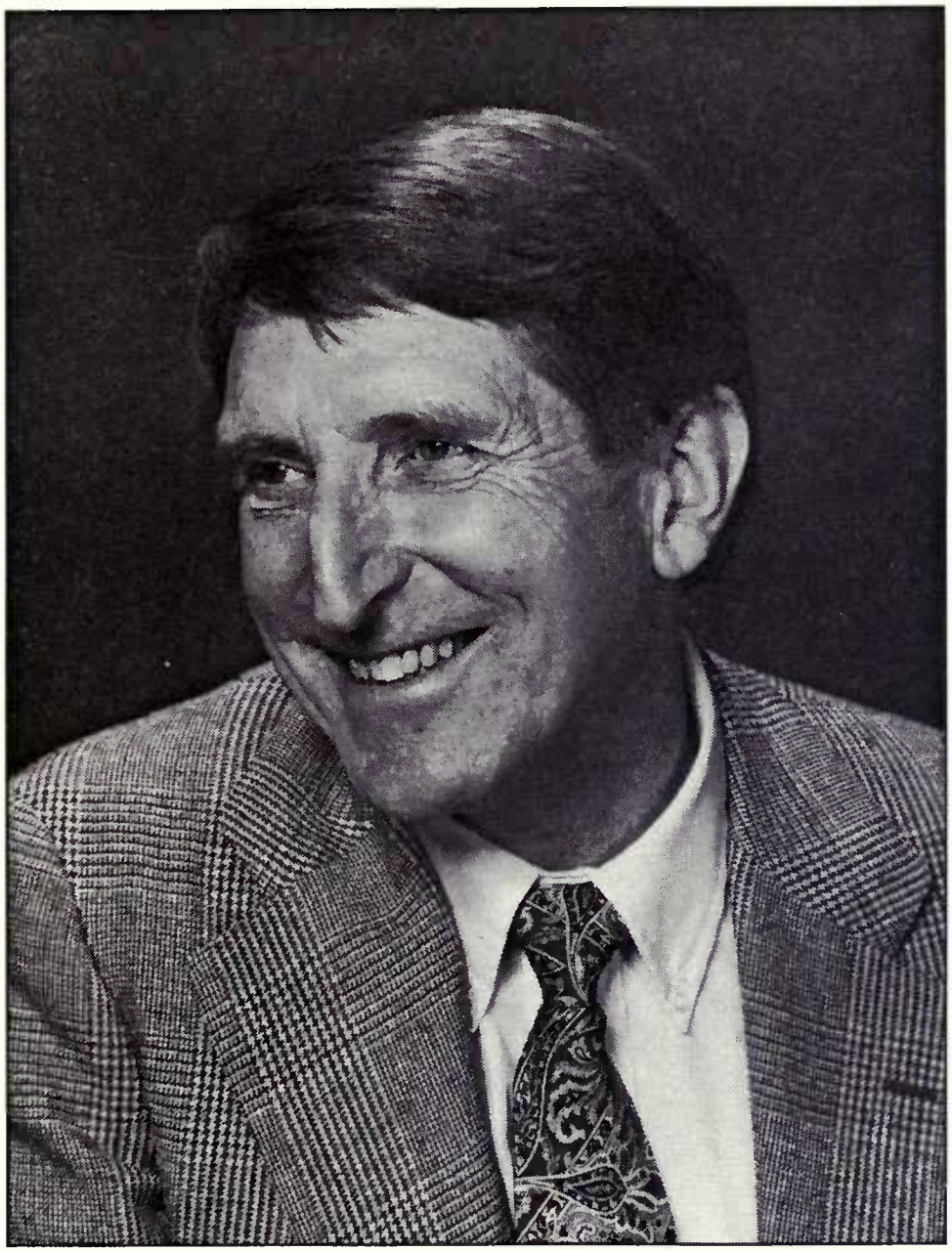

George Waters, Berkeley, 1982.

Photograph by Sharon Leong

Cataloguing information

WATERS, W. George (b. 1925) Editor

English Garden History, Western Gardening, and Creating and Editing *Pacific Horticulture*, 2000, viii, 229 pp.

Boyhood in wartime London, conscientious objector status, alternative service jobs; research work at Kodak, Ltd., 1954-1972, bicycling; British Garden History Society activities, programs, horticultural groups, status; Waters's gardens in England; marriage, and move to Berkeley, CA; connecting with California Horticultural Society, founding of Pacific Horticultural Foundation, decision to revamp *California Horticultural Journal*: journal format committee, financing, supporters, advertisers, distribution; discussion of Waters's editorial stance, book reviews, photography, Mediterranean gardens, working with authors; distinctive Bay Area gardens, gardeners, and Lester Hawkins, Marge Hayakawa, others. Appendices include an autobiographical statement by Olive Rice Waters; and letters to authors.

Introduction by Susan M. Smith, Retired co-owner, San Francisco Travel Service.

Interviewed 1998 by Suzanne B. Riess for the California Horticulture Oral History Series, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION by Susan M. Smith

I was surprised to see a tall angular fellow step into the Ratcliffs' car at Lake Shasta. I had a ride with Bob and Evelyn on a California Horticultural Society weekend field trip to see the wildflowers and conifers so well known in this Shasta-Trinity area of northern California. Now, on the return trip, the company included a stranger. As the Ratcliffs had taken a garden tour in 1970 that I had organized to Virginia's great houses and gardens, we all began talking of this. Soon I learned I was with the editor of *Pacific Horticulture*, a magazine I greatly admired.

Learning that George Waters as a teenager had used his bicycle to reach nearby great gardens in England, I visualized before me a wonderful tour leader. Here was someone who could relate to and describe English gardens, their design and influences. After all, the English are the greatest of gardeners, artistic and knowledgeable.

Almost all museums, botanical gardens, and other nonprofits sponsor tours now. Then it was unusual. There were decided benefits for sponsors, including contributions to the sponsoring organization as part of the tour cost. Of course, it would be impossible to obtain the expertise of someone like George Waters with the average "tour."

The course our conversation was taking met with a bemused and slightly mocking reception. Still, the interest such a tour would have for readers of *Pacific Horticulture* was obvious. The Ratcliffs declared themselves fellow tour member candidates.

The planning began on return to San Francisco where my travel agency was located. The *Pacific Horticulture* tour to English gardens in 1978 proved a great success. George had written a fascinating article describing the history of English gardening. We sent that in advance to tour members. He had given it as a lecture before garden groups, and it was immensely popular when presented to the California Horticultural Society. During the tour George offered after-dinner talks about the gardens of the coming days from the historic perspective he knew so well.

I joined one of the several tours George led to English gardens. I recall the small shock of watching tour members "bare-root" the plants they had purchased for return through U.S. customs. This was done in one of the bathrooms of the fine hotel in which we were staying! Fortunately tour members had permission. I needn't describe the appearance of the bathtub at the end of the process.

Because of the prestige of *Pacific Horticulture*, and its many readers in England, entree was possible to gardens not generally open. It was a tremendous surprise to have one such garden owner treat the entire group to a delicious lunch.

Unexpected moments often occurred. Imagine arriving at a lovely country house with a long view over a beautiful wooded valley. At the entrance to the garden is a rickety card table. It is the aristocratic owner herself who is selling one-pound tickets for entrance to the garden!

Early on, the potential for tours to other destinations led to the establishment of a *Pacific Horticulture* tour committee chaired by Betty Rollins, a keen gardener and former president of the Herb Society. Over the years *Pacific Horticulture* tours visited South Africa, Japan, China, Greece and Turkey, India, France and Spain.

Periodically *Pacific Horticulture* tours returned to different sections of England, with its never-ending great and exquisite small gardens--and owner-gardeners--to visit. I was involved in the planning of the English garden tours, and some of the others as well. English gardens were a personal enthusiasm. I was bowled over by what a British gardener in the British climate could do with an herbaceous border, and George Waters brought an intimate knowledge and understanding of that tradition to the tours that he led.

The prestige and worldwide reputation of *Pacific Horticulture* always meant so much in planning tours. When Brazil was decided on as a destination, the tour leader drafted by George was Conrad Hamerman, friend and biographer of the great Brazilian landscape designer and conservationist, Roberto Burle Marx. The tour included a lunch hosted by Burle Marx at his house and garden outside of Rio de Janeiro.

In the fall of 1987 in New Zealand, Gordon Collier, one of the great gardeners "down under," led the *Pacific Horticulture* tour group at George's request around his friends' gardens on the north and south islands. He and his wife Annette then managed to put up some twenty tour members "bed and breakfast" style with his relatives on the neighboring peaks of an original family sheep station of some 20,000 acres!

Our 1985 Australia tour was led by an American resident of Perth, Dr. Arthur Weston, a botanist and environmental analyst. It was memorable that garden hosts in Queensland arranged books--all on the native plants of the region--on a very large dining room table. It was an impressive display of interest and knowledge for Californians who at that time had little comparable in terms of beautiful books on the flora of California.

Pacific Horticulture tours expanded the interests and enthusiasms of participants while interest abroad was reflected in the reception given the groups traveling with George.

Barbara Pitschel, the popular and well known head librarian at Strybing Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, told me of describing to visiting students and researchers qualities of publications on hand that might interest them. "It is the editorial and pictorial quality of *Pacific Horticulture* and the very high standards which first come to mind," she remarked. "George is impeccable in terms of detail--nothing gets by him. *Pacific Horticulture*," she continued, "has a stated mission and stays focused on it."

The Strybing Library, with its delightful garden setting, has a wonderful collection of books and periodicals. In looking at their many publications from the world of horticulture, Dick Turner remarked, "There is nothing comparable to *Pacific Horticulture*. Other regions envy us for it. It is unique."

He went on to tell me that taking over as editor from George Waters was the highest honor. "He is someone I greatly respected and admired for his editorship. Later I was impressed with how skilled the production of the magazine had become and how organized those taking part in it were," he added.

I should like to close on a professional and personal note. It was a delight and pleasure to work with George Waters in this area of his professional life. It was easy for me to do so--all went smoothly forward. The tours were enthusiastically received and, I believe, very satisfying to the participants. Fortunate we are in having this tall, angular English-speaking bloke, witty as well as immensely talented, at home on our Pacific West Coast.

Susan M. Smith
Retired co-owner, San Francisco Travel Service

San Francisco
October 1999

INTERVIEW HISTORY--W. George Waters

George Waters retired in 1997 as the editor of western gardening's prize-winning journal, *Pacific Horticulture*, quarterly publication of the member groups of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation. Very soon afterward we sought him out to be an interviewee in the Regional Oral History Office's series of interviews on horticulture, botany, and landscape design.

Interviews grouped in ROHO's California horticulture series go back to memoirs like that of John Gregg, who founded Berkeley's landscape architecture department; Thomas Church, the region's most famous landscape architect, and interviews with his staff and clients; nurseryman and bonsai master Toichi Domoto; Ruth Bancroft, whose unique Walnut Creek garden inspired organization of the Garden Conservancy; Adele and Lewis Lawyer, plant pathologists and native iris hybridizers; habitat explorer and personality Wayne Roderick; and *California Horticulture* editor Owen Pearce. And it frequently happened, in my twenty-plus years of conducting these interviews with Bay Area landscape architects and horticulturists for ROHO, that I would be puzzled about something, editorial or informational, and George Waters's would be the English-accented voice with suggestions at the other end of the questing telephone.

But why would *Pacific Horticulture*'s editor be my informant over the years? Certainly the complete list of ROHO's interviews in horticulture, botany, and landscape design (bound into this most recent volume in the series) appears too varied, from plant taxonomists and landscape contractors and foresters to the owner of Filoli, the landmark estate in Woodside, California, and members of Kensington's Blake Garden family, to be encompassed by one man's expertise. Yet unifying that diversity is the near certainty that the persons interviewed for the oral histories also made their appearance in *Pacific Horticulture*, either as garden owners, or experts and authors. Editor George Waters and his contributing authors cast their net as widely as possible, and made of the journal a community of garden people.

* * *

About George Waters, as he says in his summary biographical piece, he "moved to California in the early 1970s and worked for a while in garden restoration and design. In 1976 he helped launch *Pacific Horticulture* to provide gardeners in the summer-dry western United States with their own publication... [then] became the editor of *Pacific Horticulture* later that year, and discovered a facility with the language that had been dormant since childhood." That far-too-abbreviated summary is fleshed out in the following memoir in which

George tells his stories of boyhood in World War II London, coming to grips with his conscientious objector status, and the many careers he subsequently pursued, along the way becoming a "keen gardener, cultivating in turn the productive greensand of Bedfordshire, the dry gravel of Hertfordshire, and the clay and marl of the Chiltern Hills."

The foregoing three-line quote, brief as it is, is nevertheless, for me, suffused with the voice of George Waters. A voice and a manner, an accent, perhaps, that recurs throughout the oral history, and of course in print in the editorial pieces and numerous book reviews he wrote--and on occasion still writes--for *Pacific Horticulture*. Beautifully illustrating his tone and approach are the thirteen letters we have appended to this volume and titled "Letters *From* the Editor." The reader will appreciate that while graciously, subtly, allowing his authors to reconsider their text, George Waters makes his editorial camp irresistible.

Once George Waters agreed to be interviewed, it was decided, atypically for our office, to have the tape-recording take place in the interviewer's home. George is a North Berkeley neighbor, by a mile's level stroll, and he volunteered to walk up The Alameda to what we would consider my "office" to be interviewed rather than put up with the problematic parking logistics associated with a trip to the more neutral space of a university library office. Such an arrangement, of course, meant that there was on my part a certain uneasy sense of being hostess, and of my garden being subject to the scrutiny of the retired editor of the West Coast's singularly excellent quarterly journal. "Welcome, come along my garden path, gaze down on my lawn, my trees, et cetera." I did take advantage of George's informed interest in plants, and his eye for space, and looked anew at my garden. And, as is the habit of the avid plant person, we exchanged cuttings, in this case varieties of salvia, in recognition of the end of the interviews.

* * *

An Interview History--what we call this piece of writing--is placed at the beginning of ROHO volumes on the assumption that readers will wish for a degree of insight into the experience of the oral history conversation, the interaction, through some description of the situation and the affect of the persons involved. And so, put simply, George Waters came to be interviewed for five two-hour sessions, between July 6th and September 19, 1998. But the tapes and the transcript reveal meetings punctuated by an immoderate amount of laughter. It took a transcriber as skilled and patient as Shannon Page to sort through all the noisy amusement. George Waters told his stories modestly, self-deprecatingly at times, but with an ear for the play on words, and the surprising twists and turns of his life.

* * *

I worried about how George Waters would handle the editing of his oral history. On the first occasion when I encountered him in person, sometime in 1997, seated with his wife Olive Rice Waters, and a plate of potluck dinner, preceding a talk at a California Horticultural Society meeting, I brought up the possibility of his doing an oral history interview. He made clear then to me that he is a man intensely interested in things being well written, and to the point. He quoted George Orwell in *Politics and the English Language*, from whom he declares he takes his cue as an editor--and I looked up the entire quote--as follows:

> A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly?

Needless to say, I made my case for applying different standards to the spoken process that is oral history. But having to abandon Orwell's control and standards in favor of respecting the apparent randomness of question-answer conversation was probably excruciating for George Waters. When it came to editing the oral history he did a painstaking job with what he referred to variously and unlovingly as the "Huge Pile of Paper," or the "White Elephant." I quote him:

> My November note [to the interviewer] did come out sounding off key, but was intended to convey only amazement at what, between us, we had wrought. And you must admit that in it I display some astounding verbal ticks...all those "and so on's" and "I thinks." And all that laughter! It makes our sessions sound more like riotous parties than intellectual exchanges! (One paragraph of mine is so completely incomprehensible as to suggest more Bacchanal than party!) Fortunately colorful oddities diminish in later pages, where recalling the significant incidents of my life demands only shallow dredging in the murky waters of memory, and I'm less surprised myself by what comes to the surface.
>
> I do see that extensive editing would remove too much of the interview flavor. On the other hand, readers are needlessly irritated when their attention to the thread of the story is deflected often by irrelevant words and phrases. So I hope that you will find that mine is a middle course...

By proposing the addition of several extended discussions in the form of inserted pieces of typescript (marked ++ in the text), he added substantially to the background history and setting of scene.

George Waters was a generous interviewee, both spontaneous in his answers, and conscientious in his editing. It was a pleasure to work with him. His proffered illustrations were thoughtfully chosen, and the appended "Letters *From* the Editor" give particular subtle insights into the job of being an editor. I appreciate the generous addition of her story, "Peering Through the Web," told with great feeling by Olive Rice Waters. Susan Smith's Introduction to George Waters is a real bonus, bringing in the story of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation trips, introducing the Library at Strybing Arboretum, and quoting George Waters's successor as editor of *Pacific Horticulture*, Richard G. Turner. My thanks to all of these people.

The Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library thanks most particularly the donors who made this oral history possible--they are listed in the front of the volume. While acknowledged as organizations, it is the directors and secretaries and foundation executives of those organization to whom we are particularly grateful. Their support is a validation of our work.

The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to augment through tape-recorded memoirs the Library's materials on the history of California and the West. Copies of all interviews are available for research use in The Bancroft Library and in the UCLA Department of Special Collections. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, Division Head, and the administrative direction of Charles B. Faulhaber, The James D. Hart Director of The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Suzanne B. Riess, Interviewer/Editor

November 1999
Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library
Berkeley, California

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

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Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Walter George Waters

Date of birth 29 March 1925 Birthplace Brockley, London, SE4

Father's full name William Ernest Waters

Occupation Omnibus Driver Birthplace Winchmore Hill, London

Mother's full name Dorothy Comerford

Occupation Retail Office Clerk Birthplace South London

Your spouse Olive Johnson Rice

~~Your~~ Spouse's children Andrew Rice, Landscape Architect, Oregon; Virginia Rice, Architect, Oakland, Calif; Cecilia Christensen, Artist Weaver, Santa Rosa.

Where did you grow up? Dagenham, Essex, England

Present community Berkeley, California

Education Alibon Road Junior School, Dagenham
Eastbrook Senior School, Dagenham

Occupation(s) Freelance editor, writer & photographer

Areas of expertise Garden history, horticulture, photography and film manufacture

Other interests or activities Music, especially chamber and choral; literature and reading

Organizations in which you are active California Horticultural Society

I BACKGROUND AND EARLY EMPLOYMENT

[Interview 1: July 6, 1998] ##[1]

Background and Family

Riess: Today I want to have you tell me about your background.

Waters: Start from the 29th of March, 1925, and go on from there, shall I?

Riess: Yes. Where were you born?

Waters: At Brockley, which is a town in the borough of Deptford, to the southeast of Central London, on the Thames near Wapping. That gives you some idea of the area's character. Most of Deptford is regarded as a dreadful place: some of Dickens' grimmest scenes are near the Thames in Deptford. But Brockley, I was told recently, was regarded by others in Deptford as being the posh end.

Then, so far as I can tell, I was taken very soon, maybe within a year, certainly within two years, to Dagenham, and Dagenham is a large area to the east of London. It became a humorous interlude for a comedian called Arthur Askey who in the war years amused a lot of Englanders with his radio programs, and references to the fictitious Dagenham Tea Rooms, where he would take his girlfriend, whose name was Nausea Bagwash. [laughter]

Riess: Tell me about your parents. What were they doing in Deptford and Dagenham?

Waters: My father, William Ernest Waters, from the first time I became aware of him, was working for the London buses. He was a bus conductor. About six foot one inch tall, sturdily built; not fat, but sturdily built. Was often mistaken for a policeman in plain

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[1]## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

clothes, a misconception he encouraged in some of the rougher areas to which his work in London took him. He was sandy haired, so called "Ginger" by his co-workers.

Mother, Dorothy, was considerably smaller. She was living in Brockley--that's where her mother lived, anyway. How they got to meet I don't know at all. My father's parents were running a public house. I think it was called the King's Head, but I'm not sure. And that was at Winchmore Hill, in north London. Probably my father's mother ran the pub, along with a friend of the family, a dear silver-haired lady, known to me as Aunt Kitty. She was actually no relative at all. I think she was a barmaid at the pub absorbed into the family when the pub changed hands.

When I met them, they all, including my father's two brothers and three sisters, had moved to Dagenham. They were all large people, crowded into a rather small house.

Riess: Were you an only child?

Waters: No, I had a brother, Edward, called Ted. He was two years older than me. So he came to Dagenham also.

My grandfather on my father's side was a retired policeman. Very stern-looking man with a bushy mustache. Yes, I have some fond recollections of that little house that my grandparents occupied. I remember the family were at the center of a street party celebrating the coronation of George VI, in May 1937, and I joined in the festivities.

Later on, I used to earn myself sixpence every Saturday by taking a large shopping bag around there, collecting a long list of groceries, and then walking to the stores and filling up the shopping bag and lugging it back again, to supply the groceries for my grandmother's kitchen.

Riess: Did your own home have a garden, a kitchen garden?

Waters: No, but maybe there were the beginnings of gardening for me there, because my grandfather had an ornamental garden which used to win prizes from the Dagenham Corporation. You see, Dagenham was built by the London County Council as a slum clearance scheme. Acres and acres of red-brick houses which stretched over the horizon, and all almost identical in whichever direction you looked.

It was a scheme done in collaboration with the Ford Motor Company, as a matter of fact. The Ford Motor Company planned to build a factory in England, and the LCC gave them concessions on a site near the Thames estuary at Dagenham, the understanding being

that it would provide employment for a lot of the people who were moved to the housing they were about to erect there. So a lot of the people there worked at the Ford Motor Company.

The houses were well built and well maintained, although only equipped in simple fashion: water was heated with a fire made under a large copper boiler and pumped by hand up to the bathroom. Lighting was with gas lamps. One of my uncles was a carpenter in the employ of the LCC, based at a depot in the middle of the estate. All of the houses were rented at that time, and they were maintained extremely well by the LCC. Mind you, there was a certain amount of uniformity there. Your door was painted the color they happened to use, and so on.

Riess: Maybe gardens were an expression of individuality? Was it a front garden?

Waters: Yes. Each one had a front and a rear garden, and they were the equal of most city gardens. Not large, but adequate.

Riess: How was your grandfather's distinguished?

Waters: Well, by our modern standards, it wasn't. It was the usual piece of grass with a standard rose in the middle, and annuals around the edge and so on. But it was well and neatly done.

Riess: Was it a place you could play, or was it a place that you had to stay out of?

Waters: No, not really. No, the front bit of my grandfather's garden was always a place to stay out of. Our own front garden ten minutes walk away was a place you could play in, because it was just a patch of grass with a privet hedge around it. And the back was where my father did his gardening, and that was a place where you went to work. You didn't go to play.

Riess: That's interesting, fathers in gardens. Were fathers more in gardens in Britain? My experience is mothers in gardens.

Waters: There is a difference in Britain, certainly. The history of gardening here is one in which the men farmed and the women wanted something useful around the kitchen door, useful and pretty. The farmer would perhaps dig the ground and then walk away and leave it for the mother to plant.

I think the difference is in the way in which gardening evolved in Britain, it being, as it were, handed down from the aristocrats who made it fashionable, with each successive wave of prosperous people aping their social superiors. It was therefore

the occupation of the arriviste, and respectable for the man of the house. My own father I think was first in competition with his father to grow things somewhat better. But gradually, he saw it as a means of making money, and had a scheme whereby he would keep graves in the local cemetery furnished under some sort of contract. It was not a large enough garden for him to become rich doing this, but it would have made him a little extra cash, and for people in the Depression period, that became important.

He had bought a little prefabricated greenhouse in order to raise seedlings for this scheme, and it was heated with a paraffin stove which fell over, or something went wrong with it, and it burned the whole thing down. So his enterprise was cut short.

Riess: Were garden clubs, garden organizations, part of your parents' lives?

Waters: No, I don't recall that they were. There was a kind of ad-hoc club among those who cultivated what were known as allotments. Here they are called community gardens. Allotment gardens were in an area of land at the edge of the Dagenham estate set aside for people to rent. I can't tell you the actual size, because in those days, they were measured in poles and perches, and I'm no longer sure how to convert them. I think a perch is about five and a half yards. They persisted in England right up until after the Second World War, but Britain is decimal now.

Anyway, these were strips of land divided by narrow paths--paths were just uncultivated strips, that's all. A bit like the old strip system of Medieval Europe. And a kind of ad-hoc social club develops in such places. People meet one another there, and then maybe go to the pub for a beer afterwards or something like that.

Riess: Would they talk about plants?

Waters: Oh, yes, they would compare one another's progress and so on, offer advice. But all informally done. There was no organization about it whatever.

I used to go there occasionally and help my father. I have a vivid recollection of joining him--he used to ride his bicycle there, of course, and when I got a bicycle, I did too. And I must have been very, very inexperienced, because I remember arriving at the gate to the area a little bit too soon. My father hadn't got it open for me to ride through, and I fell off my bicycle into a huge bed of nettles. [laughs] Which for a little boy in short trousers was extremely irritating!

When my father was attempting his little garden enterprise, my task was to collect horse manure from the streets. I dealt with that in one of my editorials; it's called "The Scent of Summer."[2] [laughter]

Riess: On vacations, would your family visit great estate gardens?

Waters: Lord no. That is definitely a bourgeois activity. These were just very plain working folks, bus conductors and drivers, not very much more. In fact, it wasn't until my mother had a rather serious infection in one of her legs that resulted in a temporary lameness, the doctor advised her to ride a bicycle as a means of exercising it, getting strength back into it. This was difficult for her to contemplate until my father bought a tandem bicycle. It was an extravagant outlay for him. The question of buying a motor vehicle never occurred, it just wasn't even spoken of in the house.

Riess: So you went by bus or bike.

Waters: As a bus employee Father had a free pass on all London buses, and so he traveled almost everywhere within the City by bus. Occasionally, he borrowed a motorcycle, I don't know who from, but I do recall riding on the pillion of a motorcycle of the kind for which oil had to be pumped by hand with a plunger every now and again.

I recall a few day-long outings, but no prolonged vacations until the bicycles came along in the late thirties. Travel was distinctly limited.

Schooling, and Telegraph Messenger Job

Riess: You were born into the Depression, and then the war followed hard on the heels of that. You were going to school through all of this. What kind of schools did you go to?

Waters: The junior school, which began at age four or five, was called the Alibon Road Junior School.

Riess: What's the name?

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[2]*Pacific Horticulture*, Summer 1995.

Waters: [spells] I don't know that it has any meaning, unless it's a variation of Albion, an ancient name for the British Isles. When you lay out a large estate like that, you have to think of names for streets--the namers must become quite desperate at times.

That [Alibon Road Junior School] had three parts. There was the littlest kids part at the center. It was all, as I recall, sort of mixed, mixed infants. And then at about, I'm not sure, must have been about eight years of age, one moved into one of the wings of the school, with girls on the left side and boys on the right of the infants' building. And that went on until the age of about ten or eleven.

Riess: Were you a good student?

Waters: Apparently not, because whilst a number of children who were friends of mine got scholarships and went to the grammar school, I never did. So I think that it was concluded that I was dim.

Riess: Dim?

Waters: Well, dull, or thick.

Riess: Would you think of yourself now as someone who had other interests, or you were distracted, or what?

Waters: No--I don't know. I often think about that, and I conclude that I was just a bit slow developing, that's all.

In the absence of a scholarship to a grammar school, the inevitable stage after this, and this would have been about ten or eleven years of age, was Eastbrook Senior School, which again had a girls section and a boys section, with wire fence down the middle of the playground. [laughter] And that continued until the age of fourteen, when you were let out to go and make your way in the world.

Riess: And you had passed the point where you could consider university?

Waters: Yes. Well, you see, I don't think my parents were terribly enthusiastic about schooling and education. There was no discouragement, but there was no enthusiasm either and no discussion about what the future might hold or anything like that. When schooling ended, it was just a matter of, "Okay, now George, we have to find a job for you."

My first job was as a telegraph messenger for the Cable and Wireless Company in London. The District Line, part of the London Underground system, came out to Dagenham, and the station was a

short walk down the road. So I'd catch the District Line up to London in my navy blue and red uniform, with brass buttons that I had polished the night before, and deliver telegrams in London.

Riess: On foot?

Waters: On foot.

Riess: You got to know--you had all of London?

Waters: No, no. Because the Cable and Wireless Company had depots all over the City. My depot was the head office, which was on the corner of Moorgate and London Wall, so it was right in the middle of the City, an area that later was devastated by bombing.

Riess: You were fourteen, and out on the streets? That's unconscionable, isn't it?

Waters: We weren't dangerous in those days. Oh, we boys fought among ourselves, of course. My brother and I, for example, were always fighting. But he was two years older and somewhat heavier and stronger, so he invariably got the better of me.

Riess: So this is 1939?

Waters: Yes, just before the war began. It began in fact in late '39; September '39 war was declared.

Before that--I think it must have been earlier in '39--we moved from Dagenham a little further towards the center of London, to a place called East Ham. This was largely because of my father's job, his depot for the bus company was a garage called Upton Park. The London General Omnibus Company, that became London Passenger Transport Board, had garages with buses all over Greater London, and each garage had a number of routes to serve. His route originated at Upton Park, and by moving to East Ham, we were much closer to it.

Unfortunately, the house we occupied in East Ham was an early casualty of the bombing. It wasn't demolished entirely, but it was made unsafe for habitation by the blast. So we had to leave.

Riess: Your father was not in the war because of his job?

Waters: He was conscripted later. He was conscripted at the age of thirty-eight.

Nobody older than thirty-eight was conscripted, so he got into the war just in time for the invasion of Europe. One of the lessons learned by the British Army in its first encounter with the German forces (just prior to Dunkirk) was the need for transport control to enable large ground forces to move quickly. My father was assigned to a new unit the purpose of which was to direct the movement of motorized columns during advance or retreat.

Strangely enough, he doesn't regret his time in the army--or didn't, I should say; he's dead now. Like a great many people who had rather dull and repetitive jobs in civilian life, the forces provided--for some of them, at any rate--a total change of environment and social climate, which had its compensations. I'm not denying that it was dreadful for many, and I know he had his share of that--one or two of those experiences he told me about--but on the whole, it was obvious to me that the experience was treasured, because it took him out of his rut. On leave during training he looked younger than I'd remembered him.

Critical Awareness, Conscientious Objection

Riess: Were you conscripted?

Waters: I was conscripted when I was eighteen, but I didn't go. I registered as a conscientious objector and was sent to face a tribunal.

Riess: That would have been 1943. Was that difficult? I don't know how easily--what you had to go through in England.

Waters: Well, it varied with the region in which you lived. Tribunals were set up all over the country. Usually magistrates served on the tribunals, and a lot of what I suppose for want of a better word were called important people. I didn't understand these people or their outlook.

My father had been active in the trade unions, so that in addition to my schooling, I was picking up certain attitudes outside school that made me critical of the world around me. In fact, perhaps the only commendation from my teachers was noted on a report that said: "George views the world around him with critical awareness." [laughter] Rather charming, isn't it? And another did comment on my use of the language. It hadn't occurred to me that there was anything extraordinary, but obviously, he had perceived something, and he did encourage it a little. He took me

and one or two other boys to the nearest theater, the East Ham Empire, where plays were put on from time to time. There were two or three of those visits, as I recall. But again, this didn't influence anything that my parents may have said to me.

Riess: Were you a great reader?

Waters: I was certainly inclined to read. My brother, who was intensely physical--everything he did involved expenditure of physical energy--he derided me as "the professor." I didn't understand that. For example, it gave me a false idea about what professor meant, you see, because I didn't see myself as being particularly professorial, as I now understand the word. But since he was using it derisively, I construed that there was something nasty about professors!

Riess: Was there a library that you could use?

Waters: My father was reading--oh, yes. In addition to his frustrated attempt to organize a flower service for the dead, he seemed to have some liking for the idea of being perhaps a cartoonist or something like that. Hutchinson's Publications were bringing out a history of the world in monthly installments--magazine-type publications which ultimately formed a comprehensive history of the world. He would encourage me to draw pictures from these things. I'm not sure whether there was ever any reward to this beyond the collection I was able to build.

Riess: He was encouraging you.

Waters: He was encouraging me to copy them, yes. I don't think I ever developed any particular skills in draftsmanship or drawing, but probably I did get some kind of an inkling about marvelous things happening over the ages [laughs] throughout the world. I saw, for example, horsemen riding under triumphal arches over thousands of corpses. I can remember pictures like this. That might have affected my attitude to the war.

And I do remember too, there was a strike of London buses--yes, yes--and my father was involved--I think he was representing his garage at meetings of trade union members. And since there were no buses running, we went to a meeting on the tandem bicycle he bought to exercise my mother. And when I was a boy, I could ride the back of it quite well--it was a specially made tandem bicycle, because he being so big and she being so small, a regular machine would not accommodate them both equally. So it was a large frame at front joined to a small one behind.

Riess: And she got her exercise.

Waters: She got her exercise, and they traveled to some interesting places. A tandem tour in Germany planned for 1939 came to nothing, but they went to Devon and Cornwall instead.

Riess: So you went to the union meeting.

Waters: I went to the meeting. I remember meeting Ernest Bevin. Do you remember Ernest Bevin?

Riess: I certainly know the name.

Waters: He was the head of the London Transport and General Workers Union, which was a large and influential union. And because of his leadership of that union, he was taken into Churchill's wartime cabinet as the minister of labor, and that's where he made his reputation. And I do recall sitting with my father in Bevin's office at Transport House, I think it was, in London, talking about the strike.

Riess: We have gotten to this because you were talking about your conscientious objector status.

Waters: Oh, that's right, yes. Trying to understand how it came about. I'm saying that I formed ideas about trade unionism, and its limitations as a means of alleviating social ills.

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Waters: This took me towards thinking more broadly about political activity, and eventually led me to the feeling that nothing that could come out of the war would justify the destruction and slaughter, nor would it resolve anything. And that was the basis; it was sort of humanitarian and sociological objection that I brought to the tribunal in Fulham Town Hall.

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Waters: I was quizzed for about forty-five minutes by members of the tribunal. A friend named Anthony Turner, a man older than myself and a well-known and widely admired speaker at Hyde Park Corner, came forward with the assurance that my objection was a deeply held conviction, and not the result of recent conversion.

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[3]++ This symbol indicates the beginning and end of segments inserted by Mr. Waters during the editing process. Inserted segments are noted on the tape guide following the transcript.

Since then some have asked how I could object to a war that ended the dreadful treatment of Jews in Europe. They forget that the war was, ostensibly, a defense of democracy and a brake on German hegemony in Europe; it was not launched to rescue Jews from systematic persecution and genocide the true horror of which was revealed to us only at war's end.

The origins of World War II had more to do with German industrial expansion than with defending democracy. Even prior to World War I British diplomacy was aimed at keeping Germany bottled up in ports on the North Sea, while Germany was eager to gain easy access to eastern markets. She felt that Britain, with an extensive empire, should leave European markets to her, but the argument fell on deaf ears. An attempt to reach the Middle East by building a railway from Berlin to Baghdad was thwarted by British and Russian interests. World War II was another attempt by Germany to grab manufacturing resources demanded by a highly developed industrial country, and take over markets for the vast quantities of goods she was capable of producing. In Britain there were influential people unable to countenance the threatened loss of European markets, and who had much to gain by preventing the spread of German influence there.

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Riess: Were you alone among your friends in making this choice?

Waters: Once I had registered, I began to make contact with others who had also appealed conscription. They were not numerous, it wasn't common. But likewise, there was a great deal more tolerance, officially, towards conscientious objectors than in the First World War. In the First World War, from what I've read, they were imprisoned and brutally treated. It was not uncommon for objectors to be forced into uniform and then sent to the front, where they would inevitably die.

Riess: As punishment.

Waters: Yes. They were often deliberately killed, because nobody wanted to serve with them, so intense was the jingoism, you see. They were put in prison. I've read of instances where they were invited to dig a hole six feet deep and made to then stand in it for days on end. I'm not aware of anything like that in the Second World War; jingoism was less pronounced. I encountered only a few examples of resentment of my status as a C.O.

Riess: For you, was it a brave stance? How difficult was it at the time to do this?

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Waters: I was in turmoil. Partly it was not knowing how I might stand up to hostile questioning; how my friends would react to my stand; and how I would endure prison--the remaining alternative to the army if my appeal failed. My brother was already dead; my father was in the army. He supported my position, but could do nothing directly. My mother also was supportive, but as a parent hoping to keep her remaining child from harm, and this, I felt, would do nothing to help my case before the tribunal.

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Waters: I guess I was more fortunate than those whose objections were disallowed. My tribunal was held at Fulham, and I have since read that the tribunals at Fulham were more difficult than many, that there were other tribunals where people were more commonly given exemptions. I was given conditional exemption. The condition was that I would take up work in the fire service, in agriculture, or medical work.

And it so happened that I had a friend at that time who was employed by the Burroughs Wellcome pharmaceutical company, in Beckenham. It's a well-known company--they've recently merged with Glaxo. And the Burroughs Wellcome Company was doing a lot of research into antibiotics, things of that kind, which were becoming widely used then. They were derived from blood by first mildly infecting animals, usually horses, and when the antitoxins were produced, they would draw off some of the blood, refine it, and inject it to stimulate human resistance to the disease.

I went there, submitted this as meeting the requirements of the tribunal, and it was accepted. So I worked at Burroughs Wellcome for a number of years.

Riess: Were you in the lab?

Waters: It was actually a pilot scale plant. I guess they were using any place that they could to produce this stuff. We were producing a few hundred large bottles a week for tetanus, gas gangrene, and other diseases.

Riess: This was for the war effort?

Waters: Largely for the war effort, yes.

Surviving the War, in London

Riess: Were you living at home?

Waters: Well, I mentioned that the place at East Ham was bombed. And again, there was a need to find somewhere else to live. My father had explained that the east side of London is not the most desirable place. The reason for that is that it was the industrial side, and the prevailing wind is southwesterly, as it so often is. So you find that the better-off people tend to live on the west side of a smoky city, and the rest are left to live on the east side. And we had been on the east side. And because of the industry there, it also had more attention from enemy bombers.

So he invited me to join him on this wonderful tandem bicycle. We rode right across London, and out to the west side, and we finished up at a place called East Molesey. There was also a West Molesey. The River Mole, from which Molesey's name comes, is a tributary of the Thames, and East Molesey is in fact right at the point where that tributary enters the Thames, and the nearest place of note is Hampton Court, the famous palace.

We found that many of the original inhabitants of East Molesey were well enough off to be able to go even further away from London than we were, so there were a number of large houses left, one of which, because of the need to control rents during the war to stop profiteering, we got very cheaply.

Riess: Your little family of four?

Waters: Well, I'm not sure whether to ignore my brother or not. [laughs] He, being the activist he was, had joined the army under age. In fact, long before he even joined the army, he joined the auxiliary fire service. Those red flashing engines just fascinated him. And when, again under age, he joined the army, I don't know what he told them--he told them he was older than he was. I guess they didn't look at birth certificates or anything like that. He was a sturdy young lad, and there was no reason not to accept him in the army. So he was gone. He had gone, even from the point where we were still at Dagenham, he had vanished from the home. He was out into the world.

Riess: Were your parents supportive of your brother's decisions also?

Waters: Oh, yes. It probably seemed inevitable in view of his character. Our parents were generally agreeable. There were certain parents who struggled and fought a lot, and there were others, like ours, who struggled and fought less. But no one was seen as

dysfunctional; it never occurred to us. In fact, the word was unknown.

Riess: You first described your father as quite the authority figure, and that sounds like much more the father of the enlistee.

Waters: I think that he felt the need to ensure that the family was properly clothed and fed. I think he saw my mother as being--what shall we say?--slightly irresponsible, so that although she had sufficient to feed us, almost all the larger expenditures he maintained control of.

The result was that my mother was usually clothed in extremely good, hard-wearing cloth, and sturdy leather shoes. This seemed to me to be a good thing, but I don't think she saw it as such. You can imagine, can't you? I can remember the sturdy green tweed coats that she was clad in, and wonderful Barrett's shoes. Barrett's made very fine shoes, guaranteed to keep your feet in good shape and healthy, and to wear out very slowly. [laughter] But especially in retrospect, I now see--.

At the time, there was mild discontent on my mother's part which I was subconsciously aware of. And I now see that very few women would have been happy in these circumstances, no matter how warm the coat and how sturdy the shoes. Nonetheless, I think that with the limited income available, I can also understand my father saw that there was little money and strictness was necessary.

Riess: Yes. So you were then quite well housed on the west side for the rest of the war.

Waters: This was grand, yes. A few bombs fell in Molesey, but not many.

Strange Episodes, Wartime

Waters: But once we'd moved onto the west side of London the train service up to the Cable and Wireless Company in Central London was less convenient, and so I got a job selling shoes in a shoe shop in Kingston-on-Thames. Dolcis was the name of the company. They have depots over here, but not many. You haven't heard of them?

Riess: No. I guess if I'd heard of them, I would have thought they were Italian.

Waters: Well, they just sold shoes, and I sold shoes for a while. It was a strange episode in my life. The manager of the store was a Mr.

Christmas, who wore stiff wing collars. They were still quite common then, especially among the managers of clothing stores.

Riess: And you were seventeen or so?

Waters: Sixteen, seventeen, yes. I guess I was a telegraph boy for one or two years, something like that, and the ferocious bombing, particularly of the Docks in East London, and the City, was beginning. I can remember being more or less imprisoned in the basement of the Cable and Wireless Company office because it was not safe to leave. And I remember also the bus services being totally dislocated, both buses and trains, by the bombing. I had to walk almost all the way home on one occasion, through East London to East Ham, over broken glass and between smoldering buildings. Some of that bombing was--well, you've heard about it, seen it in pictures--quite devastating.

Riess: Was it terrifying?

Waters: No, no, not for a boy of my age. Except momentarily--delivering messages in London in the blackout was often very difficult at night; in daytime, it was no great problem, but at night it could be very difficult. Walking down dark streets, imagining shapes of things in front of me and putting up my hands to make sure that I wasn't hitting things. On one occasion I had put up my hands and realized that there was nothing there, put my hands down and then walked smack into a big iron structure.

The horse era was not quite gone, and it was common to have these iron structures. They were shaped a bit like U.S. mailboxes, except that they were made of cast iron, very Victorian, of course. And they went right down to the ground, and they contained sand, which was scattered on the road when it was slippery so that horses wouldn't lose their footing. And what I had done was to walk into one of those sand bins, and they were just about this height. So in fact, I got a terrible bash in the mouth. But the telegram had to be delivered, and so I walked on, groaning.

That was the kind of thing. You had to walk; you were not allowed to run. There were inspectors out to make sure that we were not slovenly, and kept to the rules. The Cable and Wireless Company employed hundreds of us boys, and inspectors walked around in mufti to keep an eye on us.

Riess: Why were you not allowed to run?

Waters: Oh, it just was unseemly. We were issued a uniform and boots. There was one depot, and that was attached to what they called the

London Exchange, and those boys were issued with shoes, and they were expected to run, but they were the only ones who were allowed to run. That was because, of course, financial messages were important and especially urgent. [laughter]

Riess: After the shoe job was when you were conscripted or drafted?

Waters: Yes. I had fallen out with Mr. Christmas. I think it was a prearranged thing. He had a very good customer whose boy was just looking for a job, and he had promised her to take him on, and he had to get rid of me.

So I went round the corner and got a job with a company whose specialty was making tennis courts. But they had a machine shop, and the machine shop had become a place where all kinds of war apparatus was made. This was the only job the Ministry of Labour would offer me once I was no longer working for Dolcis. The Ministry of Labour became the arbiter of what I did, and this was where they sent me.

It was quite a change from the shoe shop; you have to get your hands dirty to manufacture things in metal. But I did pick up lathe work there, and all kinds of mechanical aptitudes which I found I was quite good at. Once I had registered as a conscientious objector, one of the questions they threw at me at once was, "But you are working in a machine shop which is manufacturing--" not actual armaments, but things which made armaments possible.

I said, "Well, yes, and I'm asking to be relieved of that job also." So I was relieved of that job and went to work at Burroughs Wellcome. So there were one, two, three, four jobs now, okay. We have to keep tab of these, because there are a great many to come. [laughs] Those are the first four.

I'm not sure how much of this is relevant, but a lot of it seems relevant to the person I subsequently became, do you see? That's why I'm tending to include so much of it. Although you may not have enough tape on hand!

[tape interruption]

Debating

Waters: I suppose what I'm doing essentially is trying to maintain this thread. I think it's this "critical" business that was mentioned

earlier, by the teacher, that led me to be a conscientious objector. And of course, it changed the character of my life, because it brought me in touch with others with similar ideas. But these were comparatively few people. Most of the other people that I met had no sympathy for these ideas at all. So I was in constant debate.

And I think that's where my education came from. In fact, at one point while at Burroughs Wellcome, I joined a debating society organized by the vicar of the local church, who sat as chairman of the meetings. It was known as the Penge Parliament. Penge was the locality--another of those areas in the outskirts of London that are a source of jokes for radio comedians.

This Penge Parliament was organized like a mock Parliament, with the vicar as the Speaker of the House sitting on the Woolsack, and then on either side the Labourites and the Conservatives. I joined neither and sat on the crossbenches. I had no sympathy for either of those views, because I didn't think they were terribly relevant to what was needed in society.

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Waters: I wanted to dig deeper than most political discussions allowed, and to test ideas that seemed to need debate but which were rarely if ever alluded to in newspaper reports.

For example, there was, and still is, always a lot of talk about the poor, but little real thought goes into it. The idea that poverty is necessary to competitive industrialism seems outrageous to everyone I mention it to, but it is so. The voting population is convinced that by electing their favorite candidate to office all wrongs can be redressed. But no politician has the power to eliminate poverty, and any suspected of attempting it would quickly be removed from office. The simplest reasoning shows that without the poor to provide a reservoir of labor threatening those who ask for wage increases, wages would rise to levels unacceptable to employers--unacceptable because wages subtract from dividends. The simple fact is demonstrated in war time, when armed forces recruitment dries up the labor reservoir, resulting in a labor shortage and a steep rise in wages. Labor is, after all, just a commodity bought and sold like any other, and shortages cause price (wage) rises and surpluses keep prices down.

Some others cherish the idea that they'd be better off if only government taxes were lower. But if taxes were reduced the benefit to working people would be limited and temporary. Wage and salary levels are based on the cost of living; many employers

have routine cost-of-living salary adjustments. Taxes are part of the cost of living, so any fluctuation in taxes will eventually be reflected in wages and salaries. A reduction in taxes may not bring about a coincident reduction in wages, but it will certainly defer increases until parity with cost-of-living is reached. From this it can be seen that employers pay taxes, their employees do not. The anti-tax lobby serves employers, not their employees, although wage and salary earners are routinely urged with tales of government wastefulness to join in pressing for "small government" and tax reduction. But any economies brought about by shrinking government and reduced taxes will have only a temporary effect on our wage packets.

I also looked for opportunities to question the claims of the agriculture industry when it speaks collectively of "feeding the world," as though hunger were the result of poor crops. A corporation using public television these days to promote itself, ADM, is particularly fond of spreading the myth. But ADM is only one among many; for decades we have heard farmers defending the use of pesticides by claiming that "the world can't be fed without them." In fact, farmers aren't attempting to feed the world; they are concerned only with selling food to those who can pay for it. This is obvious when we see the laden shelves of local supermarkets and their already overfed customers, then turn to see the poverty and malnutrition suffered by many at our own back door. In the late 1940s a famine in India was reported in British newspapers by a writer who spoke of stepping over starved and dying bodies on the railway station platform to reach the restaurant for breakfast of bacon and eggs. After such an experience I'm sure that reporter could never see hunger as anything but a manifestation of poverty.

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Riess: It's rare here to put an eighteen-year-old mind to work defending ideas.

Waters: Well, that's right. Some few years back I visited somebody up on Indian Rock who was on the UC campus--a professor or something like that. And he had just come back from a sabbatical in Cambridge, England.

He said, "You know, the extraordinary thing that I noticed there was the readiness of everybody to just debate ideas for the sake of it, just throw ideas backwards and forwards." He said, "In the States, mostly people are interested in ideas only if they're going to lead somewhere. If they can see that they are helping to make something, or decide something."

I saw what he meant and began to feel a need again for just debating ideas, but I couldn't find the equivalent of that debating society anywhere. Not even in Berkeley, which I would have thought would have been the very place you would find it. Do you know of any such thing here?

Riess: No.

Waters: All this leads me to believe that my main education was during the war--that period when I was forced, as it were, to defend my ideas.

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Waters: While at Burroughs Wellcome the V1 rockets began arriving from occupied France. They were slow moving compared with modern rockets--even compared with the V2s that came from the German army in France a little later. Air force fighter planes were able now and then to fly beside the V1s and tip the wings causing them to drop before reaching the target. But most reached their destination, which was usually London. The V1s were soon called doodle bugs because of the pop-pop noise from the power unit, which spurted flames as well. When the noise stopped the rocket fell, and those below knew that a tremendous explosion would follow. The sudden silence when the power of an approaching doodle bug switched off was terrible because we knew it would fall nearby.

Frequently I worked at night, when the blood plasma had been filtered and needed bagging in plastic for dialysis. Dialysis was a slow process and so it was important to begin it as soon as possible and to free up filtration equipment for further use. Cycling to and from my lodgings at night gave me many opportunities for observing doodle bugs, and plenty of experience in throwing myself quickly to the ground behind any available cover when their engines cut out.

V2 rockets were more like today's missiles--quiet, much faster, and exploding without warning. There was nothing to be done about them unless one were to spend his life in a bomb shelter. But in some strange way they were less terrifying, since their arrival and explosion could not be anticipated.

During that period I changed address three times as each of my lodgings were damaged by bombs.

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In By a Back Door, Teaching

Waters: I wasn't supposed to leave Burroughs Wellcome until my period of conscription was over, but I did, actually. This was because I had the idea that I might become a teacher. So I applied--there was an emergency training program for teachers set up immediately after the war, and I thought that might be my entree. They weren't insisting on degrees or anything like that, applicants just had to go before an interviewing board and answer a number of questions to show their worth.

Anyway, I was turned down, and I was disappointed. Then I saw a job advertised for someone to look after the laboratories, a laboratory technician, I suppose, at a teacher's training college at Cooper's Hill, near Egham, Surrey. And I thought that it might be a back door to teaching. So I got the job on the basis of my experience in Burroughs Wellcome, because I was now sort of a laboratory technician, although this new job was totally different from the work I was doing in the pharmaceutical laboratory.

Anyway, I got the job. And I told the lecturers about my ambitions, and they were very helpful. The emergency training scheme consisted of alternating periods of several months of college training, and then several months out as working teachers at schools in the neighborhood. And after I had been there for a while, I was told that if I would like to, I could go out with the students and pass myself off as a trainee teacher. I thought, Well, the lecturers must have confidence. They work around me all day, and I'm working around them, inevitably listening to their lectures, so they must realize that I have potential.

So I went as a teacher--as a trainee teacher, I should say--to a school in Walton-on-Thames. (All this is taking place by the Thames. Although I was living away from home during the war, I resumed Molesey as my base after the war.) The experience of teaching in a school was very enlightening. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Riess: You were a science teacher?

Waters: Mostly teaching science, yes. I would rush to the library each evening and read up on the next lessons, and devise fabulous demonstrations and experiments to keep the boys' attention. We were demonstrating refraction of light in water and all that kind of stuff. I also taught English grammar.

And the science teacher was impressed and gave me a good recommendation. I then confessed that I was a fraud, you see, and he said, "Well, if you want to get accepted, go to the headmaster

and get a letter." So the headmaster gave me a letter saying that as soon as my training was completed, I could have a job there. I thought I'd won!

Then I went to the principal of the training college and got a letter from him. He described me as extremely capable, conscientious, and so on. I went to another tribunal and took my letters with me, and they turned me down a second time. After that I gave up on teaching.

Riess: They were hewing to the real letter of the law?

Waters: Newspaper reports of the activities of local education authorities around the country suggest to me that there was a great deal of prejudice against employing people who were conscientious objectors. Although there was nothing in the rules about who the scheme was meant for, it was implicit in the nature of the thing that what they were trying to do was to take in ex-servicemen. But other conscientious objectors had been enrolled as teachers, and I knew of several of them. I just guess I was unlucky and I met the wrong kinds of people.

Senior Technician, Former Farmworker

Waters: At some point then, the Ministry of Labour caught up with me and said, "George, you're supposed to be at Burroughs Wellcome. What are you doing up there?" I told them, and they said, "No, you can't do it." The only thing I could do then was to take up almost any job that complied with their requirements, and so I worked for a while on a farm, I suppose you'd call it a farm, the special kind of farm that you find on the fringes of cities where land starts to get cheap, where produce is being raised to feed the market.

Riess: Truck farm.

Waters: Truck farm, that's right. That's also mentioned in "The Scent of Summer." So I worked there for a while, but I wasn't terribly good at it.

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Waters: I remember being sent out to a field that seemed to go on forever on a frosty morning, and picking Brussels sprouts. In Britain, they have a feeling about Brussels sprouts, that they're never worth eating unless there's frost on them, you know. So they

would always pick the Brussels sprouts when the frost was on them, and of course, I was only a few rows done by the time my fingers were numb, frozen stiff.

Riess: And they didn't just whack off the whole stalk?

Waters: No, because there's still more to come. They whack it off eventually, but not until the yield has gone down.

In fact, I was late the first day I started there, and then some months later, I was late again, and the farmer told me to clear off, he'd find somebody who could get out of bed earlier. I wasn't sorry.

Riess: I'm fascinated that the Ministry of Labour kept such close tabs on you.

Waters: Oh, yes. But as I say, it was slow, because I'd done a fair amount of teacher's training college, as you can see, before they did catch up. I was banking on that. I thought there was a possibility they would catch up eventually.

But then when I left the farm I guess I took another gamble, and this time it paid off, because in the meanwhile, my age group was demobilized, and that meant that my restrictions ended too.

I was now fairly well up on the idea of laboratory work, and scientific activities of one kind or other. I'd kind of gotten a rudimentary grounding in all kinds of sciences by this time. I had a certificate to operate 16 mm. sound movie projectors. [sighs] Well, I keep getting led aside by these--

Riess: Sounds like a happy learning experience.

Waters: Yes, yes, it led to all kinds of marvelous things. But I won't divulge all the details of that.

Riess: Were you saving money through all of this?

Waters: Oh, no. No, no. My early introduction to bicycling had taken hold of me, and it became a center of my social life. I belonged to two clubs, and I was bicycling for pleasure on vacations, and for necessity almost everywhere else. Even when I moved lodgings, I would strap everything on my back and on my bicycle and trundle off to wherever my new job took me.

My next new job took me to University College, in London, and the department of geology. I was now to become acquainted with the science of geology.

Riess: You saw an advertisement?

Waters: Yes, I just saw a notice in the paper and applied.

Mainly, I was making microscope slides of rock sections, which were then examined through Nicol prisms to show up different constituents of the rock. The varying refractive indices of minerals caused them to appear differently colored under the prism, if the slice was thin and well made. But the man in charge of that laboratory--there was a head man, and there were two of us lads who helped him--was reluctant to part with information. I think he felt threatened by the idea that his assistants might know as much as he did, so he was rather secretive about things. One had to almost wring information out of him, and after a while, I got tired of it.

I did have a resurgence of my interest in trade unionism, and I joined the Association of Scientific Workers. I attended a few meetings, but I wasn't very deeply into it by then.

So I left there and took a job at a polytechnic institute in north London. It was known as the Northhampton Polytechnic, not because it was in Northhampton, of course it wasn't, it was in London. But it was on land in a part of London that was owned by the Marquis of Northhampton. It's not called Northhampton Polytechnic anymore--it's now a college associated with the University of London, I think.

I was by this time regarded as a senior technician, and I was in charge of the chemistry laboratories, several of them, and I had a half a dozen people working under me at the time. I was there for about two or three years.

Riess: In order to know what you were doing, you had to keep studying what you were doing?

Waters: Yes, a certain amount of it, yes. That's true. But I still wasn't terribly focused. I wasn't ambitious or anything like that, and I didn't see any great future for myself. It was just mostly a matter of keeping body and soul together, and it so happened that through my need to meet the demands of the Labour Ministry during the war, I finished up in a laboratory, which happened to be Burroughs Wellcome. And that kind of set me on the course towards some kind of science, but my understanding of it was generalized.

But I did become active in a trade union here. It was the National Union of Public Employees. A colleague working in another college and I formed a branch of the union, and as

chairman I even attended the national conference as delegate. It was a young union headed by a far-sighted man who saw the benefit of organizing by location, not by trade or occupation. Management gained from negotiating with representatives of one union instead of several, as happens in large institutions.

Bedford, British Whiting, Motorbiking

Riess: What an extraordinary résumé you have. It certainly doesn't turn up in the biographical statement you gave me.

Waters: Oh, no, that doesn't have any of this. It skips very lightly over it all. No, this is all for your benefit, my dear. These are things I haven't recollected in centuries. So if this is too rambling you have only yourself to blame for encouraging me.

Anyway, where am I?

Riess: You are denying that you were going about your life in a very focused way. So what is it that brought you into focus--I mean, I'm assuming that you had a moment of truth.

Waters: I think the moment of truth only came at the tribunal. That was the moment of truth.

Riess: So you kept on at the Northhampton Polytechnic.

Waters: Yes. The man in charge, I mean the head of the department of chemistry, Dr. Charles Garside, was from Manchester. I think he had had a lot of difficulty keeping people there. I don't know why. I liked him. But he had a lot of difficulty keeping people there, and he wanted me to undertake to stay at least two years, and I said I would. And in fact, I think I stayed for three years, just to make sure that he got his money's worth.

But I think I wanted--at that stage [after three years], I wanted to do more hands-on things. It had become somewhat an administrative job, organizing laboratory demonstrations and making sure the classes had the equipment they needed, and all the bottles were filled and cleaned and so on. He offered to involve me in actual teaching at one point, but I made up my mind, and I took a job in Bedford.

This is the first time I'd worked really way outside London. Bedford is about fifty miles north of London, a nice little town on the River Ouse, noted for its schools. But I got a job with

the British Whiting Association, the British Whiting Research Laboratory. Whiting, you know, is something that happens when you spread chalk on things. Compressed chalk was sold as whiting in blocks to women who wanted their steps to look nice. You know, those front steps that are often the only bright spots in dismal factory areas of Wigan, Leeds, and Glasgow?

Riess: Yes. And this was called the British Whiting Association?

Waters: Whiting Research Laboratory.

There was a government department known as the DSIR, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, and its job was to encourage manufacturing associations--in this case, a lot of people who dug chalk out of hillsides--to get together and set up research laboratories. Through the DSIR they would get advice and some money to start them up. And this was one of those organizations.

Whiting was used as a filler in putty in the days when it was made with linseed oil. So I spent a lot of time devising ways of taking lumps of putty and stretching it to see at what point it broke. The machine would be known as a tensiometer. I devised a tensiometer for putty, one of my great achievements. [laughs]

Riess: And were you involved in doing the chemistry?

Waters: There were chemists, there were qualified chemists involved as well. I was merely, after discussion with them, devising these pieces of apparatus and then helping make them. At this point, I'm going back to the job after the shoe shop, because now I'm using my experience on working a metal turning lathe and things like that. There was also an automatic device for sieving so that one could put a sample through at one end of the machine, and it would pass through sieves of different finenesses, and thereby you would separate the whiting into particle sizes. It involved suspending sieves in a chain and vibrating them.

But then a merger was proposed with the lime people, the people who produce lime, which is a product of chalk and heat, isn't it, as I'm sure you know.

Riess: I thought you might merge with the blueing people. [laughter]

Waters: Now, that's a possibility! Though I think Recket's were probably one of the companies involved. Recket's Blue was something every housewife used to make her whites whiter. Then Recket's merged with Coleman Mustard and became Recket-Coleman.

Riess: The merger with the lime folks.

Waters: I saw my future threatened at that point. That proved to be a very profound event, because that was when I applied to Kodak for a job.

Riess: When was that?

Waters: Oh, it would have been the early fifties.

Riess: Early fifties? Is this possible that all these jobs--?

Waters: Oh, lord, yes. I never stayed at any of them more than two years, two or three. [laughs] I was moving fast.

Riess: And you were certainly living on your own by then?

Waters: Oh, yes, in various diggings--lodgings and so on.

But, whilst working at British Whiting, I found a cottage on the Duke of Bedford's estate which I could rent very cheaply. That's when gardening reappeared, because there was half an acre of land around it. But it was a fair piece into Bedford from there, so I bought a marvelous little engine made by the Duchatti Company in Italy and clamped it under my bicycle, and became motorized for the first time in my life.

Riess: This is something that a person can just do, is make a motorbike?

Waters: Oh, yes. After the war in Britain, these little engines were cheap, and there was a great craze for them. This is when Vespa scooters were being turned out in Italy. Well, if you couldn't rise to the level of a Vespa, you got an engine--most of them were two-stroke engines--and clamped onto the back behind the saddle and drove the rear tire through a friction pulley. Very crude arrangement, but they were popular and cheap.

Duchatti was way ahead of that. Very few people would believe it when they saw it, but the Duchatti was actually a four-stroke engine. It had a sort of semi-automatic gear change. It had two gears, and neutral, and it drove through the chain to the back wheel. It was a sophisticated device, and actually terribly dangerous because of the speeds it would reach. Duchatti is a famous maker of racing motorcycles, and I suppose they thought there was a market here. And it was an extremely ingenious little device.

But I had to be very careful. Eventually, a company in Britain made a special frame to accept it, which was lower built,

heavier, on fatter tires, so that the thing became less dangerous. But clamped on an ordinary bicycle, it was hair-raising, because the weight of the bicycle was so low and the engine so fast. [laughter]

Anyway, I went to my interview at Kodak on this motorized thing, it poured with rain, and I arrived soaked. But, wet as I was, I was taken on. There I remained for about eighteen years.

Riess: Did you stay on at the Duke of Bedford's estate?

Waters: Oh, no. Once I got the job at Kodak, I found lodgings at Harrow.

Riess: That's where Kodak was?

Waters: Yes, Kodak Harrow. The company is known as Kodak Ltd., and that differentiates it from Eastman Kodak in the U.S. And likewise it differentiates it from the French company which is known as Kodak Pathé. But all three of them have research laboratories. And it was in the research laboratory that I went.

A Garden on a Greensand Ridge

Riess: Let's step back to the Duke of Bedford's estate. Surely we can say more about that acreage--what did you do?

Waters: Oh, yes, that's right. First of all, it was on a ridge. Northward from this ridge, Bedfordshire was clay, and in fact, two things happened in clay like that. One is you can grow marvelous cabbages, so there are fields and fields of cabbages. Heavy clay makes good, sturdy hearts to cabbages.

Riess: And they can't go anywhere, stuck in the clay!

Waters: That's right, stay and wait for some poor swine to come along and cut them off.

And the other thing is that you can make bricks from clay, and there were brickfields in there. And the brickfields were particularly profitable because the clay contained a certain amount of carbon, which meant that you could fire them with very little additional fuel. The bricks would essentially fire themselves. These bricks were known as flettons, and Fletton is the name of a place further north in England--I think in Northhamptonshire, I'm not sure--where the first clay was found that had this marvelous quality.

The brickfields were developed by the London Brick Company in Bedfordshire, because they had the same kind of clay, but flettons were not terribly high quality bricks, and mostly they didn't weather terribly well. Brick houses in Britain are built with two faces, the inner face and the outer face, and the flettons were very suitable for the inner face. But techniques were found for coating the surface of a fletton brick so that its exterior became more weatherproof. Usually it was some kind of a sand that was blasted with steam onto the surface while the clay was wet, just before it was fired, and then that surface became part and parcel of the brick, which was now more weatherproof. The ordinary common fletton was not very suitable for outdoor use. But they were cheap, so builders, of course, found lots of uses for them.

Riess: So, cabbages and bricks.

Waters: Yes. The ridge overlooked the brickfields, so when the wind turned in the direction of the brickfields, the sulphurous fumes would make working the garden that I had not too pleasant.

Riess: Maybe the sulphur kept the cabbage moths from the cabbages.

Waters: That might have been true.

But the ridge that I was on was greensand. Which isn't green, of course, it merely means geologically it's young, I think. But anyway, a fair amount of greensand crops up. This region went right along up to a place called Biggelswade, Cambridgeshire. And it was very popular with market gardeners, because it was easily worked, it wasn't heavy in clay like the land below, and yet it was reasonably fertile.

That was the first garden I had of my own, and it created expectations of success that I've never been able to repeat. Because not only was it greensand, which had these wonderful qualities, but in the village nearby--it was called Ridgemont, and the address was 40 High Street, Ridgemont--there was a dairy farmer who invited me to take whatever muck I needed. So I was fortunate. I had all the cow manure that I could carry. This was perfect for greensand, because cow manure is heavier than horse manure and tends to bind sandy soil, whereas horse manure heats up more quickly and tends to break up clay soils.

But also, this cottage was rather primitive, and I had an outdoor privy. And so I had to process that as well. So between the farmyard and the privy, things really shot up out of the ground! I had sweet peas that were the marvel for miles around.

Riess: And you had a source of lime, which of course is part of it.

Waters: That too, which helps to process the privy stuff. I see you're acquainted with these things. You've obviously had outdoor privy experience [laughter]. Good. There were various products. The one that I used was based on formaldehyde, with which one killed off undesirable bacteria. And yes, the lime, which I would bring home as waste material from the laboratory. I think the sweet peas were just glad to get out of it. [laughter] Anyway.

And also in the garden there were a number of old apple trees, including the famous old "Ribston Pippin," which were marvelous.

Riess: It sounds like you could have ended your life there, happily. [laughter]

Waters: Your wishful thinking! [laughter] Oh, dear. And I'm still not thirty years old, almost thirty, I think, when I went to Kodak.

Work for Kodak Ltd., 1954 to 1972

Waters: At Kodak I was engaged to help some people who were working on the physical side, and they were trying to construct equipment of an unusual nature. My job was to help them do that, because I was bringing experience with lathes and precision tools and an experimental turn of mind. I worked with a man who's still a friend, although he remains in England, and we correspond occasionally. He would prefer to telephone and I prefer to write, so I write letters to him and he telephones me back and says he's got them. [laughs] That's about as far as it goes.

Anyway, he became a real friend. I was rather sorry when it broke up. But eventually, I joined two other people in a workshop which essentially was a group of three of us who specialized in making extraordinary equipment that wasn't available anywhere else.

Riess: For scientists who could describe what they wanted.

Waters: That's right. They would come along and talk about it, and make sketches and so on, and we would develop the beginnings of this equipment, and then discuss further improvements with them.

In other words, I was now working more or less for anyone in the lab who had an idea that needed working up. For example, I

made a microdensitometer. These people were studying photographic images, you see, and when you consider the sharpness of an image in film, what you are actually doing is seeing a transition from a light area, say, to a dark area, or from one color to another. The rapidity of that transition essentially is a measure of sharpness. If it's a slow transition, then the picture tends to look blurred. This is known scientifically as acutance. Subjectively it's known as sharpness.

We needed to get a measure of that acutance, that transition period. So we needed to read changes of density over a very, very small area. The sample would travel very slowly and steadily over a distance of a millimeter through a narrow beam of light. The amount of light that could be used to get a measurement of density was very small too, because it had to be a mere pinpoint. The broader the beam of light, the more averaging and less informative the measurement.

So a small amount of light had to be picked up at the receiving end with a photo multiplier, the kind of thing used to enhance night vision, and amplified so that its variations could be recorded. For this, we used a commercial microscope to scan the sample located on a table moved by a rotating cam. It was successful, and became the subject of a joint paper at a meeting of the Society of Cinematograph Engineers.

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Riess: Were they developing commercial films, or films for industry?

Waters: Oh, all, yes. The money makers were color films, and so a lot of money was poured into anything which would improve the color part. But a lot of scientific films, industrial films, if they sold well, like x-ray films, they would benefit, they would get money put into them too. After all, Kodak was a profit-making company--there was a fair amount of pure research done in the laboratory, but that was always tending to shrink, because pressure increased to make money out of this research, particularly as competitors like Fuji came along.

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Waters: An ideal photographic film would give equal increments in density in response to equal increments in exposure, but silver doesn't behave that way. Instead of the straight line graph that would depict the ideal, films tend to give a shallow, elongated S, with an almost straight middle section that is not quite long enough to accommodate the images we need to make. The bends at top and bottom of the curve--the "shoulder" and the "toe"--are where a lot

of effort is spent in improving the response of film: its ability to reveal detail in shadow areas, at one end of the curve, and to retain an image in over-bright light, at the other.

One approach used in Kodak films divides the work between two layers of emulsion[4]: one faster than the other. The slow emulsion is active only at high exposure levels, thus the curve showing response to light for the two layers can be straighter than was previously given by one layer alone.

Earlier color film had three basic emulsion layers, one each sensitive to cyan, magenta, and yellow wavelengths; now, with this technique to achieve a straighter response curve, there are six emulsions. To this number must be added other layers: sub-layers for adhesion to the support, inter-layers for light filtration, anti-halation layers to check the spread of light within the film, supercoats for abrasion resistance, and final correction of color balance (sometimes needed). So in many products there are about a dozen layers in all. When dried they are about one ten-thousandth of an inch thick, and must be applied to the support accurately, quickly, in almost total darkness, and as far as possible simultaneously. It is a demanding task.

When Kodak contracted with Dr. Land for the production of Polaroid film it was expected that since the technology was similar to that used in the company's own products making them would be plain sailing. But difficulties arose because of the need for extremely rapid processing within the camera. The gelatin in the emulsion slows up processing by inhibiting the movement of processing solutions, so the Land formula called for a minimum of gelatin to support the silver halides. So thin and watery were the solutions to be coated that halides tended to settle out on the way to the coating point. Settled particles interfered with the layers as they were laid down, producing heavy and light lines in the finished product--and in images on the film.

My next task was to help in the design and construction of a pilot scale machine that would allow the study of coating problems, with those connected with Polaroid products having high priority. Almost before the machine was complete I found myself replicating the defects encountered in production and using the unfinished equipment to find ways of avoiding them. This led to my complete involvement in coating studies. With a team of ten we

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[4]Emulsion, the term commonly used for the mixture of silver halides, gelatin, dyes and doctoring agents that comprise the light sensitive layer, is a misnomer; it is better described as a suspension.

were able to use the machine (it performed like a production machine, but was one-tenth the size) to show how some defects could be avoided, and to demonstrate possibilities for running at much higher speeds and, at the same time, improving quality.

The potential for increase in coating speed was a highly attractive way of recouping the investment in full size production coating machines, which are hugely expensive to build and run. The result was a kind of treadmill on which products were studied one after another to find the level at which speed and quality were optimum. I lost interest in the work, and resigned.

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Riess: What was Land's part in the development?

Waters: Dr. Land developed Polaroid film for instant pictures. He offered it to Kodak at one point, but they weren't interested. And of course, once Polaroid looked as though it was catching on, they [Kodak] tried to produce their own, and Dr. Land sued them. It only happened recently, in the last ten years, I think. Took them to court, saying that they were infringing his patents. Even at the time that I was there, people in the lab were examining Land's patents to see how they could get round them and produce Kodak's own version, and they marketed something for a while, but in the end, they withdrew it.

Riess: It all sounds enormously challenging. Working in the dark, and maintaining a totally clean atmosphere.

Waters: Yes, it had to be clean. Everyone who went into the coating area would put on a white coverall suit then pass through an enclosure in which air was blasted at them from all directions to blow off and suck away loose hairs and dust particles. And the coating--even these multi-layers are only about a tenth of a thousandth of an inch thick, and it had to be better than 3 percent even.

Riess: Now this was just the British Kodak?

Waters: Yes. Well, there was collaboration, because--in fact, at one point I went over to the Eastman Kodak Company to compare notes with them, and they occasionally sent people to us. And likewise the French company sent people and I went to Paris and discussed with them and so on. We were trying to avoid duplicating each other's work, but they were all interested in the same kinds of problems.

Riess: Were you paid in shares of Kodak?

Waters: Oh, no. Lend-Lease during the war stopped all that. Because one of the arrangements for Lend-Lease was that stock for American companies in Britain was sacrificed. So in fact, no employees at Kodak had any stock at all. I was amazed to discover when I went to Rochester that all they ever talked about there was their stock purchases.

One of the amusing things was, of course, that this was in Rochester, New York, where Xerox Corporation had put up its headquarters right next door, deliberately a higher building than Kodak's on State Street. [laughs] Just to show off. And people in Rochester were moaning that they had resolutely refused to take any stock in Xerox, but then their wives had all gone out and bought it, and at one point their wives' portfolios were worth more than theirs. [laughing]

Riess: Did you do much photography yourself early?

Waters: No, I didn't. I got an appreciation for what was possible with photography. And in fact, one of the training programs that I went through actually had me making my own emulsions and coating them onto glass plates, exposing them and testing them with sensitometry.

At that time too, the camera manufacturing department was also on the site at Harrow. Subsequently, it moved out of town and went to Stevenage, but at the beginning, it was at Harrow. One of my pleasures, when I had reason to visit other parts of the plant, was to go by the camera department and look in scrap bins to see what bits of equipment they had thrown out. I assembled a cheap camera that way, from pieces of scrap. It was the camera known as the Retinette. The Retina, which was made over here, was quite a famous camera; Retina 3 was the last model, I think.

Riess: I had a Retina.

Waters: Oh, yes? A little folding camera.

Riess: Yes, with a bellows.

Waters: Yes, splendid little job. Well, the Retinette was almost an insult, because it had very few of the qualities of the Retina. But it was a good cheap camera, and I took a number of pictures with this thing made from scrap pieces that cost me nothing at all.

II ENTRY INTO THE WORLD OF GARDENS AND GARDEN HISTORY

Garden History Society, New Horizons

Waters: But by this time, about the time--aha, I have to retrace. Okay?

Riess: That's okay.

Waters: About the time I went to Kodak--I'd had another garden. I had become quite interested in gardening, and I had started to buy books on gardening. I quickly realized that most of the best books on gardening were out of print. But there were a lot of hacks turning out books on almost any subject a publisher might want. (We've got them here too, you know.) I had a few of these, and I realized that I had to look elsewhere, because I couldn't enjoy these books. Not because of the information, but it was just presented in such a dreary way.

So I started to look for books by people I'd heard about, like William Robinson and Reginald Farrer, and a few people like that. I haven't bought myself a car yet, I'm still bicycling everywhere. And when I went bicycling around the countryside, I would invariably call in at any used book store on the way to see what I could find.

So this--and I suppose too the early interest in history that my father encouraged in me by these books that he sent for--led me to the Garden History Society. I read somewhere about a garden history society that was being formed, and there was a meeting to be held at the Royal Horticultural Society's offices in London. I went up to it, and that's where I met a number of people. Ray Desmond, who was the librarian at Kew, William Stearn, the author of Botanical Latin, and several other interesting people.

Riess: Did you put together quite a collection of garden books?

Waters: Yes, oh, yes. It's now giving me problems of storage. I brought all of them over here to the States, and I've added to the collection since. It now fills more than 200 feet of shelving.

Riess: I interrupted you. You started to meet people--

Waters: --interested in gardening and in history, and people interested in design. This is the point at which I started to think about the design of gardens, not just the growing of plants. And of course, I acquired a historical perspective by virtue of my interest in the Garden History Society, because at that meeting an executive committee was formed, and the fellow sitting next to me, we seemed to get on very well together, a fellow called Laurence Fricker nominated me, and so I, to get my own back, nominated him for the executive.

Riess: What were the aims of the society?

Waters: It was to provide sources of information for people doing research. It was the brainchild of a man called Hunt, Peter [Francis] Hunt, who had just written a book called The Shell Gardens Book. Essentially it was a pocket encyclopedia and guide for people interested in the great gardens of Britain, and it also gave snippets of the history, and the principal features of the gardens. It contains discussions, for example, on garden urns, gates and gate houses, borders, topiary, and so on. All things that are being done much more grandiosely now, but Peter Hunt essentially was beginning guides of this kind.

He realized that he was having great difficulty finding this information, so he thought that the Garden History Society would be a means of organizing people with similar interests so as to make the information more readily available to everybody. It is also an effective force in garden conservation.

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Waters: One of the first needs of the new society was to become better known. With this in mind I collaborated with Miles Hadfield, author of a history of gardening in Britain, in putting together a set of notes on garden history and a collection of color slides that together could be rented from the society for lectures. I was able to have good duplicates made of slides borrowed from members, and from them put together two or three sets of about eighty pictures each. These were in constant use for several years.

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Riess: Why do you think there was an interest at the time? Is this the early sixties?

Waters: Nineteen sixty-five dates the foundation of the Garden History Society.

Yes, certainly gardening literature was increasing enormously. Whereas at one time, one or two publishers, like Country Life and Colingridge were the publishers of gardening books, almost alone in the market. Ward, Lock were publishing guides, touring guides. Each had a specialty. And indeed, that was part and parcel of the publishing business, because it meant they could keep specialist editors on staff who were able to vet manuscripts and say, Yes, this is a good one, and this is no good, we shouldn't bother with it.

Suddenly, there was a crucial publication, and it was a wildflower book by a cleric, William Keble Martin's The Concise British Flora. Martin, as he traveled around visiting his colleagues and perhaps standing in while they went on vacation, would make watercolors of the wildflowers that he saw. He got pages and pages of this stuff. Took them to publishers--I think his daughter did, because he was getting rather old. Nobody wanted to touch it.

But then a publisher did pick it up, got the Duke of Edinburgh to write a preface, and in 1965 the thing went like wildfire! All the publishing houses that previously hadn't concerned themselves with plants or gardens suddenly realized they were missing out. So almost every publishing house in Britain was producing gardening books.

Riess: That's interesting. I think that was about the time that Knopf published Julia Child, and nobody had published cookbooks before then.

Waters: That's right, the same thing was happening in cooking. Those two fields particularly. But of course, it also meant that the day of the hack had arrived, because many publishing houses no longer needed--or felt no need--to keep specialist editors and would just print any damn thing that was offered them, and that's the situation. It's been that way ever since, pretty well, hasn't it?

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Waters: Editing also suffers from the automation of book production. Machinery has so reduced the cost of preparation, printing, and binding, that the editing process now looms as an expense much larger than others in a publisher's accounts sheet. When

economies are looked for as a means of increasing profit or staving off bankruptcy, it is the editing that seems most labor intensive and to offer greatest saving in costs. In many publishing houses work once shared among specialist editors is now attempted by one, and the months once allowed for it are reduced to as many weeks.

A comment on this subject in a *Pacific Horticulture* editorial[1] prompted a response from a reader who had left the publisher for whom he had been editor, disgusted by the limited attention to editing now allowed there. He was now a professional gardener and wholeheartedly endorsed my assessment of trends in horticultural publishing. An example of these failings was singled out for mention in a *Pacific Horticulture* review[2] of a book published by Doubleday in 1978. Listing enough errors "to indicate the limits of the author's comprehension" the reviewer summed up the book as containing "so much misinformation that [it] cannot be recommended for beginning gardeners, and should be read by others only for amusement."

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Waters: That was, I think, essentially what was happening, and this obviously stemmed from a tremendous--the beginnings of what has now become almost an avalanche of books as a result of growing interest among people in Britain for gardening. And the same thing happened here about ten years later, I would say.

First Horticultural Society Involvement, Garden at Oxhey, 1961

[Interview 2: July 14, 1998] ##

Riess: From our first interview, it seems you lived a number of places. When we come to the editing, I will want it to be clear enough so that the reader isn't saying, "What? Where? Where was he collecting manure? When did he have his motorcycle?" All of these things will get cleared up, I hope, at the end.

Waters: Yes.

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[1]*Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1977, p. 1.

[2]*Pacific Horticulture*, Fall 1978, p. 52.

Riess: And the autobiographical editorial pieces in the issues of *Pacific Horticulture* added even more locations. For instance, where was the garden that you mulched with municipal compost and hops?[3]

Waters: Oh, that one, yes, you're referring to my reference to it. That was at Oxhey, as a matter of fact. It was a very long, thin garden. It was only about thirty-five feet wide, but it was about 300 feet long. A long strip.

Riess: And where is Oxhey?

Waters: Oxhey is in Hertfordshire, on the outskirts of the town of Watford, a town northwest of London, just beyond the greater metropolitan area and much better known. There was a large golf course at Oxhey at one time that had been abandoned by golfers and was now just a kind of public park. On one side of the park, before the Second World War, there had been a private housing development, and on the other side in the postwar period the London County Council put up another housing project, which had become known as South Oxhey.

As a matter of fact, while living in Oxhey I became involved in local council activities. I campaigned and got a seat on the Rural District Council. But anyway, that garden was at Oxhey, and it's where I first became involved in horticultural societies.

The pre-war, private development, was quite a tight community. There were half a dozen streets, and in one long evening you could walk around putting notices through letterboxes. So it was a convenient unit within which to organize a horticultural society. And when, in 1955, I first went to a meeting, it was obvious that the society was almost defunct, because nobody wanted to be an officer. So there was going to be no show that year. I thought to myself, better a show secretary who knows nothing about it than no show secretary at all, so I volunteered.

And that had a magical effect, because I suddenly discovered that the show secretary was supposed to know it all, do you see, and I thought, My god, I haven't the foggiest idea what these people are talking about. So I went out and bought a book, and that was the beginning of my garden library. As well as the two flower shows, I arranged film shows in winter, drawing on the several libraries offering 16 mm. sound films on technical subjects, and bus trips to fine gardens.

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[3]*Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1992.

Riess: Are all the horticultural societies a part of the Royal Horticultural Society?

Waters: Not necessarily, no. Some do make some kind of affiliation to the RHS, but no, this was just an independent unit that had two flower shows a year, one in June and another in September.

They also had a building--actually, more of a hut. It was the air raid warden's hut that had been erected during the war, and the society had taken it over to store fertilizers and things like that. These things they bought wholesale and sold on Sunday mornings to members at cut prices. So it was a useful organization.

Riess: You got this great strip of garden with your cottage?

Waters: Yes. It was actually just a semi-detached house, that's all, part of this small private development. Not as monotonous as the estate in Dagenham--there was a greater variation in the buildings, and they were stucco, not just plain brick.

Who Gardens in England, and Why

Waters: I had become interested in fuchsias and went to a nursery and met a very friendly Irishman called Alfred White who was the owner and ran it with his two sons. He encouraged my interest in gardening. He was already a revered member of this society--he lived in one of the streets nearby. He also grew irises, and that's how I became particularly interested in irises.

Riess: What did you have in that show the first year?

Waters: Oh, I don't recall. I do recall showing my first delphinium. I got really interested in growing them taller and thicker than anyone else. I was quite successful with delphiniums.

Riess: And this was because of your composting and mulching?

Waters: That's right, yes. I quickly latched onto the idea that if you fed the soil, the plants would look after themselves. So my idea was that those soil bacteria just had to be fattened up and just pushed everything they might enjoy at them that I could lay my hands on. [laughs] And it did seem to be quite successful, although the soil there at Oxhey was fundamentally very poor. It was extremely gravelly. It was said that that part of Hertfordshire had been the repository for the last huge pile of

debris from the ice ages. The debris--gravel--was left behind in Hertfordshire by the receding ice as the climate became warmer.

Riess: When you talk about the tallest delphinium, it reminds me of the competitive aspect of gardening.

Waters: Yes, and you find competition here, too. There are iris, dahlia, lily, and other societies dotted around this country, and they have competitive shows. But they're probably less attractive because of their specialty--they're just competitions among iris, or dahlia enthusiasts.

The flower shows we were holding were less sophisticated in that there wasn't a great deal of specialization, but you would find all kinds of things exhibited there, including vegetables, and the women would bring along their jams and their special-recipe cakes and things like that, and they would all be subject to competition. Being a judge at these shows meant being a gourmand as well. The prizes were negligible, of course. It was a social event, in reality. You might have got half a crown or something or other, and a blue ribbon. It didn't really amount to anything. It was a token. But it brought people together, and it was a great social event.

Mr. White, the Irishman I was telling you about, was in great demand because of his knowledge as a judge in the next tier of shows, which were the equivalent, I suppose, of county fairs here. They were called county shows in England. And they were quite large events in which one would maybe spend the whole day, because there were amusements as well. There were also cattle and dog and cat shows, among other events, and the horticultural tent was usually quite large. People came from all over the county and from other parts of the country to compete, and the prizes at county shows were significantly larger. Alfred White occasionally took me along as his assistant when judging at county shows, so that I could learn the ropes and broaden my horticultural horizons.

But yes, the competition is an aspect of it. In fact, in Britain there are books for gardeners on how to be successful in competition, with all kinds of hints about the need to groom your specimens, and place them well. When you stage your exhibit, the books tell you to place it next to that of a fellow competitor whose flowers are pale so that your vivid red ones stand out and hit the judge's eye, and that kind of thing.[4] But mainly they

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[4]E.R. James, *Flower Growing for Shows*, Penguin, 1959. George Whitehead, *Growing for Showing*, Faber, 1978.

tell how to grow exhibition plants really well, and carry them to shows without damage.

And in these horticultural exhibits which might call for, say, a dish of potatoes, the prize would be heavily weighted towards that dish which showed evenness in size and shape, and in the case of fruit, for example, it was quite common for the judge to slice it open and taste it to see if it was up to scratch, and a really good example. Though there would also be a class, maybe, for the longest bean, whose size, not quality, was the decider. There are all kinds of classes to enter. The schedule would be as crowded as it could be, but in the end, the page had a finite length. So you couldn't have a schedule which included every possibility.

Riess: And at the bottom of all of it is competition.

Waters: But the competition at local shows is usually friendly; prizes are given mainly to encourage exhibitors. Only at specialized national shows does competition become serious. Among garden makers too, there's competition. Obviously, there's pride in producing a garden that attracts more visitors. Garden visiting in Britain nowadays is a major industry. It's so important to tourism. I think it's had a deleterious effect on garden design in Britain, insofar as now owners of famous gardens, eager to attract visitors, want to provide what will draw the crowds, not necessarily that which is artistically superior.

Riess: Are these the gardens that are supporting the old houses?

Waters: Yes, in some cases. They need the money, and that again becomes an aspect of competition, I would imagine. The prize being the gate money.

In fact, I won't mention names, but on my last visit to England I encountered a gardener who rather deplored the fact that he hadn't been able to attract the visitors that he needed to maintain the garden. He said that a week or two hence, a number of the best-known names in horticulture, who were sympathetic to his need, were to stage an event there which would give him an opportunity to publicize his garden. So attracting visitors had become essential to him.

Riess: No more secret gardens.

Waters: Oh, there are secret gardens as well, people who don't maintain them for visitors. But a lot of people in Britain are landed, as it were, they've inherited the property, and it has a famous garden, a garden that has not been taken over by the National

Trust, and somehow or other, they feel the need to keep it going. Admission fees are one way of doing it.

Riess: In 1961, you were at Oxhey. In 1965 when you helped found the Garden History Society, were you still in Oxhey?

Waters: Yes. Yes, most of the time that I was at Kodak, from 1954 to 1972, I was at Oxhey.

Publicizing the Garden History Society

Riess: Tell me more about the Garden History Society. Did you write for them? Did it have a publication?

Waters: Yes, it had a publication. I didn't contribute to it, no. At that time, it was little more than a newsletter. I do have all of them on file, as a matter of fact, from number one. Peter Hunt was producing it for the first few years. It had all kinds of news of the society's activities, and announcements about what was being attempted in the way of compiling a register of important gardens throughout the country and so on. That was part of its activity, and bibliographies were being compiled by certain people in the society. In other words, people who were active in historical research were reporting what they were doing in the newsletter, but it was fragmentary in the main at that time.

Riess: How did you make the Garden History Society known?

Waters: Yes, publicizing the thing was a problem.

Coming out of an early meeting, there was a little group of us, including Ray Desmond, of Kew, Frederick Doerflinger, who represented the Dutch bulb industry in London, and Sandra Raphael, a librarian working at Oxford at the time. We were charged with finding ways of publicizing the society, and one of the things that we did was to put up shows at the Royal Horticultural Society's meetings. Kay Sanecki, the secretary, and I conceived of a display at a Royal Horticultural Society show at Vincent Square, London [November 21-22, 1967].

This first exhibition was of old garden tools. We had a slightly raised platform, and in the center of it we erected a wooden tower, a four-sided tower, and for the sides I made photographs of one of the depictions by Brueghel, a thing called "Spring," a lot of Flemish gardeners digging away. (You probably know the thing, it's quite famous.) I made four photographically

enlarged copies--poster size--and put the society's name above them. On the platform beneath the tower, we displayed a lot of old garden tools collected from various sources around the country.

We had found a cache of old garden tools near St. Albans, Hertfordshire. They were the property of a man called Salaman, a relative, I believe, of Redcliffe Salaman, described by Herbert Baker as "the potato's chief biographer."[5] He had all kinds of old tools, including an Irish fack, which was the name for a wooden tool used in cultivating potatoes.

Digging tools are very localized in Britain. Almost every region had its own favorite shape. The blade was narrower, or longer, or broader or, in some cases, had a toothed edge, depending on local soil, weather, and the sort of crops grown. The toothed edge would be found in areas blessed with heavy clay, and was a means of helping to cut into it. Anyway, there were lots of other things there as well. Some of the famous old cloches, bell jars, which were used for propagation, he had several of those intact. We borrowed all this from him, or a lot of it--he had a whole barn full of the stuff--to put on our display. And that was the first GHS display. It attracted attention, but it did not win a medal from the RHS.

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Our next display, at the RHS show in February, 1970, did win. It was a series of photographic enlargements illustrating the main styles and periods in British gardening over about three hundred years. An illuminated panel was devoted to each style: the pagoda at Alton Towers, the Japanese garden at Tatton Park, the bridge at Sezincote, all showing Oriental influences; gardens at Studley Royal, Stowe, and Chiswick House, showing the Search for Nature. Other headings, given here in no particular order, included The Grand Manner, Patterns and Traceries, The Plants Take Over, The Italian Revival, and Space For Living. Original photographs for this exhibit came mainly from those members who had helped with the slide lecture, notably Arthur Hellyer, editor for many years of the British weekly, *Amateur Gardening*.

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That was one of the very first exhibits--so far as I know--at the RHS's fortnightly shows that was electrically lit. Individually, obviously the hall was illuminated for most exhibits. But my friends at Kodak got behind me on this, and they made all the enlarged prints for me, and they even designed the

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[5]H.G. Baker, *Plants and Civilization*, 3rd edition, p. 42. Wadsworth Publishing, 1978.

exhibit insofar as they found folding display panels, and arranged for each panel to be lit from above. And they transported and assembled the whole thing, so the Silver Lindley Medal given to the society for the exhibit was theirs too, I'd say.

Riess: Was Kodak a sponsor?

Waters: No, this was all done privately. No, I don't know that the management actually knew anything about it. It was all done by a network within the company. "Yes, George, we can fix this for you"--a friendly arrangement. Most of it was done in odd moments. But the company was reasonably tolerant in those days. Fuji hadn't started making inroads into their profits as they have since. [laughs] Fuji was just a shadow on the horizon then. They were paying license fees for several manufacturing processes developed by Kodak.

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Waters: I was also active in the British Iris Society, at whose shows in the RHS halls in Vincent Square I helped with displays as well. For one of these we built a darkened closet, about eight feet square, in which were five large bowls of irises illuminated with beams of light filtered to produce extraordinary colors in the flowers. The intended futuristic effect was somewhat lessened by the sun entering through high windows in the hall that almost overpowered our electrical light sources. We had not anticipated such bright weather--but evening visitors to the show saw our exhibit at full power.

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Riess: There was no consciousness of the history of gardens until the Garden History Society?

Waters: The Garden History Society was obviously a response to a growing interest, but at that point the interest from academia was almost nil. Most of the people who founded the society were gardeners, they weren't academics, you see, although William Stearn was well established academically.

Roy Strong, who subsequently made a name for himself in academic circles in the area of garden history, was director of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and in 1979 put on a big exhibit called A Celebration of 1,000 Years of British Garden History. But Strong was inclined to dismiss the Garden History Society because it wasn't sufficiently academic in its approach to the subject.

Riess: What about Sissinghurst and places like that? They were garden history, weren't they?

Waters: I'm not sure now when Sissinghurst passed into the hands of the National Trust, the date escapes me, but in the sixties, I think Sackville-West was still there. And it was an important and a much admired garden, but at that point, it was not seen necessarily as an historic garden. Although the building around which it was made was historic, the garden itself was just a place that she wrote about, and therefore, it was famous and people went to visit it.

Riess: What were historic gardens?

Waters: The earliest garden in Britain is an excavation on the south coast where archaeologists unearthed the foundations of a Roman villa. So that's a remnant of the Roman occupation. And they also unearthed tile work which outlines the garden that accompanied that villa. I think it's called Fishbourne. And since those days, I think there have been other relics found of Roman gardens in Britain; I'm not sure about that.

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Waters: Little is known about gardens in medieval Britain. They are believed to have differed little from those of the time in mainland Europe, where a few manuscripts describe them. Our conjectures find confirmation in the writings of Thomas Hyll[6] and a few anonymous authors of slightly earlier date, who include, inter alia, chapters on gardening.

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Waters: But there are odd relics from the period. For example, in New College, Oxford, there is the Mount, which was a distinctly medieval artifact in gardens, but not much else other than the walls that surrounded the garden can be called medieval.

Things start to get a bit easier once you come to the European, the French influence particularly. There are signs of a garden made in the classic French style at Hampton Court. That was done for William and Mary. It's said that Le Notre visited Hampton Court, presumably in an advisory capacity, but I'm not

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[6]Thomas Hyll, *A Most Briefe and Pleasant Treatyse,..*, 1563, London, and Hyll, *The Gardeners Labyrinth*, 1577. (The first of these is the earliest book in English on gardening of which copies exist. The second is the best known of Hyll's several books on gardening.)

sure that's true. It's disputed. And also at Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire, Levens Hall, Cumbria, and Wrest Park, in Bedfordshire, there are remnants of gardens of distinctly French influence. So, scattered around the country we find evidence of early gardens.

With the huge revolution in taste in the 18th century, then the evidence becomes thick on the ground. But despite the fact that the 18th century revolution destroyed a great deal of what went before, there are those earlier remnants.

Riess: "Arcadia."

Waters: Yes, that's right. It's a revolution that's quite fascinating in itself. There was a Romantic revolution throughout the arts, and in many ways, I think it's possible to show that garden design, then considered the highest art, preceded all others. So it's worth digging into, and it's also interesting that humanist ideas were bandied about quite a lot in those days. Which incidentally coincides with the revolution over here.

It could be argued that the revolution taking place in North America was not in fact an anti-British activity; it was a humanistic revolution. Something similar was also taking place in Britain, but without warfare; it was occurring in Parliament.

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Waters: John Locke's social contract theories, which endorsed the individual's right to the pursuit of "life, health, liberty, and possessions," are the basis of the U.S. Constitution. But Locke was influential in his own country as well, and his ideas provided the philosophical and moral underpinning for the Age of Reason and the emergence of the English middle class.

Pointers to the similarity of direction in the two countries, if not the mode of travel, are seen in the replacement in Parliament in 1757 of Walpole, for long the condoner of corruption and privilege, by Pitt, with more democratic leanings and opposed to corruption. A minister popular with the people was a novelty. As Dr. Johnson had it: Walpole was a minister given by the King to the people; Pitt was a minister given by the people to the King. The shift towards a new spirit of humanism is seen, too, in literature (Fielding), religion (Wesley), and even in the administration of law, with the appearance in London of police courts where even the poorest could gain a hearing; sometimes a sympathetic one.

In other words, there was in England at that time the same reaching for individual liberty and the same struggle to be free

of the yoke long maintained by the landowning aristocracy. The engine of change in both countries was powered by steam from coal. But those philosophic connections with the Revolutionary War need more examination; I'm speculating only.

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Riess: It goes to show how far garden history as a concept could go.

Waters: Yes, and now the Garden History Society is well established both in practical fields, in advising government departments on conservation and so on, and also as a sponsor of academic studies. In fact now its journal has transformed itself into a splashy thing with a colored cover and so on. There are now two journals: one published by the Garden History Society and the other published independently. So there's lots going on.

Riess: Do we have the equivalent in this country?

Waters: There are garden history societies associated with states. There is the New England Garden History Society, which publishes an academic journal. And there is, to my knowledge, a California Garden History Society which hasn't published anything beyond a newsletter at the moment, it's still trying to get itself into shape. And there are almost certainly others throughout the country, but I don't know much about them.

But from the outset the Garden History Society has been international. An early membership list includes many U.S. names, and others in Europe and Africa.

Riess: And of course here we have the Garden Conservancy. You've been a member of the board of the Garden Conservancy?

Waters: No. I came to it appointed as a referee, as I think they call them.

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Waters: The Ruth Bancroft Garden probably could be said to be the spark that got it [the Garden Conservancy] going. Frank Cabot, as you know, is the founder, essentially, and the source of its first energy. I guess it was there I met him, and he asked me to serve in that capacity.

Riess: Do you bring likely projects to the attention of the Garden Conservancy?

Waters: Yes, it works both ways. Usually what happens is that they get to hear of a project, and send the details out to the referees asking for their opinions. They assemble responses from referees, chew it over, and decide whether there's anything the conservancy can do to help the applicants convert a private garden to public use.

Deeper Into the Oxhey Garden

Riess: In my further pursuit of when you were where you were, I noted that you have written about "pleiones in a greenhouse."[7] On what property did you have a greenhouse?

Waters: This was at Oxhey. In fact, I finished up with three greenhouses at Oxhey.

Riess: That you built yourself?

Waters: Well, they all came by different means. The first was a very small wooden thing that came from one of the many companies in Britain that made prefabricated buildings. It was quite small, I don't know--ten feet by eight feet, something like that.

Then I got hold of an aluminum structure which was in the nature of a conservatory in that it was designed to be attached to the wall of the house. So I hung that on the back wall of the house. It was very modern; it was all made from aluminum extrusion, and the glass was set in in specially extruded plastic mountings and so on.

Then I became friendly with Percy King, who was a lawyer in Watford with a large garden that he could no longer manage, and he sold off half of it. On the part to be sold, he had two greenhouses. One of them was twenty feet long and about ten feet wide. He said that if I wanted to dismantle it and take it away, I could have it.

So along with the two fellows who helped to shift plants--

Riess: Oh, "Gerard and Jack?"[8]

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[7] *Pacific Horticulture*, Spring 1991.

[8] *Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1984.

Waters: --Gerard and Jack, they helped me take the thing down, and we loaded it onto the flatbed which had previously accommodated plants. We laid it piece by piece--it was still glazed, it was an old-fashioned wood structure, with putty glazing and so on. We laid it down, carefully, one piece on top of another, and took it round to my garden and unloaded it, and eventually I put it up there. It was one of those greenhouses that sits on a low brick wall about two feet high. That was quite an achievement. I think I broke one piece of glass in the whole process of putting it up. That was pretty good, I thought.

Riess: This is sounding a little crowded, your garden space.

Waters: [laughs] Although the lot was narrow, it was 300 feet long, so there was a fair amount of space in it. By this time, I had quite abandoned the idea of growing grass, I thought that was a waste of time. So the only area that wasn't cultivated was a small paved path from one end of the garden to the other. All the rest of it was stacked with plants.

Riess: Stacked with plants in what you would now think of as an artful design?

Waters: I would call it an artful design, yes. I thought it was artful then too.

Riess: But don't you think gardening is a totally evolutionary process?

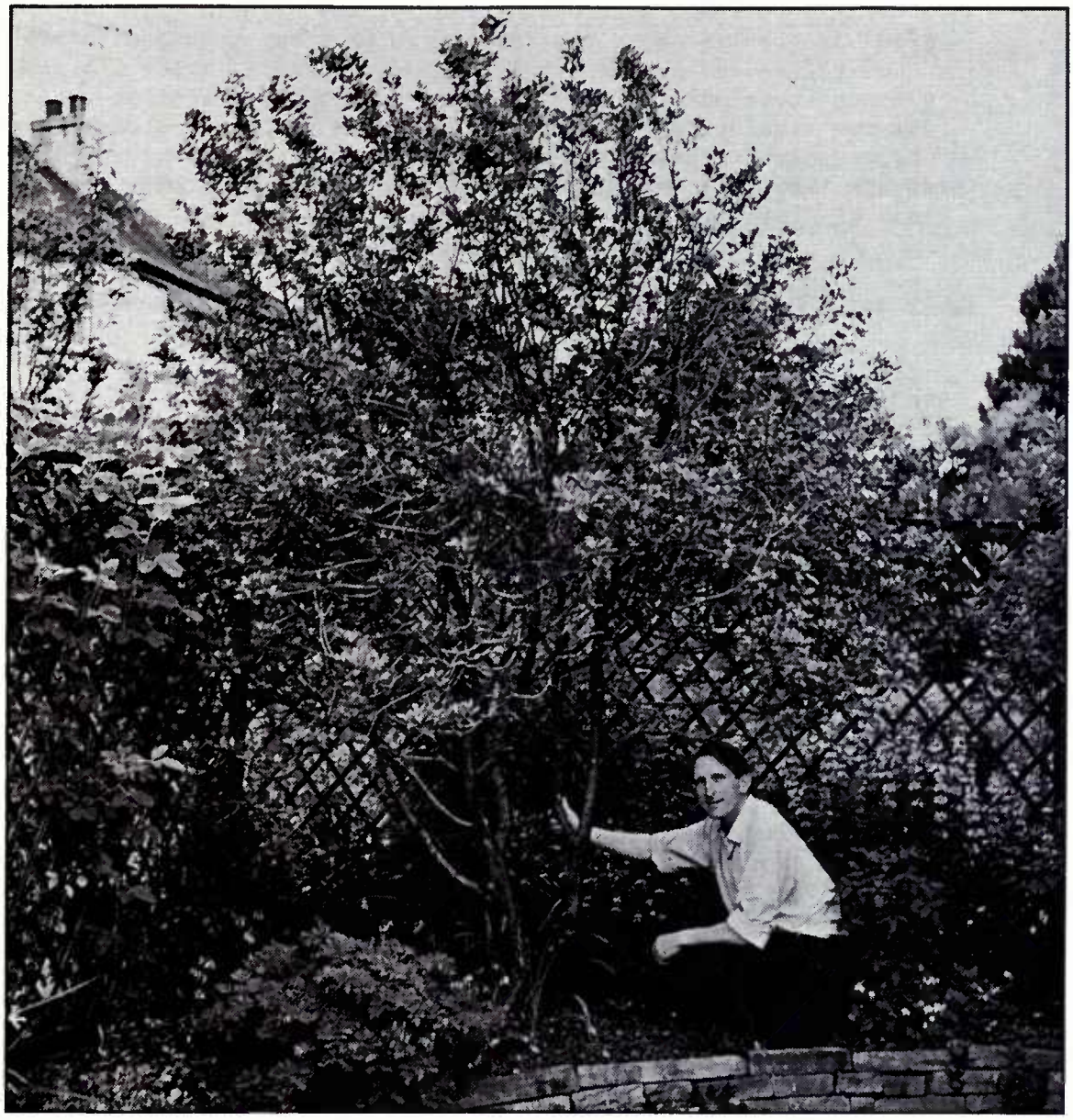
Waters: Yes.

Riess: That your taste just is constantly changing.

Waters: Yes, indeed it is. That's true. As I say, I abandoned the idea of a grass lawn. The path waved about a bit, so that the borders on either side, which filled most of the garden, would provide different aspects. One side would be shady and allow me to grow hostas, even in gravelly soil. And the other side would be sunny, so I would grow maybe azaleas or whatever on the sunny side.

Riess: What do you think your gardening instinct was then? Is it to see whether things will grow, and the fun of it, or what?

Waters: Yes, that's right. There was a certain amount of acquisitiveness attached to it. One has to learn about plants. Even if one subsequently decides not to grow them, he must handle them and have them and see the plants. So there was acquisitiveness in there.



George Waters at 87 Raglan Gardens, Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire, photographed for Garden News.

G.W. notes: "*Garden News published human interest stories of the achievements of gardeners. Word of the plants that Jack, Gerard, and I had moved from gardens about to be 'developed' must have reached them, and this photograph by Ken Lauder accompanied their story on my garden in Oxhey. It shows me fondling an eight-foot Osmanthus heterophyllus lifted from a garden in Harrow and helped to survive the move with a soil-heating cable buried at its roots.*" [p. 48 in the oral history]

There was an element of defiance, of course, in growing things that people said could not flourish in that area. There was defiance also in deliberately abandoning one aspect of a garden that everyone said was essential: green grass. So there were all these things operating. There was the necessity to learn, because I spent many years in this horticultural society with people expecting me to answer all their questions, you see. So I was reading by this time a great deal, and learning about plants, reading about plants that attracted me from what was said about them, and therefore setting out to acquire them. So there were all kinds of things influencing my gardening.

Riess: Are there stories of how you acquired these plants? Did you range all over England?

Waters: No, mostly around West London. Jack was at Ruislip. Gerard was--he wandered around a bit. He was kind of out in the Watford area for much of the time.

Riess: These are gardening pals?

Waters: No, these were colleagues at Kodak, and their gardening interest arose in different ways. Jack became fairly enthusiastic, because he had a large piece of ground that needed to be made presentable. Gerard never had a very large garden--oh, he did at one time for a short while--but he never really became a man of the soil. He became especially interested in Japanese maples, and he still is interested in them.

Riess: In the Bay Area there is a great range of nurseries, and the botanic gardens have their plant sales. And then, of course, catalogues. How did you go about getting your plants?

Waters: I was getting catalogues from the famous firm of Hillier's in Winchester. Their catalogue was a most delightful thing, almost completely unillustrated, by the way, but the plants that it listed--the stock was enormously varied. And they must have maintained a lot of stuff that wasn't economic, because the proprietor himself was proud of the fact that he could supply so much.

Gradually, with new generations of owners coming along, the company [Hillier's] decided to reduce its overhead by getting rid of a lot of stuff. By that time--this would have been the late sixties, seventies--by that time there were many other small nurseries in Britain, and these smaller companies deliberately went to Hillier's and arranged to take over part of the stock that Hillier's was disposing of. The plants thus were dispersed among several specialized nurseries. The owners felt that what was not

economic for the large nursery might be profitable for a small one.

Riess: And this was a happy solution?

Waters: In a way it was, of course, but Hillier's as the source for almost everything was such an enormous convenience.

Riess: Did you know Hillier?

Waters: I was acquainted with one or two people on the staff, but I never met Harold Hillier. One of his staff--when they first published what was known as *Hillier's Manual of Trees and Shrubs*, which was just a reference list of everything that they had ever stocked, I got a copy, and this young woman arranged for Harold Hillier to sign it for me. That was about as close as I got to him.

I met Roy Lancaster at some point, and he became somewhat of a friend. And he was on the Hillier staff. Oh, that's right, he was curator of the arboretum. The private garden, the Hillier garden down in Hampshire, by default became an arboretum, and Hillier eventually handed it over to the county council, which now maintains it. Roy Lancaster was the first curator, and he had been on the Hillier staff up to that point.

Riess: I was asking how you decided what to put in your garden, what proportion was through a growing acquaintance with the people in the world of gardening, and how much was reading catalogues during the long winters? But mostly today I want to get you out of England! [laughter]

Waters: Yes, you'll have to schedule that for '99. [laughter]

Putting on Garden Programs

Waters: Where are we? Yes, the Garden History Society obviously brought me in touch with lots of people. We tried to form regional groups. I'm not sure how successful this has been, but we had one in Hertfordshire. We arranged visits to famous gardens. For example, Ashridge in Hertfordshire is a famous garden. It has remnants of Humphrey Repton's work in it. We had a very fine visit there. It's now a privately run business college. Delightful part of Hertfordshire. And we had several others.

So this was essentially widening my scope. Arthur Hellyer, for example, who was active in the Garden History Society, was an

editor of *Amateur Gardening* magazine. He was a revered plantsman, provided some of the photographs that went into the exhibit of the Garden History Society. And Miles Hadfield I met through the society. He wrote one of the first books on garden history to become quite popular in Britain.

Riess: Were you propagating and grafting, and all those things? [laughs]

Waters: Yes, all those things.

Riess: Did you ever take classes to learn how to do this?

Waters: No, it was all by reading, and talk with people like Alfred White, you know, the old nurseryman I was telling you about earlier on. He had ideas about gardening and propagation and I was constantly in discussions with him. But no, in the main, it was through reading. The only classes that I can recall being associated with were those I had the audacity to set myself up as teacher of. [laughs]

Riess: That was in this period also?

Waters: Yes, that's right, it was all in this period. The first and most successful set of classes was in Welwyn Garden City in Hertfordshire. Teaching classes was all part of the process of building confidence.

Riess: That's interesting, yes. And if you hadn't taken a class, how could you teach a class? And why did you want to do this?

Waters: Why? That's a good question. I suppose I'd had this yearning that was frustrated earlier on of being a teacher. Maybe that was it. I can't remember now the circumstances under which I took it up. I must have heard of the fact that they were looking for somebody to run such classes. I don't really know, I can't recall how it came about. It was a short but happy period.

Oh, yes, that's right--in the local horticultural society I was trying to take care of those long winters you were talking about by running movie shows. Through my contacts at Kodak I knew that there were a lot of 16 mm. sound movies available, and if you remember, I had got a certificate in using 16 mm. sound movie projectors from one of my earlier jobs. So I arranged movie shows for the winter for the members of our society.

I wrote off for the movies and booked the local hall that we used for our shows--it was associated with some kind of a tennis club, I think, I'm not quite sure now. And to make sure that people knew about it, I printed announcements on an old offset

printing press that Kodak had scrapped. There was a--I suppose you would call it a recycling depot in the factory where anything that any department didn't want was dumped. People in the recycling depot disposed of the scrap, if possible by selling it. But if a member of the Kodak staff found anything that they wanted, they could sign a chit and take it away.

I saw this little offset printing press which looked as though it would function, so I took it back to my laboratory and put it in a corner, and in the evenings I would go and tinker with it. Eventually I made it work, with advice from people in the laboratory who knew more about these things than I did, and I made handbills inviting Oxhey residents to my film shows. Films about birds or other animals were popular, and I tried to include one in each program.

I remember the first handbill, I think I still have a copy of it. It was in two colors: black and blue. They were the only inks I had available. And I pushed these through the letterboxes of all the people on the estate of half a dozen streets in Oxhey. We got quite a nice crowd of people as a result.

Riess: And you showed films about gardens?

Waters: I tried to make up programs that had some deliberate garden instruction. A lot of it was promotional--we call it "public relations" now--material, from people who were making fertilizers and pesticides and things like that. But some of it was extremely good.

One had to do with a company that was raising new grain crops, cereal crops. Their agent went to a remote Italian village to persuade these people that there were seeds far better than the ones they were raising. The movie examined his work and the difficulty he had overcoming the villagers' innate suspicion of him. Of course, their suspicion was justified, we now know that. [laughter] But he seemed a terribly dedicated man, and judging from the movie's evidence, he did them a favor. But it was a revelation to realize that there were people living in Italy in such remote circumstances.

All kinds of movies. I think it did a great deal for the society, bringing them together throughout the winter now and then.

From Oxhey to Kings Langley, by Car!

Riess: How large was Oxhey? With the tennis club and the garden society and so on.

Waters: Oh, there may have been about a thousand houses. There was absolutely no commercial development attached to it at all, no shops or anything.

Riess: Was it charming?

Waters: It was more charming than South Oxhey, but no, if you wanted charm, you had to go to the next-door community of Bushey, which was a Victorian development. It had one or two famous people. There was a painter called Herckomer, who made some highly-regarded portraits in Victorian days. And there was a kind of atmosphere hanging around Bushey which no doubt Herckomer was partly responsible for. I think there may have been something of an artist's colony there at one time, and maybe Herckomer was just the best known of them.

So Oxhey was on the fringes of charm. That's the best I can say for it.

Riess: I wonder if your greenhouses and your garden exists at all any more. Have you ever gone back to see it?

Waters: Ahah. I've avoided it. Some years back, when I was visiting in a rental car, I did stop in the street outside and look, and I could recognize the front of the place quite well. It hadn't changed enormously.

But I knew that--when I sold it I made play of the fact that there were a number of unusual plants in the garden, and it came to the notice of a man employed by a publishing company that was producing a gardening newspaper. He wanted it for his daughter who was getting married. He was fascinated by it all, and I thought, Ah, how wonderful to have found someone for this. Anyway, his enthusiasm for gardening was not inherited by his daughter and her husband, not in quite the same way, because some of the plants, some of those things that I had shifted almost fully grown, with enormous expenditure of effort and sweat, were just--I think he bought himself a new saw and decided that he needed to go through the garden and cut things down.

No, it's not going to do me any good to go back there. I'm sure it's not a good idea. After all, in these circumstances it's no longer yours, you have no right to grieve over it. You did

what you wanted there, and your successor does what he or she wants. You have no right to tell them what they should be doing. You can advise them that this plant is such-and-such, and is a rarity, and then after that, it's theirs.

Riess: Yes, you're right. What prompted your departure from this heaven?

Waters: Oh, I had another garden in England. From Oxhey I went to Kings Langley, which was about, I don't know, ten, fifteen miles further out on the road towards Aylesbury, found on maps of England on the A-41, I think. The A-40 goes to Oxford; the A-41 to Aylesbury.

Riess: Why did you move?

Waters: It was basically the idea of making a different kind of garden. And Kings Langley was still fairly convenient to Kodak. By now I had acquired a motorcar, I was no longer bicycling everywhere.

[laughing] I just remembered a funny incident at Kodak when I was dining with some colleagues. The tables held about six. I was still bicycling in those days, and one of my colleagues said to me--it had been raining heavily all day, and I had bicycled through the rain. He said, "I passed you bicycling into work this morning, George. In the rain. You looked so miserable, I thought it might be a service to run you over." [laughter] I thought that was a gem.

Anyway, about '65, that was the year I bought a used Ford Cortina wagon. You still see those Cortinas around, not often now, but it was quite a popular car in Britain.

The House of Flint

Waters: So, while out one day I saw a small cluster of attractive little places and managed to find out who was responsible. It was an old guy, Knight his name was, Leo Knight. He was an individualist who had got caught up in the naturist movement and all that kind of thing in the thirties, I suppose. He had decided to build himself a house in this still rural area, and in looking up methods for building houses oneself, he had discovered that when one dug into the chalk--Kings Langley is at the edge of the Chiltern Hills, which are predominantly chalk--one found flint, which is an ideal building material in many ways, since it is almost completely impervious. After all, it's a naturally occurring form of glass.

But for some reason--and I've never discovered why, and I don't think geologists have ever explained it fully--it [flint] occurs in chalk, but apparently only in chalk, as quite bizarrely shaped lumps. I think they result from seepage under intense heat, because the silica must be molten when it forms these shapes. But there is also evidence that it tends to form around some kind of nucleus, because very often if you break into a flint, you'll find sometimes a quite attractive cluster of calcite crystals.

So Knight abandoned ideas of building in wood and decided to build with flint. He had acquired this piece of land, and he built houses from the flint that he dug out when forming the foundations. But because of its shapeless nature, it was necessary to use bricks to form quoins, the corner parts, because you can't make a sharp corner with flint. So the flints formed panels within brick quoins.

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Waters: He built one house a year, and sold it, and lived on the proceeds.

Riess: Am I right that naturist is nudist?

Waters: Yes, that's right. There was a strong naturist movement in Britain in the thirties--I suppose it's still there--but I think its notoriety arose from the fact that nobody else published pictures of nude people. So boys in public school were titillated by Naturist magazine--they didn't have Playboy or anything of that sort in those days.

Riess: When you bought your place, it was new?

Waters: Oh, no. When I met Knight and talked about the whole project, he said that one of the earliest ones was about to become vacant, and he would let me know. Later on, he told me that the place was available, and so we did a deal. It was standing in about an acre of ground, a lovely hillside, with lots of trees. He was deliberately building low facades so that they would fit nicely in among the trees. He was a man of some discernment in many respects, although he had some cranky ideas in others.

It was quite small, but he agreed to add another room for me. He put the addition on himself, exactly as he had built the place originally. He even removed some of the old tiles from the roof of the original building and blended them with new ones on the extension, so that there would be a gradation instead of a sudden change from old tiles to new, because he couldn't find roof tiles to match the old ones, of course.

The extension was a small utility room to hold hot water heaters and things of that sort. And he also built a garage for me. But he mixed the concrete with a shovel, he didn't want to disturb the rural quiet by bringing in a cement mixing machine. That's the kind of guy he was. He had to bang a hole through the original wall, which after all was not only of flint but of poured concrete. The technique--do you know the technique?

Riess: No.

Waters: Well, essentially, it's in situ poured concrete. He builds the outer wall of flint and brick, and he places beaverboard, as it was called--now he would use plaster board. And he would prop the beaverboard up on the inside, build the outer wall, and then pour concrete down between, so the two layers formed a sort of shuttering for the concrete.

Riess: A sort of shuttering?

Waters: Yes, shuttering. They call them forms here, I think. They're called shuttering in Britain.

In any event, it's not easy to make holes in the sandwich of flint and concrete that results. He was actually banging his way through that wall on his seventieth birthday while I was busy at Kodak earning the money to pay him! [laughter]

Iris Society Garden Party

Waters: Because of the slope on this place, and the difference in shape, and the fact that there were a number of mature conifers, there was the possibility for all kinds of interesting garden areas there. The first year I was there, I borrowed a sizeable marquee that practically filled the area of grass laid out in front of the place, and had a celebration for the iris society that I belonged to--the local group of the British Iris Society--known as the Mercia group.

It was called the Mercia group because Mercia was an old Anglo-Saxon kingdom in England that through the years changed its shape by virtue of gains and losses from other kingdoms. First it was this bit, and then it went up this way, and then it sort of--it was a kind of amorphous territory that enabled us to recruit members from almost anywhere, because it was so uncertain in its boundaries. [laughs] But roughly, it corresponded to the old Hardy area, Wessex, the area southwest of London.

Riess: You had the marquee and the show on your lawn.

Waters: That's right. Oh, we had a kind of cookout, and it was a dark canvas marquee, so we had a movie show. The American Iris Society, which is a much larger organization, had had a convention in New York in 1970 or thereabouts, and a guy had made a movie of the whole thing. So I wrote to him, and he sent me over the movie, and I showed it to the members of the Mercia group. So we had a good time there.

Riess: Had you made a garden there?

Waters: Yes, I had plenty of room there for the marquee, but had cleared only a little of the area around it.

Mr. Knight taught me his technique of building with concrete, flint, and brick, so I built a terraced wall along the front of the place so it all matched up. What else did I do? I found an area that seemed to me ideal in its sunny exposure for irises.

Elsewhere on the lot there had been a quarry there where marl had been taken out. You know marl? It's the naturally occurring clay-lime mixture used by farmers at one time to improve fertility in their fields. Lime does it by hastening decomposition of organic matter, and helping coagulate the particles of clay itself which, by virtue of the electrical charges it holds, is a very fertile medium, although it's hellishly difficult to work. Once you've got it into a suitable tilth, it's highly fertile. So clay in one form or another is desirable, and mixed with lime, it's more likely to form that tilth by virtue of the coagulation that takes place.

So marl was quarried and spread on fields, and I think that's probably what had happened. The result was that there was a concave slope at what was said to be the back of the house. I don't think I was ever quite sure which was the front and which the back of that place, but I regarded this as the back, because it was the least sunny side. On that, I raised maples, Acer hersii, Acer davidii, from seed, and planted them out there. I also planted lilies, but left the contour of the land intact.

Riess: Had you thought that you would be there for long?

Waters: Probably, yes.

III CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL BEGINNINGS

Finding Olive, Over the Irises

Riess: What prompted your departure for America?

Waters: Several things. I met Olive, and I became somewhat disillusioned with my job at Kodak, for the reasons I explained to you: the treadmill result of what was initially a useful find becoming something of a burden. So I decided suddenly to make a change.

Riess: You met Olive through the iris society?

Waters: That's right. She came to Britain and joined in the fiftieth anniversary festivities of the society.

So in the end, I decided to go to California--or come to California, I should say.

Riess: Making the decision, I should think she would have thought you had a splendid situation there.

Waters: She had a family and I didn't. So she was not likely to feel inclined to move. So her family adopted me.

Riess: Tell about meeting Olive.

Waters: I was helping put up a show, an iris display--this was in Westminster. Olive, I think, was on one of those Berkeley-Oxford Extension things. But she was already active in the American Iris Society over here, and she knew about what was going on in Britain too.

I think I spoke to her first when I was putting up this exhibit. Working at Harrow, I'd come to know about a company called the Greyfriars Glass Company. Quite a famous old company that used to do stained glass work for William Morris--you find

references to them in William Morris's records. Greyfriars was an area in London where they once were, but they had moved out to Harrow, and were just across the street from Kodak.

I went to visit them--they threw the place open to groups of us who used to go across there to see the glass workers. Some of the Kodak engineers had been helpful to Greyfriars in designing some special equipment during the war. They were undertaking to make thermometer tubing in quantity. The old way of making thermometer tubing--and I saw them doing it there--they'd take a large annular ring of molten glass, two people with tongs gripping this annular ring of glass, and they would run apart until it was reduced to a thin tube. That's a fact!

Obviously, the diameter of the hole through the middle of the tubing was important, and so they would do it by selection. They would determine the diameter of the hole and cut out pieces that were right.

What they decided to do was to build a tower in which the molten glass would be pulled out mechanically, presumably at some controlled rate. And I think Kodak engineers actually designed the mechanism that would do the pulling for them, because they were used to devising means for having things happen at controlled rates.

And so we would occasionally assemble groups and go and admire their work. Changing crucibles without extinguishing the furnace was an especially dramatic scene, like something from Dante. They were proud of their traditional methods, and they still had an area devoted to the design and construction of stained glass work. They had contracts for all kinds of work for churches and cathedrals in Europe, even in Sweden, which is a country quite well known for its own glass.

At Greyfriars I saw an experimental panel. In addition to traditional stained glass with pieces set in lead, they were experimenting with techniques for taking pieces of glass of different colors, laying them side by side and in places, overlapping, and then fusing the whole thing together as a solid panel. I saw such a panel, and I was impressed with the similarity in color between the glass and iris petals.

So when we were talking about ways for the Mercia Group to put up an exhibit at Westminster, I thought of approaching these people and asking them if I could borrow that experimental panel. They agreed, with some trepidation, but I assured them that I would look after it and bring it back safely.

A group of us in the society arranged to erect this, vertically--it was a tall, thin panel, about six feet high and about two feet wide--illuminate it with fluorescent tubes from behind, screen it out with black curtains, so that it just stood there as a bright glowing column, and in front of the black curtain we would arrange bowls of irises in colors that corresponded with the glass.

One of the people who was judging at the local flower shows was a man called Fletcher who taught at the art school in Bushey. He agreed to come up and make the arrangements in bowls for me, so I provided the irises and the panel and the black curtain, and he came and arranged the irises, perhaps as many as 200 stems, and it was a very nice display.

And that's what Olive was looking at, and I was adjusting the lighting, and we got talking. One thing led to another, as they say, and that's it. A mystery, isn't it? [laughter]

Riess: You hadn't traveled to America?

Waters: Only for the company once, and that was also in '65--1965 was a busy year for me. That was the year I helped found the Garden History Society, and I bought my first motorcar, all in 1965, a watershed year.

Becoming a Gardener in Berkeley

Riess: Now, how did you plan to make a living in California? Did you come here first and look for a job?

Waters: No, I just felt that it was a place where I could be comfortable. I got the impression that the language was somewhat similar, so it wouldn't be difficult to get by. [laughs]

Riess: No, but it was a big change.

Waters: Yes, there is a pattern I can now see of these sudden changes, sudden decisions, in an otherwise conservative life.

Riess: A full life, as you describe it.

Waters: Yes, that's right. And then suddenly feeling the need to make a change, yes.

Riess: Olive lived in Berkeley?

Waters: Yes. She was still studying at UC at the time.

Riess: And, Berkeley, late sixties--you had heard about Berkeley?

Waters: Oh, yes. But it didn't deter me--it may have been almost an inducement, because politically, I was somewhat nonconformist. Not that I was anxious to join in the street fights or anything like that, but by and large, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the place is a comfortable environment for me. I've visited a number of other cities in the States, although I haven't lived or even stayed in them to any great extent, and I wouldn't, I'm sure, feel as comfortable in most of them. I mean, the university has had an enormous influence on the cultural environment of Berkeley, hasn't it.

So yes, the transition was easier in Berkeley than it would have been elsewhere in the U.S. [tape interruption]

We started out with a sort of little garden business, we got a Toyota truck, Olive and I, and we did maintenance work, all kinds, any odd job. Mostly it was a matter of rescuing people from gardens.

You know, people come from the East Coast and they have no conception of what more than 300 growing days a year means to a garden, and they suddenly find themselves enclosed with vegetation, and they call up and say, "Come and get us out!" And anyone who can do that can make a living in Berkeley. All you have to do is to have a pair of shears and know the way to the city dump [laughs], and you can call yourself a gardener.

Riess: How did you get known?

Waters: Well, one leaves a card, a business card, at the Berkeley Horticultural Nursery, and you put a little ad in the newspaper. What was that thing we used to have in those days? It was full of all kinds of ads. You'd get a free notice in it too,

Riess: Did you bill yourselves as designers?

Waters: Oh, no, although gradually that kind of work started to come along, designing work. What did we call ourselves? I've forgotten now.

Riess: But mainly you were just maintaining?

Waters: Just anything that came up. As a matter of fact, when garden work was in short supply, through a contact we made with real estate

people in Telegraph Avenue called Freeholders. I also did carpentry and plumbing.

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Waters: They put odd jobs in my way, like repair work, when somebody had their front door broken into, so the doorjamb was damaged and needed replacing and things like that. And there was some work on somebody's chimney, and a gas line I ran underground between a house and detached garage. So these were odd jobs that I was able to fill in on when there wasn't enough garden work.

Connecting with the California Horticultural Society

Waters: One of the things I did [to become better known] was to offer to give a talk at the California Horticultural Society, feeling, having joined it, that that was a good way to make contacts and get better known.

Riess: Cal Hort was the center of horticultural activity in the Bay Area?

Waters: Oh, yes, that's where the knowledgeable gardeners were meeting, there's no doubt about that. There were some very well known people, and some of them are still about, of course.

For the Garden History Society in England I had put together a slide lecture. I did the accumulating and duplicating of slides. We had three copies of it. Miles Hadfield did the text to accompany them. We mailed these slides out to people who wanted to entertain an audience on the history of gardening in England.

Well, I knew most of these notes almost by heart, and many of the original slides were mine, so I made up some of the photographic gaps in the meanwhile by one means or another and delivered a talk to the California Horticultural Society.

It was a strange experience.

Riess: Why?

Waters: Well, most of their meetings are held in the Morrison Auditorium of the Academy of Sciences, but for one reason or another, which I never understood, they decided to move this talk to that big room in the Hall of Flowers. Do you know that place? It has a

platform on the diagonal--and the acoustics are appalling! It's the most god-awful place to give a talk.

There was a very big crowd there. And then the sound system broke down. So here was this guy with an accent that many of them were having difficulty understanding, in a hall with very bad acoustics and a sound system that ceased to work! I don't know whether anyone actually ever heard it, frankly.

But they had a journal, the *California Horticultural Journal*, which was being edited by Owen Pearce, whom no doubt you know of.

Riess: Yes, we have an interview with him.[1]

Waters: Owen said, "Well, what I'd like to do is to run that talk, the text of it, in the journal." So I polished it up a bit and it was published in the journal--[laughs] those people who didn't understand had an opportunity to find out what it was all about. I gave that talk in several other places, and it all helped to get me established.

Riess: What were you feeling then about where your life was going?

Waters: Oh, it was fine, for a while. But it gradually dawned on me that I had been sedentary for so long, the nonstop physical effort of gardening was nearly more than I could manage.

So that was why, when the proposal came to launch *Pacific Horticulture*, I threw myself into it. Because though we had no idea that it might develop to the point where one might earn some kind of income from it, it did seem worth a try.

Riess: What other ways did you get acquainted? And what did you find most interesting about being here?

Waters: Of course, the first thing that confronts a gardener from Britain is the absence of so many familiar plants, and the presence of a great, great many plants that one's never met before. That's bewildering.

Riess: And that's what you called yourself? If someone asked "What are you?", you would have said, "I'm a gardener"?

Waters: Yes.

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[1]F. Owen Pearce, *California Garden Society Publications, 1947-1990*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, 1990.

Riess: You wouldn't have said, "I'm a research chemist."

Waters: No, no. That was irrelevant, wasn't it? [laughs] And in a way, it's important if you want to do something different I think to make some kind of a change like that. If you continue in your old environment, you're subject to all kinds of social pressure to go on doing what you've always done. People have certain expectations of you. But in a new place, people have no expectations. They're still looking to see what on earth you're going to do. They're trying to make something of you. They have no preconceived ideas. So I think that's an important way of making a change, if you're going to.

So yes, in answer to your question, I was going to all kinds of other garden meetings, and I was on the board of the Friends of the Botanical Garden for a while. I was trying to learn about plants. It's not easy.

Riess: Did you take classes?

Waters: No.

Riess: How substantial a garden library had you by then?

Waters: Oh, it was about half the size it is now, mostly garden books, overwhelmingly, yes. There were a few other things, novels and things like that. And a few political tracts.

Pacific Horticultural Foundation Founded

Riess: Let's go on to your involvement with *Pacific Horticulture*.

Waters: Well, we had a Toyota truck, and Owen Pearce said he was in need of somebody to distribute the journal, *California Horticultural Journal*, and the Toyota truck was a good way of doing it. It meant going to the printer for the copies of each issue when it was finished, taking them home, sticking all the address labels on, and then bagging them according to zip codes for the post office, and taking them to the post office. That was what the distribution amounted to.

So Olive and I took that on, and that meant that we went to meetings of the board of the foundation. It was by that time being published by the Pacific Horticultural Foundation. Briefly, the history goes like this: the journal was founded by Sydney Mitchell when he was president of the California Horticultural

Society. He launched it in early 1940, and it was then the journal of the California Horticultural Society.

But in 1965, the society got in contact with the Strybing Arboretum Society, and the Western Horticultural Society, which is centered in Palo Alto, and they formed the foundation [Pacific Horticultural Foundation], which is a nonprofit group for the purpose of publishing the journal. So the name of the publication was changed to the *California Horticultural Journal*. That was 1968.

And then the Southern California Horticultural Institute, as it was then called, came in I think in '70 or '71 to the foundation. So a wider distribution for the journal became possible. At the time that I got involved in sending it out, somewhere in the order of 2,500 people were getting it.

Riess: Wider distribution, but also greater financial support?

Waters: Well, it was still being paid for out of members' dues to the societies. They met all the bills out of their dues--proportionally, of course, according to the number of members.

Riess: What did the foundation do? Foundations ordinarily mean money.

Waters: Well, that's true. The Pacific Horticultural Foundation has never been terribly adept at drawing funds in, not until comparatively recently, anyway.

Riess: But initially, why create a foundation? There were all these sponsoring entities already, Western Hort and Cal Hort, and Southern California. You could have published a magazine without a foundation, couldn't you?

Waters: Oh! I see what you mean. Yes, that's true, it is feasible. But there are advantages in having a nonprofit entity. Mailing rates, for one thing.

Riess: It was created to facilitate publishing the journal, that's all?

Waters: Yes, that's right, that's what the foundation does, yes. It's not only a nonprofit, it's also an educational entity, and so the mailing rates that the foundation is able to get are the lowest the post office has to offer. And that's quite significant.

That's true, the advantages of cost in printing larger numbers just comes by having any kind of ad hoc organization, but the foundation does give certain advantages. There is a tax advantage, though the foundation has never made enough money to

make that significant, but it's there in case of need. [laughter] We have been audited several times, incidentally, but have always passed muster.

Riess: And who was on the foundation board?

Waters: Well, first it's probably well to say that Victor Reiter certainly, and probably other members of the California Horticultural Society on the board of the foundation had the idea of increasing the distribution, making the journal a Western publication, not just California. And several members went up to the Northwest to explore the possibilities of gaining the support of horticultural societies there as well. I think their report was not favorable, but the background was there. I mean, there were other people before who had seen the need and the possibilities of such a more general publication, but nothing had come of it.

Planning to Revamp the Journal

Waters: Then in February 1975--the board only met once a year, in February--Richard Hildreth was the president at the time, and Marge Hayakawa was a member of the board--and at that meeting the question came up once again, "Well, isn't a pity, with so much good material, that there are still so few people who receive it?"

Being the new boy, of course, I felt I knew the answer, and I said that the material was good, but it was not sufficiently attractively presented, that there were things one could do to improve it. For example, I remember mentioning that the paper was too glossy and it glinted when light struck it--that it was hurtful to the eyes. Things of that kind.

And it happened that a number of other people on the board had those feelings too, but were disinclined to say so, because they felt it might upset Owen Pearce, who was the editor. But as the new boy, of course, I was somewhat impervious to that kind of thing. You know the way it is. I don't have to elaborate on that, do I? [laughter]

Anyway, the idea of revamping the thing caught on quickly, and Dick Hildreth said, "Well, okay, those people who are interested in something of this sort, stay on after the meetings and we'll talk about it." The board charged the committee in the end not with making a report, but with actually producing a revamped magazine in January the following year.

And I think that's the key to the whole thing. That is, Hildreth essentially gave us those terms of reference, essentially to produce a new magazine one year hence. Not to study the possibilities and make a report, because we know that's often the death of any project. So people like Harland Hand and Marge Hayakawa, Dick Hildreth himself, Emily Brown, Helen Markwett, and a number of others--.

Riess: Fred Boutin, and Charles Burr, and Owen himself?

Waters: Owen himself, yes. Boutin would come up from southern California occasionally. Charlie Burr was an occasional member. I remember Elizabeth McClintock attending one or two meetings too.

There was a core group of probably I should say Harland, Hildreth, Marge, Olive, and myself, who convened the meetings, and the others came as and when they were able. We held the meetings all around the place. There was one at Emily's house. Several were held at Harland's house. One or two at the California Academy of Science, and so on. Wherever we could find a room.

Decisions on Editing, Designing, Printing, Distributing

Waters: But there were frequent meetings, and as we got near to the publication date, Marge took me aside and said that she felt it was important that there should be an assistant editor. The reason was understandable, and that was that Owen was somewhat less enthusiastic about the changes than the rest of us were, because he'd been in the editor's seat for, what, fifteen, sixteen years, I think, a long while, and felt that the present arrangements were okay. Although he didn't hinder our discussions, he clearly wasn't subscribing quite as enthusiastically.

Anyway, Marge thought that by appointing an assistant editor, we could make sure that the changes were brought about. I didn't answer her immediately, because I could see that it was not going to be an easy thing to do. For one thing, it would almost certainly mean conflict with Owen. And the other thing was that it would take time which couldn't be paid for. The foundation had no money, it just met its bills.

Riess: Did it pay Owen?

Waters: No, Owen was a volunteer. Up to that point the job had been unpaid. But now we were thinking about beefing up advertising,

color printing, and things that would essentially consume a lot of time.

Riess: While you were meeting as a group, did the journal continue to come out?

Waters: Well, yes--that's yes with reservation. One of the problems that we were confronting was that it was often months late. And again, that needed to be attended to if one were going to be serious about it. In other words, while it was just going to members of the organizations there was a great deal of tolerance. But if it was going to be sold or offered to subscribers who were independent of these organizations, as we anticipated, then it would have to come out when it was promised.

And advertisers would then regard it as a professional publication, and would expect their ads to appear when promised, too. Not some time later, "When we get around to it, old man."

So I went back to Dick and to Marge, and I told them that if and when a conflict occurred, that I expected that they would back me. And secondly, that if it became possible to give the editor some compensation, that that would be necessary too, because I had no private resources. They might have thought that I had, and it was important that I disabuse them of that idea in case it were lurking there somewhere.

We didn't write anything down, we just agreed on these things. There used to be a thing, you probably remember it, from way back, called a gentleman's agreement?

Riess: Yes. A handshake, actually.

Waters: That was all it was, that's right. So that's how it began. We had gained the services of a designer who participated in several of the later meetings. That was Laurence Hyman, who was professionally designing for--I think he was doing freelance work, but some of his jobs were for Freeman's, the technical publishers in San Francisco. We had looked at the work of others who were more familiar with magazine production, but their ideas were somewhat bizarre, and we didn't intend to abandon the somewhat conservative layout, we just wanted to make the thing look more attractive. Laurence was well aware of that. I think he was already working on *Fremontia* with Marge--she was editing *Fremontia*, and I think he was working for her on that. I can't remember exactly which came first, but I think that was it.

Laurence established the Palatino type, and he did a lot of the early discussions with the printer. He found a printer for

us, which was Dharma Press in Emeryville. But although they had--I think they had printed some color, but it wasn't the four-color lithographic process. They were doing some vivid color posters for various Buddhist groups and so on, which I saw. They printed the first issue, that came out in January '76. We retained the volume numbering from the old journal, out of respect for Sydney Mitchell and the people who had followed him, but we did change the name. It was important to get a name that would not be rejected immediately by people outside California.

Sunset magazine gave us a very good write-up of the first issue, which was very encouraging, because subscriptions came rolling in. In those days, *Sunset* was almost a bible to many people in the West. But that write-up almost overwhelmed us. We had printed about 5,000 copies for the first issue. That was rather ambitious, wasn't it? We only had 2,500 readers at the time. But the result of the *Sunset* write-up meant that we quickly used up that 5,000 and we had to reprint.

Riess: Was Walter Doty your contact at *Sunset*?

Waters: No, he had left *Sunset*. Joe Williamson was the editor of the garden section--and he eventually came onto the board.

Riess: Did you change the cost with the new issue?

Waters: We were advertising a subscription at five dollars a year, for four issues.

Riess: And that's what it had been?

Waters: Prior to that there was no price for a private subscription. It was just for members of the societies, you see, so there was no subscription price. But I remember the first issue, the first announcements were five dollars a year.

Between receiving those subscriptions and getting a reprint things got a bit shaky, because we were still using the old Addressograph method of printing mailing labels that had been used for the old journal. This meant the sudden manufacture of all kinds of new plates--you know that system, don't you, the Addressograph machine? An embossed plate with the name and address on it is slipped into the machine and plunked down onto an inked screen to make a label. But those embossed plates were something that you had to send away for.

The person who had been doing that for the California Horticultural Society--well, for the old foundation, but a member of the California Horticultural Society--couldn't cope with this

sudden rush of new subscriptions. And then we had to get a reprint done, and we were having difficulties, because Dharma Press had produced the first batch quite successfully, but were not doing too well with the second. We were beginning to realize what their limitations were.

One or two people who had sent in subscriptions got restless and had their lawyers write to us! Anyway, Olive got busy and found a firm--they were called One Hundred and One Methods, in Oakland somewhere--who ran a computer devoted to maintaining lists of addresses for organizations such as the repertory company in San Francisco, ACT. They were maintaining lists and doing mailings for those people. So she had them transfer all our names and addresses to their computer. That was before personal computers came along-- everything was big and bulky and very expensive. But they did that job for several years, and it got us out of a hole, because we had to do something quickly to get these magazines out.

IV LAUNCHING *PACIFIC HORTICULTURE*

[Interview 3: July 21, 1998] ##

An Ad Hoc Format Committee

Waters: Last time we had just reached a point where the format committee was formed, is that it?

Riess: Yes. I'm interested in how that committee worked, and about the importance of the other committees, the editorial committee.

Waters: Yes. Essentially, as I think I said, the format committee was created at a meeting of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation in February of '75. And it was--would it be right to call it a sort of ad hoc committee? I mean, people weren't named to it. Those who were interested stayed after the board meeting that day, and then from time to time, some people, members of the board usually, who weren't available on that date turned up at some subsequent meetings, and others remained absent, and so on. So it was a somewhat amorphous group. But generally speaking, they were members of the board of the foundation, plus a few others who were called in.

Riess: Would there be minutes for those meetings?

Waters: Yes, some meetings have minutes; they refer not to the format committee, our informal name, but to the Journal Revision Committee. And there is a report dated September '75 from the committee summarizing its work and intent.

Discussion was wide-ranging. I don't recall other publications being brought in and shown as examples, but obviously reference would have been made to them. One of the things that constantly came up was the use of color printing. For the first meetings, the early meetings--the first half of the year, 1975--it was assumed that we wouldn't be using color printing. The earlier

publication had not used it regularly. It had used it on one or two special occasions. But it generally wasn't used, because we saw it as expensive and we had very little money to play with.

But then as we developed ideas about the kind of paper we were going to use, the kind of type we wanted to use, and so on, and the need for a more attractive layout in general rather than leaving it to the printer to get the type on as few pages as possible, which had been the style of the earlier publication, we came to see that for a publication to make any kind of a mark by 1976, it had to have some color in it. You can't really talk about plants and illustrate them with black and white pictures.

So, towards the end of '75 we had reached the position of saying, "Well, we've got to have some color in it, but it will have to be as little as we can get away with because we just don't have the money to be lavish." Once that had happened, then I in particular, I think, but most other members of the committee saw that a slight increase in size over the earlier publication would be necessary, or would be an advantage, rather. Because size does have an effect. If you can present a picture large, in general, it will tend to have more impact than if you see it small. By making the thing slightly larger than the earlier journal, we were able to use pictures, color pictures especially, more effectively. So the size was increased. These were the kinds of things that we were discussing.

Then, once Laurence Hyman was brought in--he came in towards the end of those discussions as a designer--he was able to bring particular sizes to our attention, because that then has to be related to the size of printing presses, and how many multiples of a page can be fitted onto his printing plates, which in general are called forms and contain, generally speaking, in our publication, eight pages on a form. If you want to print economically, you use as much of that sheet of paper as you can, rather than print up only part of it and have him cut some off, which you still have to pay for. So that meant that there were certain units of size that were feasible and others not so. So we got down to those particulars.

But the particulars we didn't get down to until the very last minute, of course, were how we were going to pay for it, and how we were going to distribute it. We all knew, in the end we all came to an agreement, about how to make the thing attractive. That's comparatively easy. But selling it is not. [laughs] But we paid very little attention to that. We were all gardeners--and people like Marge, who had some background in editing and was an enthusiastic and discriminating regular at our meetings.

I had checked and polished the technical reports of my group members at Kodak, but had no real background in editing; I did bring to our meetings some expertise in photography, which essentially controls the printing process these days anyway. Everything is done photographically. Well, digital work is coming in now and replacing some of that, but certainly at the time it was all done photographically. And I had enthusiasm. As distribution manager for the foundation, I had been going to the printing house, getting the magazines after they were printed, and the smell of the ink sort of got into my nostrils. I found it exciting; it was almost like a drug.

Riess: Were you already, do you think, being seen as future editor?

Waters: Well, I think I probably had a lot to say for myself at the meetings, yes. It wasn't until the very end of '75 that Marge approached me about taking it on. Down to that point, it had never occurred to me. But I was at almost all the meetings, if not all of them. And I was enthusiastic about the project, there's no doubt about it.

Riess: Did you see it as a job for you?

Waters: No, I just saw it as an exciting thing to be doing, helping to launch a new magazine. It was my own criticism of the previous one that had sparked all this, so in a way, I felt I had some responsibility to see that it worked.

Riess: So the format committee was an ad hoc arrangement.

And Other Editorial Committees

Waters: Yes. And the other committees you mentioned, I came face to face with them only after the magazine was launched, because the previous journal had had an editorial committee, and they were people who met occasionally--I don't know how often--with the editor, and they discussed sources of articles and so on. But I've never been terribly good at committees, and I must admit that when I became editor I kind of let the thing fall by the wayside. I held a few meetings. I didn't feel that enough was being achieved, and I kind of let it drop.

Riess: So they weren't overseeing the content in any way?

Waters: They weren't controlling things, no.

The names remained on the masthead--some of them still do. I think Herbert Baker was still on as botanical advisor, but as you know, he's almost completely inactive now.

Riess: Why do they keep those names on there?

Waters: Well, just out of courtesy. As people die, we delete the names, and generally speaking, we haven't replaced them.

Riess: But Herbert Baker, and earlier, Mildred Mathias--that implies that they perform a scientific check.

Waters: Oh, yes, and I did make use of them. When Herbert Baker was active, and when Mildred was alive, I made use of them. I used to call them from time to time and get advice and opinions, so they were and are useful, but it was never a refereed journal in the sense that the university understands it. Articles were not submitted regularly for scrutiny. Only occasionally for advice and straightening out confusion and so on.

Riess: I should think that in the beginning of your editorship of the journal, that it would have been hugely reassuring to have a committee to turn to. To take all this on--you could do it all?

Waters: [pause] I've never been asked this before. [laughs] I should have to consider my answer carefully. Maybe I'm forgetting things, and I'll have to ask the transcriber to leave a half a page blank there while I think over carefully what might have been going on.

Riess: Maybe there aren't that many places where one would trip up. An obvious one would be incorrect botanical names.

Waters: This is perhaps the time to mention that, for many years during which the journal was being published, and from the outset of *Pacific Horticulture*, Elizabeth McClintock, who was at the [California] Academy of Sciences--was able to check botanical names on every issue. She did see every manuscript. She's still doing it. Extraordinary dedication there. So that was our main backup, as it were, for getting names right.

Occasionally, I would get opinions from Bob Ornduff on aspects of botany. For example, he has a great expertise on South African bulbs, which he has enthusiasm for. And a couple of times, I've had notes from him subsequent to publication calling my attention to certain orthographic lapses. [laughing] But my rule then was to publish his letter so that people could make the correction.

Limiting Factors for *Pacific Horticulture*

Riess: To follow this line of thinking, would an analysis of the magazine show areas that were not really dealt with because of a central lack of knowledge? This is terrible to be asking you this, but one does steer a course.

Waters: Well, that's right.

The question to me comes down to, Are there limitations in what the magazine was able to publish, or did publish, putting it in its most general way. Well, yes, of course there were. The most severe limitation I think arises from the fact that we were never in a position to pay contributors. All the articles and all the photographs and all the illustrations were donated. That is a very severe limitation. I didn't feel that it was a limitation at all early on, but gradually, it began to irritate me, because I realized that a lot of capable writers whom I would like to have asked for contributions weren't prepared to devote the time that was needed to make a good job of it, do you see?

There were lots of people ready to send me manuscripts. In fact, I suppose 50 percent of the manuscripts I got weren't published, because I felt they were either too frivolous, weren't the kind of thing--attempts at humor, which almost always fall flat in writing--or they didn't display a sufficiently sound grasp of the subject. So that, I think, was a principal limitation.

On the other hand, *Pacific Horticulture* I think did cast a pretty wide net, and if you compare the range of material in it with other publications--in the horticultural field, that is--I think you'll find that it shows a greater range of subjects than most of them, dealt with in greater depth than most other magazines, in horticulture.

The other limitation, I suppose in a way, is the fact that it was only a quarterly, and that means that in general, and throughout the year, you don't get that many pages. So in the end, I almost had to deliberately narrow the field, feeling that as a publication for gardeners in the West, a gardening climate for which there is very little material by and large in books or magazines, that it was an act of profligacy to publish something about gardening in a climate which was not Mediterranean.

So in the end, I started deliberately to refuse manuscripts, although they were still coming, from England and from other countries, which, although excellent, had little to do with Western gardening. It is, after all, an extraordinary climate for

gardeners, and only in the last few years has there been a society with its own publication in the Mediterranean countries of Europe, and they say the same thing: "There's so little available to us on gardening in this climate." It's nearly all coming from northern Europe and from climates comparable with that region.

For example, in the rest of North America, there's no experience of this climate. I used to get phone calls from writers in the East. One that comes to mind was from someone who was talking about hardy geraniums, many of which are quite satisfactory in Western gardens, but they also grow in the East. They had really no idea that for gardeners on this West Coast here, spring occurs in a manner of speaking in the fall. That's when the rains begin, and if you want to get your geraniums in, that's the time you should do it. I could almost hear them gasping over the telephone. And yet, they were writing for a national publication, which was going to be distributed in the West.

This was a situation that we were fighting when we established *Pacific Horticulture*. We just wanted to provide an authentic voice in Western gardening, instead of leaving people at the mercy of publications from the East. That's why in the end I had to say, "Well, now, this is a magazine for Western gardeners."

I had initially seen it as a grand opportunity to, for example, bridge the gap between landscape architects and horticulturists. There was a kind of chasm there--horticulturists despised landscape architects because they knew insufficient about plants. And many landscape architects were anxious not to be seen as gardeners with dirt in their fingernails, you know? They tended to landscape everything with concrete paving stones and stick in a few trees that everyone knew. And I thought, Wouldn't it be grand to get these people to see eye to eye, at least on a few points?

Riess: You did have landscape architects on your editorial board.

Waters: Oh, yes, that's right. And people like Russ Beatty, who was very pleased to contribute. And indeed, he was one of the exceptions among landscape architects: he really knew plants, and he wrote very well. Some of the articles most frequently reprinted elsewhere from *Pacific Horticulture* were by Russ Beatty.

But the majority of landscape architects, when they write--I think it has to do with this anxiety to be seen as Designers with a capital D--tend to talk in vague terms instead of getting down to concrete ideas. But that idea of bridging the chasm wasn't a

terribly good idea, and in the end I abandoned it and said, "All right, let's talk about gardening in the Mediterranean climate."

Riess: You mean you actually made a decision that it wouldn't be possible to create a kind of hybrid journal of landscape and horticulture?

Waters: It was not an early decision--these ideas were going on while I was editing the magazine. Just look at some of the early issues: I've got whole articles about, for example, restoring historic gardens. And of course, written by an Englishman, and mostly about English gardens, illustrated with pictures of English gardens. The first big center spread I ever did, with bleeds all round, right across the middle, was of Scotney Castle in southern England.[1] [laughs]

In those early issues, I failed to recognize, sufficiently recognize, the need for a magazine devoted entirely to gardening in our summer-dry climate. Not that I felt there was no merit in doing it; merely that the arithmetic of a quarterly publication with, say, sixty to seventy pages, that we couldn't spare the space for that other stuff.

Thoughts on Some Other Garden Journals

Riess: Did most of your readers, do you think, read other garden journals, so they didn't need to have everything in one place?

Waters: Yes, and most of which have a larger circulation even in the West than *Pacific Horticulture*.

Riess: What would be the most obvious ones?

Waters: Well, the long-established garden magazine *Horticulture*, published in Boston--most of the time, anyway. There was a period when it went to New York, but it returned to Boston. And the journal of the Royal Horticultural Society in England has a fairly wide distribution here.

Riess: That's the one that's called *The Garden*?

Waters: It's now called *The Garden*, yes. Although at that time it was still called the *Journal* [of the Royal Horticultural Society]. As

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[1]*Pacific Horticulture*, October 1976.

a matter of fact, it went through a phase when they seriously considered in the RHS cutting that back to a quarterly.

You know, the economic changes which suddenly make the investments you've been keeping the organization going with, suddenly look to the accountants to be almost worthless, do you see? And so they start serious cutbacks. The RHS went through that period in, I don't know, the late seventies, early eighties. And of course, the cost of producing the journal came up for consideration. I'm reliably told by members of that council that *Pacific Horticulture* was waved at meetings of the RHS council as an example of what they should be doing.

Riess: *The Garden* is so loaded with advertising, I don't see how they'd have any financial problem.

Waters: In the years subsequently, the situation has changed completely. The RHS is now an enormous business. It's totally changed its character. It went through three main phases, I suppose, in this period from the mid-seventies. It was still a journal. Then they put a color cover on it, and the paper got a bit cheaper--it started to deteriorate. They then put it in the hands of a commercial publisher acting on behalf of the RHS. Then, very soon after that, it became larger, standard magazine size. It was no longer a little journal.

And the RHS also began to blossom. A strange thing happened in gardening when discretionary income in some people's hands got larger and larger and larger, and gardening became a way of advertising this. It became--what do they call it?

Riess: Conspicuous consumption?

Waters: Yes, that's right, an aspect of conspicuous consumption. To many people--the attractive garden stores became boutique places selling expensive accessories and things of that kind. And it became okay in Britain to join the Royal Horticultural Society, but not to join the local daffodil society or chrysanthemum society. So most of these specialist societies are starved for members. The RHS has got thousands and thousands of members.

Riess: Is that because they give their members something?

Waters: And because it's an okay organization to join, it carries some sort of cachet--the Royal Horticultural Society. I think that has something to do with it.

Horticultural Stratifications, Fads

Riess: Oh, my goodness. Does that have parallels here?

Waters: It has parallels here, and there's a stratification which carries on right through gardening. For example--and you can see traces of this wherever you go--there is a certain social cachet attached to each group of plants. [laughs] If you want to start at the top, you'll have to consider those plants that have always had some sort of special significance within the Royal Horticultural Society: rhododendrons, the special woodland species, not what are called the ironclad types that were bred by Gomer Waterer and his family--

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Waters: --and species lilies, not the modern hybrids that are sold en masse at the corner store.

Riess: These are the RHS hierarchies?

Waters: Well, no, it pervades the whole field, even once you've left the umbrella of the RHS, the process continues.

For example, the Iris Society, when it was founded in Britain in about 1922, had a number of titled people in its membership. Irises were up there just a shade below rhododendrons and lilies. Eventually, somewhere in the middle, you've got roses.

Riess: This is so interesting!

Waters: It's fascinating. It came to a head in my mind recently with the publication in Britain of a little book by a man with a very good sense of humor. It's called *Yew & Non-Yew: A Guide to Horticultural Climbers* [James Bartholomew, 1998]. You see? [laughter] You know the play on words that's being used here.

Riess: Yes, upper and not-upper.

Waters: Exactly, yes--U and non-U. Well, this is a play on that, but it's spelled Yew, which is of course the evergreen hedging plant. He makes the connection rather neatly, because he points out right at the beginning that yew gardeners always plant hedges of yew. They do not plant privet. But the non-yew gardeners plant privet and all kinds of other things which are totally unacceptable. He develops that theme right through the whole area of gardening,

including literature, by the way. And at the top of his "yew" list of publications is *Pacific Horticulture*. [laughs]

Riess: Kind of him to send you a copy of his book.

Waters: The author didn't. A friend of mine in Britain sent me a copy. When I decided that this was a hilarious subject for an editorial, I looked around for a distributor in the U.S. and couldn't find one. There was one in Canada, I believe, and I mentioned that. But anyway, since then, a distributor in the U.S. has appeared.[2]

But he picks up that point, he becomes more specific, and mentions, for example, that the--the--U plant now, is euphorbias, and he develops an explanation for all that. But I'm talking about a stratification based upon the memberships of the specialist societies.

Riess: You said roses were in the middle.

Waters: And then after that, you start to descend to chrysanthemums, and down here, possibly as far down as you can get, you come across dahlias ["day-lee-as"].

Riess: Day lilies?

Waters: Dahlias.

Riess: Oh, dahlias ["dah-lias"].

Waters: Dahlias--you pronounce it correctly, but we British make a mess of it and call them day-lee-as. But dah-lias is correct, yes.

Riess: These are important things to know.

Waters: [laughs] Yes, indeed. One could easily have put a foot wrong by not knowing these things, it's true.

Riess: And it's one way that things are stratified. Then there are the fads, the faddish plants. Would it be possible to follow fads in twenty years of *Pacific Horticulture*?

Waters: I think not, because our writers and readers aren't trendy, but you would see something about it. For example, Bob Cowden, a horticulturist and retired nurseryman who has written occasionally, in a letter to the editor makes something of the period--I guess it must have been in the fifties or thereabouts--

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[2]Trafalgar [Press?].

when herbaceous plants were tossed out in favor of camellias, for example, and other evergreen shrubs. He comments on this, because he sees now--or saw then when he wrote--the camellias being dug up and replaced with herbaceous plants again. He just thought that was worth mentioning.

Riess: How does one know that one isn't right in the midst of a fad, and you think that you've just discovered something?

Waters: I think if people--it's no longer in my editorship, and so you must excuse me for commenting on it--but for example, there was an article recently in *Pacific Horticulture* on coleus, you see. These have been window sill plants for many, many years. And it may be that this is not a fad in itself, but may be an indication of a fad for filling one's garden with plants which have a tropical look.

This could have been started in England by Christopher Lloyd, who is a very influential writer on gardening in England, and much admired over here. I noticed in some publications of local clubs, one in the Northwest, for example, the idea of making gardens with a tropical look seems to be something of a fad at present.

But if I were still the editor and I had articles offered me on bringing a tropical look into the garden, I would judge it on the apparent depth of understanding of the plants being discussed, whether it were faddish or not. If the author understood the plants and was able to write about them in a useful and informative way, then I would discount the faddishness of the idea perhaps and publish it as a dissertation, so to speak, on plants with a tropical look, and that would be that.

Assessing the Audience

Riess: There must have been many winds of change blowing past *Pacific Horticulture* as you were editing it. Did the magazine change in those twenty years?

Waters: Obviously it did, yes. For one thing, I hope I can say that I became a better editor. That is to say, some of the early issues now are--I am too aware of the mistakes I made. Inconsistency, for example. Being consistent in the presentation of a publication is terribly important, in my view.

Riess: Does this come down to issues of style?

Waters: Yes, in punctuation, and so on. So yes, the magazine did change.

But you really mean--I think you're probably seeing it as an advocate.

Riess: This goes to the question of who you were editing it for.

Waters: Yes, that's right. And we were editing it for people who were deeply interested in gardening. We used to say that we took up the subject of gardening where *Sunset* magazine left off. That beginning gardeners were looking for "how-to" publications, and *Sunset* and a great many other publications--weekly newspapers, for example--carried columns which told people how to get to grips with the ground.

But once you've done that and your interest is piqued and you want to learn more, then the style that I tried to develop was one which was not obviously instructive, but one in which a reader would be interested in the subject matter and would learn by inference. One doesn't have to describe the process of digging a trench to put in plants or seedlings or whatever. An intelligent reader will derive most of that information by inference. And in any case, when they are ready to tackle botanical names to the extent that they're used in *Pacific Horticulture*, they must have acquired a certain amount of confidence, which will enable them to experiment, if necessary.

There aren't many hard and fast rules in gardening. You can break or ignore a lot of the published strictures and still get away with it. So there's very little point in being too firm about what should be done and what shouldn't be done.

Riess: Did you have sidebars?

Waters: That was a technique I began to employ later on. I used to call them boxes, but a lot of magazines call them sidebars. Very often they were used to give sources of material, and so on.

Riess: Your readers--because of the source of your subscriptions you knew that your readers were members of horticultural societies.

Waters: Yes. And they are people who enjoy reading, too.

There are a lot of magazines--not necessarily horticultural, gardening magazines, but magazines in general--that tend to have accepted the idea that their subscribers don't really want to read. So they've broken up their pages so as not to terrify them with too many words. They use all kinds of subheads and type changes and all that stuff to titillate them and excite them and

make them want to go on. If that weren't done, they seem to feel that people wouldn't confront a page of type.

I've never been in a position to adopt that kind of technique anyway. Spot color and so on, it's expensive. You've got to have money to toss around. Preferably, you've got to be producing your publication on a web press, which maybe has five or six stations. That becomes feasible only when your circulation reaches a certain level. We never got past a sheet-fed press. And as I recall it, it's still only a two-color press, so every sheet has to go through the press twice. That may have changed--the last time I went to the printer he was installing a new machine, but I can't recall now whether it was a four-station machine or a two-station.

Riess: What you're saying is that you didn't compromise the length of the articles or the content.

Waters: No, that's right. Articles range from--I tended to shy away from anything shorter than 1,000 words, or 1,500 words really, but they ranged from 1,500 to 5,000 or 6,000. I didn't discourage people from letting rip, so to speak, if they had something to say.

Riess: Let's polish off this question of the audience. People who needed more, people who were not afraid of good writing. When you wrote your editorials, who were you thinking about?

Waters: Ah, the editorials, yes. That was an attempt to introduce something a little different into the magazine, that's true. I also think variety is the essence of a magazine, and that people are reading under very different situations. For example, many people like to be reading at breakfast. It may be the newspaper, and probably often is, but if they happen to have *Pacific Horticulture* by them, they would want something that would last about as long as their piece of toast, wouldn't they?

So I thought, Well, we've got Bob Raabe's short pieces, rather technical, but not difficult to digest, by and large. But why don't we devote page one to some aspect of gardening that is right off the wall? We can give it a more personal tone and so on. So I tended in the end to start writing things derived from my own experience of gardening, and it didn't have to be too serious.

That's how they developed. They were not so much seeing a different audience as seeing the several needs of one audience. The need for, on the one hand, an article which might take a whole evening to get through, at the end of the day, but at other times they might be looking for something shorter. And in the morning,

by and large, one's concentration probably is suffering a little. [laughs] So that was how those editorials of mine came about. It was part of a desire to maintain a variety of material in the magazine.

Editorial Stance, and Letters to the Editor

Riess: Many of your editorials are quite playful. You're trying to engage a group of people who can see the joke, where the joke is.

Waters: That's right, without obviously trying to be funny. That's where disaster lies.

Riess: The occasional pun.

Waters: Oh, yes, that's right. And I'm often just waiting to see if anyone has caught it. Now and again somebody lets me know that they've caught it.

Riess: That leads me to ask about letters to the editor, and how you decide which to publish.

Waters: When one considers the total circulation of the magazine, then not a lot of letters can be expected. On the other hand, there were a gratifying number. Though if anyone went in for obvious praise of the publication, I would usually delete that part of the letter, because I didn't think it was proper to be blowing one's own trumpet. But if they had something to say in general, almost always it was published. There were very few letters that weren't.

There was one which was downright critical, not of the magazine as a whole but of something that I had written, where I had taken up the question, not in an editorial--well, there were two sections of editorials. There was the front one, and then there was the column I labeled rather clumsily, "You may like to know," which was generally factual and topical, but with a heavy dose of my own opinion blended into it.

There were some statistics that used to come to me from Sacramento, distributed to journalists, I suppose, all over the state, having to do with the program for testing pesticides in produce. I got a bit miffed, because the tone was outrageous very often. It was quite clear that the man in charge of the testing program had little regard, in fact I'd say outright contempt, for conservationists who were anxious to see that these pesticide

residues were at the very minimum. These were comments dismissing these people as extremists and so on. I thought, this man is a government employee, he's not supposed to be using official reports to express his opinion about conservationists.

So when I saw what struck me as being a mistaken analysis in the statistics, I took the matter up, and I did my own reexamination of the figures. I then took my notes up to a mathematician on the campus and asked him whether he thought I was correct, and in general he said, "Yes, that's okay." So I published this criticism of the report and let the fellow know that I didn't think that it was his place to express these opinions anyway, but if he did, he should get his facts right, you see.[3] [laughing] I thought it intolerable that a bureaucrat should misuse his position to denounce conservationists. And I just wanted to let him know, and let readers know, that this is no way for a bureaucrat to behave--I mean, a professional civil servant should know better. After all, it tends to throw doubt on the validity of his department's work.

Someone in San Francisco wrote scathingly about my comment. I've forgotten now exactly what phrases he used, but by and large, they were disapproving. I wrote back to him saying that I was very happy to publish his letter, and that he should understand that I reserved the right to add an editorial comment, and if that was what he wished to be done with his letter, I'd be happy to go ahead. He asked that I didn't publish it, so that one didn't get published, and I was rather sorry.

Riess: Was he critical of your taking a stand?

Waters: As I recall it, there were two main points. One was that he felt that my analysis was faulty, but he didn't specify, just described it as inadequate or something. And the other was that he thought that the column in which this appeared should have carried somebody's name at the bottom, and that he concluded that it was mine, but that it was not proper to publish anonymously. I didn't disagree with him on that; I didn't feel that it was germane to the main question. Privately, I agreed with him, but I didn't want to take the matter up.

No, he didn't produce any figures to prove that I was wrong or anything like that. He just rather, I think elegantly, dismissed it as inadequate. Because it was elegant, I felt like publishing it, but he didn't in the end want it to be published.

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[3]*Pacific Horticulture*, Spring 1990, page 53.

Riess: I wondered if perhaps some readers indicated that they were not interested in *Pacific Horticulture* becoming in any sense a journal of advocacy.

Waters: No, that didn't come up. By and large, some things that I included about conservation matters, and the use of pesticides and so on, got approval in letters. No, the letter I've described was the only instance of disapproval. But my comment in the first place was going a bit far, because it had to do with pesticide testing in produce throughout the state, and coming across the border from Mexico. And that's not a horticultural matter, after all.

Riess: You said *Horticulture* was another magazine your readers might read. Did you look at *Horticulture*, when you were originally back on the format committee, as a pretty good model?

Waters: I don't think we saw it as a model, but I'm sure we were all familiar with it. There would have been other magazines that we discussed, but I can't recall which ones they were.

Advertisements

Riess: The idea of articles about Scottish castle gardens, or the wonders of Australia, one might wonder whether that was driven by all the advertisements for tours that are at the end of the magazine.

Waters: No, nothing in *Pacific Horticulture* was driven by advertising.

Riess: I know, but I have to ask that.

Waters: I know you do, it's a natural thought, because magazines by and large exist for that purpose. Someone described television as not an entertainment punctuated with advertising, but an advertising medium using entertainment to attract an audience. And the same is true of magazines, by and large, now. I think *Sunset*, generally speaking, expects something like 50 percent of its space to be taken up with advertising. By and large, commercial magazines stand or fall on whether they can attract enough advertising to pay their costs.

And generally speaking, the economics works like this: that advertising pays for all your production costs, all your salaries, and yields your profit. Everything is paid for by advertising. Subscription money is just used to generate more subscriptions. Baldly speaking, that's the pattern of commercial magazines.

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Waters: We were very aware right at the start that our audience would be limited, and that we wouldn't attract sufficient advertising. Indeed, by and large, gardening magazines as a whole have always had great difficulty attracting sufficient advertising. It's a strange phenomenon, given that there are so many people who consider gardening to be their principal outdoor hobby, I think a larger proportion of the population than for any other outdoor hobby.

There is a special problem, and it is that the industry catering to these gardeners is a localized nursery industry. They don't go in for national advertising, they advertise in the local newspaper. Now, the people who are making a big business out of horticulture, like Monrovia Nursery, they're advertising in trade papers, do you see? They want these local nurserymen to stock their products, and so they go through the trade papers. That leaves advertising for national gardening magazines a bit thin. And when they do start to break even in the terms that I've described, as *Horticulture* is just about doing, I'm told, what are they doing it with? Absolut Vodka. Not with gardening things. And Jaguar motor cars even, once or twice I've seen in there.

Riess: Did the format committee put any constraints or limits on advertising, and did you talk about where it would be? Was it always only going to be at the very end of the magazine?

Waters: Yes, we did see it as a reader's publication, and that, as defined by Marge and myself, meant that we didn't allow advertising to invade all the editorial pages. We kept it disciplined. In that respect, we were very fortunate, because the first volunteer who took on the job of handling the advertising--that meant keeping in contact with our advertisers, and reminding them when their bills were due and so on--was a woman from Marin called Pat West.

She was quite a competent draftswoman. It was her decision to put the advertising in standard size boxes with rounded corners. I've been grateful to her ever since, because I think that that has given our advertising section a certain distinction which even the advertisers find attractive, and certainly the readers do. It sets it apart, and it enables us to put it at the back.

Riess: And there's a kind of equal value to every ad.

Waters: That's right, yes.

And also, we exercise some discrimination, or I did, rather. If the tone of an ad struck me as being misleading or unpleasant in some way, we would just decline it. I can think of four ads right off the bat that we just politely said we don't feel are appropriate. One which made some appeal to gardeners to go to their local nurseryman or something, and there was a figure in the corner of the ad which was supposed to represent the local nurseryman. It looked like a Chicago gangster. I thought, God, that's dreadful!

Riess: Was it a nurseryman's association advertisement?

Waters: I don't remember now what it was, where it came from. I just can't recall. But I do recall this figure--I thought, I just don't want to see him in the magazine. I think advertising should reflect the editorial content to some degree. There should be some kind of compatibility.

Every now and again, gardeners are encouraged to buy these little electronic devices that you jab into the soil to measure its moisture content. I was always rather skeptical, but I'm utterly convinced that they're useless. Someone sent an ad in for one of those, and I said, "Don't let's accept it, because I'm sure they're no bloody use whatever."

Riess: Now, that's extremely conscientious.

Waters: High-handed! [laughs] Conscientious, yes, that's right. That's a better word.

Riess: Paternalistic or something like that.

Waters: Well, yes. I mean, to some extent, a magazine has to accept some degree of responsibility for the advertisers. You can't disown it entirely, can you? After all, they've paid you, so you've entered into some kind of contract with these people. If somebody can produce valid argument to say that this device is useless, then I think one has a duty to say that.

It so happened that one of the first things that I discovered when I took up laboratory work way, way, way back, at Burroughs Wellcome, we were measuring the pH of fluids. It required an extremely elaborate device. Everything that was alien or foreign to the fluid being examined would affect it. It was done with current between electrodes, as these devices are supposed to do. So these devices inevitably would be measuring not only the moisture content of the soil, whether you like it or not, but the salt content of that moisture. So the device can't

possibly be accurate, because it's measuring more than one thing--not only moisture, it's measuring salt and pH and so on.

Riess: Unless they know what they're doing.

Waters: But you can't calibrate such an instrument! They come up every now and again, and they've always died, and almost every opinion that I've ever read about them has confirmed my own judgment, that they are useless.

[extending his hand and a finger] There's the best device that's to be used. Scrabble the top of the soil for about half an inch down, and you'll soon discover whether it needs moisture or not!

Riess: If a writer said, "Test your soil," you would edit that right out?

Waters: Oh, lord, yes, if he suggested using one of these, yes, I would probably write in a comment such as, "Use your index finger and scrabble." Yes. I did a lot of that, I'm quite shameless about that.

Riess: But you let your writers know.

Waters: Oh, they always saw what we finished with, and could make further changes, yes.

Riess: Back to the advertising: Monrovia and *Sunset*, I don't know how much they had to pay for those ads. Was that substantial support for the magazine?

Waters: It was, yes. *Sunset* were very good for many years, and so was Monrovia. It was a public relations operation for them partly, of course. I don't think they were getting all that much out of it. They would get a little, but by and large, it was just a gesture towards the magazine.

Then, as always happens, of course, these companies change. The man who was placing the ad for Monrovia called us and said how sorry he was, but he was no longer in a position to influence the matter, and it came to an end. And *Sunset* was sold, as you know. So the Lanes, who were personal friends, and therefore again were doing it as a gesture--they did a great many other things as well. They gave us free ads in their publications from time to time. I mean, an advertisement we couldn't possibly pay for, because their prices are so high. They had a circulation of well over a million at one point. There's no way that we could have paid.

Promotions, Subscriptions

Waters: There were other people who were helpful. Paul Hawken of Smith and Hawken in the early days, he was a great admirer of the magazine. And he--let's see, what did he do? I think he paid for printing of a brochure, a color brochure that we were using for direct mail subscriptions.

Riess: Was he on one of your boards?

Waters: No. Paul Hawken was in Palo Alto near the beginning. Then he moved the store to Mill Valley, and I guess Marge Hayakawa probably met him in Mill Valley. And she arranged a meeting with him--she and I went and had lunch with Paul Hawken. [pause]

The first contact goes back to Palo Alto with Paul Hawken. He called me because I had done an article on digging, "The gentle art of digging."[4] It was illustrated by Mimi Osborne, who's been a great help and support from the very beginning, or almost the very beginning. She did some very nice little drawings of spades and forks and things like that. He said he was just about to produce his mail order catalogue for Smith and Hawken, and he thought it would be nice if Mimi Osborne would do drawings for him for his catalogue. So of course, I thought, Well, that's fine, and so I put him in touch, and Mimi illustrated his first catalogue, and I think the second.

Somewhere in there he wrote to me, very admiring of the magazine, describing it as "Exceptional...in content, depth, breadth, and intelligence." I used the endorsement in our flyer distributed at flower shows. It's still there. We have a file of other endorsements, and I just pull out whichever one seems most appropriate and try to get a nice mix from the Northwest, from California, and so on. Anyway, Paul Hawken's was rather nicely put.

So that's how it happened, and then at some point or other Marge arranged this lunch, and we discussed ways in which he might be helpful. One of the things he did, as I recall, was to pay part of the cost of a direct mail promotion. And then secondly, he started to put a little flier for *Pacific Horticulture* in all his mail orders--he slipped this in without cost to us. A lot of mail order companies now do that, and you get a whole sheaf of

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[4]*Pacific Horticulture*, Spring 1980.

these things coming out of your package if you order something, but they are charging for them, usually. I think it's called piggy-back mailing.

Riess: Do you have a way of knowing whether that yielded new subscribers?

Waters: Oh, yes. Almost all of it yielded something. Our first direct mail promotion was using the Park Seed Company list which we rented, and we got over 4 percent response from that. By mail order standards, that was absolutely astounding.

Riess: You couldn't talk them into giving you their list?

Waters: No.

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Waters: In addition to attending and staffing our *Pacific Horticulture* display stand at flower shows, I gave talks to horticultural societies and garden clubs as another way of promoting the magazine. Members of the board also spread the word in that way. My talks led to our program of tours, the first of which was to Britain and was based on my lecture on the history of gardening in Britain. Many people wished they could visit with me the gardens shown in my slides. When I mentioned this to Susan Smith, a member of the California Horticultural Society who was also a travel agent, she offered to make the arrangements.

That was in 1978 and successful, not only in pleasing the participants and raising money, but in promoting the magazine as well. The tours became a regular part of the operation, and in accompanying them to China, India, Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, Greece, Turkey, Spain, and France, my store of photographs has been increased, giving more opportunities for promotional talks.

But about 1994 I tired of giving talks. Part of the weariness came from those who introduce speakers by assuring the audience how much they are going to enjoy the program. Telling the audience what their reaction to a speaker will be sounds utterly condescending. It makes me squirm. Before my own talks I gave the chairman or chairwoman a note asking that they not use such phrases, but it was rarely enough to prevent them saying it.

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Funding Through Loans and Grants

Riess: I should think, because you didn't pay your writers, that you had a strong case for things coming to you free.

Waters: That's true. Yes, we have. Since we were established ourselves as a nonprofit organization, it has enabled us to--not so much to get freebies like that, but to get grants to pay for stuff, and that's what we've done in the main.

Riess: To get grants?

Waters: Yes. The first--can we go right back to the format committee?

When we launched the magazine, we found that we needed more money than was in the kitty. We were convinced that ultimately this thing would take off and we would get some income, but the foundation itself at that point had nothing, absolutely nothing, except a list of 2,300 people who were members of the four societies that made up the foundation. We were proposing to produce a larger publication with more pages. The old journal had an average of about forty-four pages. We were proposing one with sixty-four. Larger, heavier paper, color printing.

So we got loans from some of our supporting societies. The California Horticultural Society, which has always felt like the beginning of all this, that it was their journal that essentially began it, $5,000 they loaned us. The Southern California Horticultural Institute, as it was then called--it's now called Society--also came up with about $5,000. The Western Horticultural Society, which was a significantly smaller organization, came up with $2,500. So we finished up with $12,500. Strybing Arboretum Society said that its obligations in regard to staff and so on precluded the possibility of loaning us anything; a few members sent private donations.

So that was the money we had when we launched the thing, and it enabled us to produce the first issue, using Dharma Press. If I can, I'll find you a copy of the budget. Harland Hand was largely responsible for compiling an extremely ingenious budget which showed that we were in no danger financially whatsoever. [laughing]

I mentioned that the first bit of promotion that we got was an editorial mention in *Sunset*. But after that we confronted the fact that now we were on our own. What are we going to do? All kinds of things were tried, and board members sat around tables addressing, by hand, envelopes to memberships of local societies,

the daffodil society and whatever lists we could get hold of. But none of these societies had their memberships computerized, so it was all a question of addressing by hand.

The brochures that were used in these mailings were marked, a little mark on the corner--yellow for daffodils and red for roses and it was supposed to enable us to know where responses came from. Of course, there was nobody to come back again afterwards and analyze it all [laughter].

But by and large, this clearly wasn't the way to wealth and riches--the response was minimal. And so we had to find a way of working on a larger scale. At that point, I remembered reading about the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, which was administered in Scotland.

Riess: Some address like Cullen Lodge.

Waters: Yes, you know it. It's no longer there, of course. And if you've applied recently, you have applied to San Francisco. They now have two institutions: one is administered in Cambridge, England, and the other in San Francisco. I understand that Stanley Smith made his money over here on the West Coast.

The trust was set up originally to rescue *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, a famous old thing that had been going for a couple hundred years and was beginning to founder. George Taylor, who was then the director of Kew Gardens, encouraged Stanley Smith to cough up some money to enable *Curtis's* magazine to continue. So he set up this trust which was designed to help horticultural enterprises, wherever and whatever their object. But its first operation was to save a publication. There are so few foundations that do that.

I thought, Well, if they've saved one, they can save another. Let's get in touch with Sir George. So I wrote him a letter. And it was all delightfully chatty and very informal. I thought, What a relief! They don't want everything in triplicate. In fact, he wrote back saying, "Yes, yes, I'll send you a check for $5,000." And then another letter came immediately afterwards saying, "Oh, by the way, I suppose you do have a nonprofit status? Because if you haven't, it won't work." [laughing] It was an afterthought. And I thought, Oh, this is delightful. Of course, I wrote back and sent him a copy of our nonprofit status document, and everything was fine.

So we spent that money on the first direct mail promotion with the Park Seed Company's list which got us 4 percent response, and I thought, This is the way to do it. So the following year, I

went back to Sir George again, and he said, "This is rather irregular, old chap, but okay, just this time, you can have another $5,000. But don't ask next year," sort of thing. He didn't put it quite like that, but it was fairly clear.

I think it must have been in between these two letters--I'm not sure exactly now about the dates--but one of our board members, and one of our most enthusiastic supporters in the Southern California Institute, was Elizabeth Marshall. She's quite a name. She's dead now, I'm afraid, although I think her husband George may still be living. He was a great supporter of the Wilderness Society.[5]

Anyway, Elizabeth knew George Taylor personally, and at one point she arranged for us to meet him in San Francisco. Because then it was necessary for the director to maintain contact with administrators [of the Stanley Smith Trust] in San Francisco. Although all the applications went through him, this was apparently where the money was, so he needed to keep tabs on it.

It was rather funny, because she said to me--and Olive, I guess, and Marge I think were all there when we met him--she said, "Now, his favorite Scotch is Grants. Make sure there's a bottle on the side." [laughter] That's lovely, isn't it? So we made sure there was a bottle of Grants Scotch whisky available within his reach--and at some point or other, it must be concluded that this helped, I don't know precisely to what extent. Anyway, there were two grants of $5,000 each from the Stanley Smith Trust.

Then I just didn't have the brass face to apply again immediately. And I heard in some manner of the Skaggs Foundation [L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation]. Someone said that it was supporting the restoration work in Westminster Abbey. I thought, That's not gardening, but on the other hand, it does show a kind of diversity of interest. So I sent an application there, and I went up to meet them.

A whole group of us applicants were being routinely interviewed. And it so happened that I had used as a cover a photograph of a window showing Adam digging in the Garden. It wasn't Westminster Abbey, it was actually Canterbury Cathedral, but I thought, Well, just a few miles away. [laughter] It's all stained glass, after all! It's all medieval stuff. (Canterbury, I think, is reputed to have the largest area of medieval stained

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[5]Robert Marshall was founder of the Wilderness Society. His brother George Marshall's papers are part of the Sierra Club collection in The Bancroft Library.

glass of any cathedral in Europe, but when I saw Chartres, I wondered whether that's true. But anyway, that's what they say.)

Riess: So you took that along to the meeting.

Waters: Exactly, yes. You've seen right through me, haven't you? Anyway, it worked.

Riess: And was that a continuing relationship?

Waters: No. We got two $5,000s from them too.

So there we were with $5,000 for each of four years, and we used it on each occasion to build circulation and equip the circulation office.

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Waters: The principle being that if we're asking people to subscribe by mail, to send us checks by mail, then it's appropriate to ask them by mail, isn't it? There's a certain logic in the whole process. And it seems to be the method that magazines, and increasingly almost every retailer, is using.

We never did get the 4 percent that we got from the first mailing. I don't know whether it was a fluke or the fact that, as a lot of merchandisers say, if you can say something is new, then you've got the most sellable commodity there.

Riess: Did you use the inducement of charter subscriber?

Waters: We didn't use that, we weren't sophisticated enough for that, but we were able to say it was new, and maybe that's the reason it worked. For that first mailing we chose Park, because their catalogue was offering the greatest diversity of plants, seeds and plants--well, seeds mostly, plants was another division of the company. And we've used their list frequently since.

Friends of *Pacific Horticulture*

Riess: Beyond that, you didn't continue getting money through grants, but you've had the Friends of Pacific Horticulture.

Waters: Oh, that's right, that came afterwards.

Riess: Was that very soon afterwards?

Waters: Yes, fairly soon.

After those grants we were looking around for other sources. And in fact, I was writing a dozen applications a year and getting nowhere, because there aren't all that many organizations who will support a publication. Most of them aren't interested in horticulture and gardening to begin with, and those few that may show some interest certainly aren't interested in publications. So we had two strikes against us.

Riess: Did you go to garden club lists, not only for members but for money?

Waters: I might be able to find somewhere in my files some of these applications, copies of them. At the moment, I can remember only that in the end I was getting very, very tired of this fairly laborious business.

Riess: You didn't have someone who was your grant writer or fundraiser.

Waters: No, we didn't. We did, incidentally, hire a consultant at one point somewhere in there, a woman in Oakland. I think it was she who actually made the initial contact with the Skaggs people. Prior to that her efforts had not been successful either. But she did polish up our applications a bit and show us exactly what needed doing and so on.

Riess: Does the foundation board make itself responsible for major gifts?

Waters: Our board?

Riess: Yes.

Waters: Oh, no. Never has. I know it's regarded as part and parcel of being a board member in many organizations, but our board has always been made up of gardeners and nurserymen. When comparatively recently it was suggested that they should make themselves responsible for supplying funds, there was limited enthusiasm and small response. It came mainly from Marge, Elizabeth Marshall, and Georgie Van de Kamp.

Anyway, we heard of a trust down in Los Angeles, I think it's called the Norman Trust. Not a very big organization, but it was interested in gardening--I think we got a sum from them. So Marge and I called on them. We went down there at some time, and I remember meeting the man, and he crystallized this question of the Friends by saying, "Do you ask your subscribers for money?" And Marge said, "Yes."

He said, "Well, it's not very comprehensive, because I'm a subscriber and I've never been asked prior to this."

At that point, Marge decided that it was time to launch the Friends. We got out a letter and laid things out pretty straightforwardly, that here we were with a publication to be proud of, and you as a subscriber presumably see some merit in it, but we can't attract the advertising that other magazines attract to keep it going, and we don't want to put the subscription price out of reach. So if you would like to see it continue and prosper, why don't you send us a little extra?

The result was absolutely astounding. The first appeal yielded $47,000. Isn't that incredible? It was the most rewarding thing imaginable. And these people had no obligation, they paid their subscription money, but we had, I think, I don't know, several hundred people respond, with sums from twenty-five dollars up.

Marjorie Schmidt, who was a local woman--have you ever encountered her?

Riess: I don't know her.

Waters: She wrote a book on native plants, she was an enthusiast for native plants.[6] She sent a check for $5,000 personally. I think Ruth Bancroft was among those early donors too, and she's been sending a check pretty regularly ever since, quite a generous one. But yes, it was a very rewarding thing.

Riess: What year was that?

Waters: That would have been about '82 or '83.

Riess: Is that institutionalized now?

Waters: That's institutionalized now, and is a regular appeal. It runs around, now, somewhere on the order of $50,000 to $60,000.

We tried to augment our fundraising recently, the idea being to establish some kind of a regular income from an endowment. It certainly hasn't been an easy thing to get going. Partially, I think, because organizations with a bit of real estate do better. You can bring people up to, say, a garden, show them around to see what is needed.

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[6]*Growing California Native Plants*, Marjorie G. Schmidt, University of California Press, 1980.

I remember watching the operation with Mrs. Van de Kamp, who was a board member. In fact, it was because of what I saw down at the Descanso Gardens--Georgie Van de Kamp, you know, the mother of the onetime California state attorney? She was raising money for a building at Descanso Gardens. In fact, the hall that was subsequently built--very handsome thing in the craftsman style, Greene and Greene style, you know--is named for her, because she raised about a million dollars.

I happened to be down there in the office when she was working, and she was on the telephone with some prospective donor. She was handling him with velvet gloves and a most persuasive tone, inviting him to see the garden and so on. I'm sure it must have worked.

It's always been a mystery to both of us, neither can remember how she and I first made contact. But at some point she asked me to do a talk at some kind of symposium down there at Descanso, and I gave a talk on garden photography.

Subsequently, we became friends, and I invited her onto the board, hoping that she would be able to repeat her success at Descanso on behalf of *Pacific Horticulture*. And she has been helpful, but the endowment fund--it kind of gets going and then it falters again, largely because of the need for a volunteer who is fully committed. Someone's got to head it up who knows what they're doing and is fully committed, and Georgie has her irons in so many fires.

Marge Hayakawa's Place in the Picture

Waters: However, again, Marge--I didn't tell you about Marge's contribution all along here. I think I've rather neglected her, not intentionally, I can assure you, because she looked over my shoulder in the first issues and kindly pointed out my shortcomings, and this was enormously helpful.

Riess: She'd had more professional experience?

Waters: Oh, yes. She majored in English literature, with a minor in botany, at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. There she met Don Hayakawa and worked with him on a magazine called *The Rocking Horse*. Later while living in Chicago she edited *Poetry* magazine,

Olive and George Waters.

G.W. notes: "*On my retirement in 1997 as editor of* Pacific Horticulture *a presentation was arranged by the board at the annual garden party. This photograph of Olive and me was taken on that occasion by Bill Moore, once a board member who also served nobly as its president.*"

Lawrence Hyman, Owen Pearce, Marge Hayakawa, and George Waters at Dharma Press, Emeryville, checking proofs of the first issue of Pacific Horticulture, December 1975.

Photograph by Olive Rice Waters

and here, in the Bay Area, *Fremontia*, for the California Native Plant Society.[7]

Anyway, she was helpful in that respect. But she was devoted enough, after about a year or so--I remember she made a gift to the foundation of stock from Procter & Gamble, and the understanding was that it would be sold to yield some money to pay the editor. I was at the meeting in which she said this was to happen, and she looked across at me and said, "George, you're getting thin." [laughter] Because I was neglecting the garden work that I was doing in order to devote my time to the magazine.

Riess: And still not paid.

Waters: That's right, until she gave that money.

And once--even though it wasn't a great salary, it was better than nothing--once the board had budgeted for an editor's payment, it couldn't be lopped off the following year with, Well, Marge's money is all used up. So it's remained on the budget ever since. I guess Marge was astute enough to realize that once it was there, some way would have to be found to keep it there.

And then as the circulation increased slowly, the board built it to a point where one could actually--

Riess: Get fat?

Waters: [laughs] Not get fat, but actually not get thin-thin. [laughter] But anyway, that was all part of Marge's great contribution to *Pacific Horticulture*. And when the endowment fund came along, she made another substantial contribution to that as well to get it going.

Riess: In your obituary for Marge Hayakawa you say, "During the search for another printer, differences with the editor resulted in the resignation of the board president."[8] What is this all about?

Waters: I knew I'd regret this [oral history] eventually. I'll tell you what, switch that off. [tape interruption]

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[7]Information from Alan R. Hayakawa and Wynne Hayakawa. [For further information on Marge Hayakawa's early life see S.I. Hayakawa and Margedant Peters Hayakawa, *From Semantics to the U.S. Senate, ETC., Etc.*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.]

[8]*Pacific Horticulture*, Summer 1998.

This is not the place for a detailed explanation anyway, is it? It's just trying to put Marge in the picture of the magazine as a whole. But what happened, for the sake of the machine [the tape recorder], is that I was the editor when we found we had to move away from Dharma Press and find another one. While I was looking for a new printer, with an issue ready to go to the press, the president--not Dick Hildreth now, but a subsequent president--asked me to get quotations, which I was seeking, six of them, and bring them to a meeting of the board.

This seemed a bit pointless to me, because the only thing the board could do, I could do, which was to choose the cheapest one. We just hadn't got the money to go to anything but the cheapest printer, so long as he was capable of the job. And that I could ascertain by visiting the press and seeing what they were doing.

Since I didn't want the issue to be delayed by meetings, which seemed to me to be unnecessary, I told her [the president] that I was going to make the choice and go to the printer and get the issue underway, rather than to delay it by attending meetings. The outcome of that disagreement was the resignation of the president, and that's when Marge Hayakawa became president, by general acceptance. She was obviously the most dedicated person the board had, and she was near at hand, being in Mill Valley. Whereas other people, like Betty Marshall, who of course was a fine supporter too, was down in Los Angeles.

So that was the way it happened.

Objectives, and Who's In Charge?

Riess: And that kind of power--not exactly power struggle, but making clear who's doing what, did that kind of thing come up again over the years?

Waters: No. At least not overtly. Again, I'm not mentioning names, but there was a board member--he was accompanying us on one of our tours, and he somehow was so carried away as to say to me, in a group of other tour members, that he thought the board was kow-towing to me. In other words, leaving it to me, I suppose. It seemed an extraordinary thing to say.

Riess: Well, maybe leaving it to you is appropriate. But kow-towing?

Waters: I don't know why he used that term. I think perhaps--it was at one of those little gatherings one has just before a formal dinner, and I think maybe the aperitif was speaking. I don't know. But it bothered me because he was a member of the board, and I saw there some opposition. Not that I am opposed to opposition--I enjoy debate, if it's informed debate. But there seemed to me to be some tone of resentment in the use of that language. Don't you think?

Riess: Yes.

Waters: So I saw that as a kind of warning, really.

Riess: Did you have a relationship with the board where you came before them to talk about the magazine--were you on the agenda?

Waters: Oh, yes. I attended every board meeting. I may have missed when one of our tours clashed with the date. But board meetings were held three times a year, and in some years four times a year, and I was generally there, and always presented at least a summary of my activities.

Sometimes I embarked upon technical explanations--[laughs] you know how I am inclined to do that--and to explain to the board what happened to the galleys when they'd been edited, and how the whole thing was transformed into a layout, which in those days was a paste-up of boards and so on, which were photographed. And I explained all this to them, because very often these terms cropped up in my conversation, and I thought perhaps it was a good idea to let them know what it was all about.

So yes, I gave the board every opportunity, and anyone on the board could quiz me. There was nothing underhand about it. I took it that if the board was inclined to leave things to me, that I was doing okay, and that seemed to be the way the evidence went anyway. Circulation was increasing after all.

We had an objective which seemed to me to be a reasonable figure: a circulation of 20,000. I can't explain why I chose that number, but it seemed to me to be not unreasonable to think that 20,000 subscribers could be found throughout the West, and the scattering throughout the world that we have.

And there was also the fact that at 20,000 I had calculated that it would be economic to use a web press, which would give us flexibility in layout and in the placing of color pages and so on. Because when you put a sheet through a sheet-fed press and then have to put it through a second time to complete the operation, and sheet-fed presses require more manual labor too, then it

becomes rather expensive to add color pages. But if it's on a web press, then it doesn't really make a great deal of difference how many color pages you add or where they are in the magazine. That kind of flexibility appealed to me.

So, I thought, Well, if we can reach 20,000, then we can move to a web press. But we never quite got there. So we stayed with the sheet-fed press. And that's not a bad thing in some ways.

Riess: And still that's the case?

Waters: Oh, yes. And there's no doubt about it, too, that web presses, being somewhat faster, it's easier to print a lot of inferior magazines if something goes wrong, whereas with a sheet-fed press, if your operator is attentive he can spot his errors and stop the machine more or less instantly.

Riess: After Dharma, the printer you went to was?

Waters: Suburban Press in Hayward.

Riess: Did you talk to the UC printing office?

Waters: I don't think so, no. For a quote, you mean?

Riess: Yes.

Waters: No, I don't think it occurred to me.

There was a period when Marge and I talked to the man who was director of the press at one time. Went to live down in the desert.

Riess: Oh, August Frugé.

Waters: Frugé, that's right.

Riess: He and his wife, Susan, were involved with the California Native Plant Society.

Waters: Yes. Marge met them that way, and she again, because of her interest in literature, probably had an affinity. I think--well, we were exploring the possibilities--I think soon after it was launched, and wondering what would happen to me.

For many years, even though I was getting a small salary from it, I wondered, What am I dedicating myself to here? Is this thing going to survive? In other words, there was a great deal of

uncertainty about it, and I think that became obvious to Marge, and she discussed with August Frugé the possibility that *Pacific Horticulture* might be produced under the auspices of the UC Press.

Obviously he wasn't in a position to commit the press to anything at all, but his answer was encouraging. Marge was able to tell me this, and this gave me sort of a measure of reassurance that, by devoting myself to this magazine I wasn't throwing away the remaining productive years of my life. After all, I had to look to the time when I wasn't able to work any more, or wasn't willing to work any more.

Riess: You had to create a retirement.

Waters: I had to make sure that I got some retirement income and so on. Marge was an extremely, as I say, dedicated and conscientious person. She had encouraged me into this in the first place, and I suppose she felt that she should do whatever she could to reassure me.

Discussions in the Overheated Salon

Riess: Please explain a reference in your 1998 Marge Hayakawa obituary in *Pacific Horticulture* to meetings at her home of garden designers and horticulturists "with opinions firmly held, but not always compatible...[that] provided enjoyment for all, and the editor with more stimulus, perhaps, than guidance...[an] overheated salon..."

Waters: I think we did touch on this earlier, but just to recap: I've never been good on committees. I've found that the few editorial committee meetings that we had didn't seem to me to be accomplishing much. So gradually, I kind of let them drop.

Now, what happened was that soon after the launching of the magazine, we had a few issues out, we were thrashing around essentially, not only looking for money but just trying to decide whether we were on the right track, and Marge conceived the idea of inviting to her house in Mill Valley all these people, like Lester [Hawkins] and Russ Beatty and [Victor] Reiter and the rest of them, just for a kind of brainstorming session, I suppose, about the prospects for the magazine and the directions it should take.

The reason why I described these as overheated was that there were people like Victor Reiter who was very strongly of the

opinion--I think the phrase he used, and was adopted by a lot of others was, "The plant's the thing." In other words, that all that mattered was growing plants. And in fact, the California Horticultural Society began that way, do you see. I think that before they formed the society, the initial meeting in the restaurant in San Francisco followed a freeze, a big freeze in 1932, and the idea was to bring these people together and discuss what had happened and which plants had been lost and which had survived and so on, and everyone would learn from this.

So essentially, the society emerged from this. They tended to disregard landscape architects, because of a long-held feeling that landscape architects didn't really know about plants. Now, here we were, trying to push what had been the California Horticultural Society magazine towards a broader appreciation of gardening, not just emphasizing plants.

You remember, I mentioned that I was hoping to cast a wide net, to try to bridge that chasm between the landscape architect and the plantsperson. There were landscape architects there like Russ Beatty, and myself trying to demonstrate through the magazine that not all the landscape architects are ignorant of plants. Russ Beatty himself, for example, was quite a knowledgeable plantsperson. But nonetheless, there was a resistance to the idea of acknowledging that gardens could be made by anyone but people who knew plants inside out. So that made meetings somewhat excitable.

Lester Hawkins, of course, was a person who just enjoyed debating and talking. He could talk ad infinitum on almost any topic you'd care to mention. He was an extremely thoughtful and able man, but sometimes indiscreet on the topics he raised in certain audiences.

Riess: Like what?

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Waters: Betty and Fitz Rollins had a party, a wedding anniversary celebration I believe. At the center of the crowded room was Lester, surrounded by a small group, delivering an animated lecture on the evils of financiers and of capitalism in general. Many of those in the group derived their generous share of life's comforts from investment in capitalism's financial markets.

On another occasion Lester visited me at home. Our conversation, at first stimulating and enjoyable, degenerated into a monologue by Lester that went on for so long that I could scarcely endure the boredom.

On the other hand Lester's manuscripts were a pleasure to read, and I looked forward to the discussions that followed his receipt of my suggested amendments to them. They were invariably conducted on the telephone, which tended to create a slight sense of urgency that concentrated thinking and encouraged concision in expression. But each of my suggested changes was carefully weighed and debated with courtesy and the utmost respect, with one or the other eventually conceding the point. Whatever the outcome, I was always elated by those discussions.

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Riess: How was Lester Hawkins trained?

Waters: He was a professional journalist. And Marshall's [Marshall Ollbrich] degree was in philosophy. So they fed one another, very successfully--intellectually, that is. But they left San Francisco, maybe in the fifties or sixties, and got this piece of land in Occidental. Their idea was to be self-sufficient. You know the idea, five acres and a cow?

Anyway, somehow they became interested in gardening, so the place ceased to be a self-sufficient farm and became an ornamental garden. Then, to make a living, they started selling plants, so it kind of gradually transformed itself. Lester would go out and do design work. He even made jungles for film sets, things like that. A really extraordinary, capable man. He designed plantings for one or two housing developments, a place called Oak Forest that was quite famous. (It was discussed in the magazine.[9]) He built up quite a following; they both did. As I said, it became a mecca, Western Hills Nursery, for plantspeople of all kinds.

So when you got these people together, they all had plenty to say, and they didn't always agree. That was how Marge's meetings came to be and how I came to mention them. They were stimulating, and they enabled me to meet with people who would be able to write, or help me in other ways, people like Lester and Marshall and their friends.

Riess: Now, it sounds like Lester actually did bridge the chasm.

Waters: Yes, himself. And there has been a change, too. The syllabus in the landscape design department is much broader, so that most landscape architects nowadays are coming along with a much wider understanding.

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[9]*Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1985, p. 47.

But the chasm still exists to a large extent because clients of landscape architects in general tend not to be plantspeople. Otherwise why would they bring in a landscape architect? And the commercial jobs they do in general have to be low maintenance. So again, that tends to inhibit use of anything but the toughest plants that are available.

So you still have the people who make their own gardens. Peter Newton said,[10] for example, there's no such thing as garden maintenance. Do you see? If you talk in those terms, you're not talking about gardening any more, you're talking about landscaping. So there are those people who cater to the requirements of non-gardeners who need to have a garden, and there are the gardeners. There's still that chasm to some extent.

Riess: Did you try to reconcile it, to articulate it, in your own editorials in the magazine?

Waters: Did I discuss it? I think only obliquely. For example, the subject comes up in almost every magazine at some time or other, although many of them have found ways of avoiding the question--*Sunset*, for example, never discusses a plant that isn't commercially available. They see no merit in it. And most of their readers would accept that it's senseless to discuss a plant that isn't commercially available.

We do discuss plants that aren't commercially available, and in my defense, I said, "Well, many readers feel that seeking out these unusual plants is part of the joy of gardening."[11] Nowadays, they're greatly helped by lists of specialized nurseries now available from bookstores and botanic garden bookshops. They're tracking them down--plant hunting, and that's exciting. And think of the glory when you've actually found it!

So that was an oblique treatment of the subject. But no, I don't think I ever discussed it frontally.

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[10]*Pacific Horticulture*, Summer 1992, p. 40.

[11]*Pacific Horticulture*, Summer 1977, p. 1.

V THE EDITOR AT WORK

[Interview 4: August 12, 1998] ##

Nora Harlow's Editorial Contributions

Riess: What support did you have in actually doing the job? What help with the complexities of bringing out an award-winning magazine?

Waters: It's the coming together, I think, of several factors when I was at age fifty. Marge Hayakawa decided, on her own judgment, that I was the person to take on the job, that in doing that she probably recognized, as that teacher had thirty-seven years earlier, that there was some facility with the language. I had also a great interest in gardening and a background in photography that would be useful. They all came together at that point, and that was an extraordinary coincidence, I suppose. That was significant.

Riess: And the magazine is the reflection of its editor.

Waters: In a number of ways, yes, that's right.

But Nora Harlow played an important part, too. Here again, Marge Hayakawa comes into the picture, because Nora at the time was helping with *Fremontia*, and she was interested in *Pacific Horticulture*. *Fremontia* wasn't using color printing, and though Nora had considerable experience as an editor, doing freelance work--as it happened, she told me at one point, most of it had to with the California penal system, but that was just a coincidence, I don't know how she got caught up with that. But she was dealing with huge screeds from various institutions up and down the state.

But she had no experience with color printing, and Marge, who was editing *Fremontia*, introduced her to me, and the arrangement was that she would help with the editing and I would show her all I could of what was being done in color printing in the magazine. We were gradually over the years able to increase the amount of color that we printed, because our funds were

improving. So whereas we started with eight pages and a color cover, we gradually stepped it up to first sixteen and then sometimes almost as many as thirty pages.

Riess: Had you indicated that you needed some help at that point?

Waters: Yes. My difficulty was that things like punctuation and consistency in editing were not strong points with me. I was able to understand what people were trying to say, and in some cases express it more simply and clearly. And I was able to make contributions to the magazine myself on a fairly regular basis. But Nora brought a kind of ruthlessness to the process of dealing with punctuation and consistency, and that was great, and we got on very well together. We were a good team.

Riess: How about dealing with the writers? Who was the person who dealt with the people?

Waters: Me, in the main. I made the contacts and solicited the articles, and brought pressure on them to meet deadlines and so on. But I was always able to depend upon Nora.

At the time that Nora came on board--that was must have been about 1980 or very early eighties anyway--I had no computer. So that the manuscripts were going to the typesetter, which was Medallion Graphics at that time. It was a very good man--Harrell, Dave Harrell. This was when typesetting had advanced to the point where an optical system of typesetting using photographic paper was employed.

It was an incredible machine. He let me look inside it one day and it fascinated me. All the characters of a particular typeface were photographically reproduced on a glass disk which was spinning at high speed. The keyboard selected one of those characters, and the beam of light was projected through the disk at the instant that it was required. It was enlarged according to the point size needed, optically, with an adjustable lens and projected onto the paper. You can imagine, ingenious as this was, it required incredible precision, and the machine had to be maintained in a humidity- and temperature-controlled room, because it was very susceptible to any change of those things.

Riess: What was the machine's name?

Waters: I wish I could remember.[1] We can probably reach Dave--I'm sure he's still in the Bay Area.

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[1]Mergenthaler V.I.P. (Variable Input Phototypesetter).

It was fascinating, but breakdowns were fairly frequent. But Dave was a good man, and he was also enormously helpful. He was also an organist. I suppose there's a connection. Keyboards.

Riess: Was it his invention, the machine?

Waters: Oh, no. It was a commercial apparatus.

Then the digital system came in and this was much more dependable. So he, I think with great relief, replaced the machine. Although it fascinated me, I must say. That kind of apparatus was so ingenious, if impractical.

Anyway, after Nora came along, I was able to give Dave manuscripts that were much cleaner and easier to deal with, because Nora typed at quite high speed and accurately. She was very good.

The Question of Succession

Waters: But then, as I approached age seventy, the board had the idea that if I should fall ill, or meet with an accident, that there would be no one to take over. So at their urging I persuaded Nora to come on board and accept some kind of honorarium, with the idea that she would be there as someone to take over for me, and by implication, ultimately when I gave up the job, she would be the obvious person to take over--a successor.

That idea intrigued her enormously, so that was the way we worked together more frequently, because she started writing pieces for the magazine. She did that very well too. I took her on one or two photographic expeditions so as to show her what I was doing and how I went about it. In other words, I made it as easy as possible for her to take over, when the time arose.

Riess: But you say only with an honorarium, so it wasn't full-time.

Waters: Oh, no, it was not a full-time job. She was still doing her freelance work.

As it happened, just to kind of round off that story, when the time came and I did offer her the job, she had become interested in a job with EBMUD, and she had personal reasons for preferring that. So in the end we advertised the editor's job, and got somebody else to take over. I was sorry about it, but I respected her reasons. That was that.

Riess: So, you had Nora as assistant editor, and Elizabeth McClintock's title was associate editor?

Waters: Yes, the title was something I gave her soon after I took over.

Riess: What I am working up to is, who checked on you? How did you, when you were starting out, writing your own articles in the beginning, before you developed a voice or whatever, how did you develop your confidence about where you were taking the magazine? What gave you that sense? How did you use your editorial board? Which people would you have turned to? Who read over your shoulder? I've asked that question before in other ways--I'm interested in it.

Waters: Yes, yes, and you're not satisfied with my answer, apparently. [laughter] Well, let me see. Owen, when he was living, was reading manuscripts. I occasionally sent them to Bob Ornduff. Elizabeth regularly. And then Nora, of course, was reading them.

Riess: That's a lot, actually.

Waters: Only a fraction of the reading and rereading that was done at the *New Yorker*. Was it you who was telling me that they were reading Mehta's *Shawn's New Yorker*?[2] I've just got partway through it; it's an extraordinary story.

Anyway, yes, I got some feedback from time to time. And I suppose, in a way, the whole board was in a position to redirect my efforts if they felt inclined, but apparently they didn't.

Riess: And in writing your editorials, did you use the editorial "we"?

Waters: I don't think that I did, no. I struggled with that notion, I seem to recall that I did, and early on decided that it was inappropriate. Editors tend to do it, speaking on behalf of a newspaper, say, and there may be a whole group of people involved there. I didn't see anything wrong with the personal voice, and so I think I resisted the temptation.

If one person's name appears at the bottom of a page, it's somewhat incongruous, isn't it, to say "we"? I used to put my initials at the bottom.

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[2]*Remembering Mr. Shawn's New Yorker: The Invisible Art of Editing*, by Ved Mehta, Overlook Press, Woodstock, NY, 1998.

The Answer to the Question

Riess: Maybe we could finish the question of succession. Were there many applicants? Can we talk about how it is that it fell to Dick Turner?

Waters: We set up a system whereby the written applications were circulated to a selection committee, half a dozen or so--myself and the president of the foundation, and maybe four other members of the board--and we rated them according to the extent to which they appeared to fulfill our requirements for horticultural and botanical knowledge, editorial experience, experience working within a nonprofit organization, and so on. And when all those marks were totalled up, those that came in the highest bracket were invited to interview. There were about thirty applicants, and I think six or eight came for interview.

They divided up in an extraordinary way, in that the people with the greatest editorial experience happened to be among the women applicants, but those with the greatest plant knowledge were among the male applicants. But there it is, that's just the way it was. So the board had to decide where they would place priority. In the end, they placed priority on botanical background because of the importance of the contacts that they had, as well as the knowledge that was required. They felt that they would have to provide strong botanical support to the others, and that didn't seem practical.

Riess: Though there had been a tradition of having botanical editors. I don't know whether they had ever really been used.

Waters: Not on a daily basis for, as it were, reworking manuscripts. Just occasional botanical advice.

So that was how the selection was made. [pauses] Yes, I think that, in the circumstances, they were fortunate in that the person selected happened to be in the Bay Area and available.

Riess: How about long-term commitment to the job? Was that brought up?

Waters: I don't remember it being discussed as a factor in selection, no. Turner was clearly determined to remain in this locality, so far as we could judge, although no obligation was placed on him to do that. I don't know whether that's legal even, is it?

On a Lighter Editorial Note

Riess: In terms of developing an editorial voice, we have talked about the fact that you chose to amuse at a certain level.

Waters: I felt there was nothing wrong with a light tone. And you'll find that once or twice, I did encourage people to use a light tone. I tried to get one at least--Pat Talbert, who was living in Oakland, I think she still is, wrote one or two pieces which kind of reflected the neuroses of a young new gardener's coming to the game, so I encouraged her. [see further discussion on p. 157]

As a result of Pat Talbert's first article, I was led to an illustrator. This young woman, Karen Kees, a subscriber living in San Diego, got in touch with Pat, and it turned out that Karen was an accomplished illustrator of magazine articles. So it was through my contact with Pat Talbert that I got in touch with Karen Kees, and she agreed to illustrate several of Pat Talbert's articles.

Karen did a splendid job of bringing together illustrations of people and gardens in a way that *Pacific Horticulture* had never done before. That collaboration persisted for a few years, and then Pat Talbert's interest went in other directions--she adopted a child and started writing for parenting magazines instead. Karen also got involved in I think a local radio station or television station. So she went in other directions as well.[3] But it was a most enjoyable collaboration at the time.

Riess: Did it appear in a section of the magazine, in the way that other established subjects appeared?

Waters: No, it wasn't sufficiently frequent for that. Maybe it happened once or twice in a year. So it was just occasional. When that came to an end, as all good things do, sometimes too quickly, I thought, Well, where else do I go for this leavening, as it were, of the matter? Gardeners do tend to take themselves far too seriously. I suppose devotees to almost any activity, including sports do, don't they?

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[3][from Interview 5] I visited Karen Kees on one occasion when I was in San Diego. She showed me some of her other work. They were illustrations for a very different magazine, a very different magazine. [laughing] They were delightful, but they were--I think she was illustrating a magazine article on the erotic dreams of women. Quite beautiful and fascinating, but they wouldn't have done in *Pacific Horticulture*, of course. [laughter]

So it needed something else. And I don't know that I deliberately set out to do it, it just seemed appropriate somehow to write about gooseberries and fools and things of that sort. [laughs] I just dropped into the place that they had occupied, really.

The Position and Intention of Book Reviews

Riess: It didn't take a deep study of the magazine to realize that there was a formula layout. I think towards the end of our conversation last time, we were almost getting to that. The great importance given to book reviews, and particularly their placement in the magazine.

Waters: Yes. Well, that was more a practical issue than anything else. [laughs] Certainly since the founder of the original *Journal of the California Horticultural Society*, Sydney Mitchell, was a librarian, it was almost inevitable that book reviews were a regular feature from the very beginning.

What happened was that the color was most simply and economically placed at the center of the magazine. The original eight pages was one side of a signature, which is sixteen pages, and that was the cheapest way to print a little bit of color. And that folds up and goes neatly in the center, because at the back end, you have the advertising. So that leaves you with a front end of a great many black and white pages to fill up, and that's how the books most often--not always, but most often--fell at the front of the magazine. Also, when one was short of black and white matter, since books were flooding from the publishers, books on gardening, in increasing numbers, it was quite often almost inevitable and sometimes necessary to ensure that book reviews filled two, four, or even six or more pages.

Riess: Did you keep a bank of reviews?

Waters: Very often there were several waiting book reviews stacking up, and they were either used in larger or smaller numbers according to how many black and white pages we had to fill.

Riess: Was your intention in reviewing a book to bring a good book to the attention of the public, or to steer the public around bad books?

Waters: Both. There have been some horrendously bad books on gardening, and we haven't hesitated to condemn them. On the other hand, as the number of books increased, there seemed very little point in

giving too much attention to the very worst of them, so gradually, we backed off from that.

On the other hand, even some of the good books had aspects which deserved adverse comment. Most frequently it was that they were almost totally ignoring the climate in the West, so that was most often the criticism. Even some splendid encyclopedias, for example, which the American Horticultural Society borrowed, as it were, from the Royal Horticultural Society--that being the best word to put to that--were even more egregious in that respect than books published in this country, because the British were even further away.

So although they were in some cases beautiful encyclopedias and remarkably comprehensive in their lists of plants, they totally neglected the fact that in the West we're dealing in some cases with four months of total drought. What use are pretty pictures of a few quaint watering cans as irrigation devices on the West Coast? [laughter] I mean, it was just ludicrous. That was actually happening, and one had to warn people about that kind of thing.

But, of course, we always have the good old *Western Gardening Book*, the *Sunset* publication, to fall back on, so invariably, as a proviso, one could say, "This book is useful so long as you also have the *Western Gardening Book* to make good the deficiencies."

Riess: Yes. I recently bought a little book put out by the Brooklyn Botanic Garden people on butterfly gardens, and it included the caveat that on the West Coast you had to supplement it with *Western Gardening*. It was a mistake to have bothered.

Waters: Especially as there are quite good books on butterfly gardening published, one written by a guy on the West Coast named Jerry Sedenko.[4] No, the books are there. Of course, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden handbooks have had a wide circulation all over. Here they're carried more prominently than *Pacific Horticulture* in Strybing Arboretum kiosk, for reasons which I will never understand, but there we are. [laughter]

Riess: Did book reviews come to you in the same way the articles did, often volunteered?

Waters: Well, most of the books came to me, and since we were building a reputation for our reviews, publishers were often very anxious to

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[4]*The Butterfly Garden*, Villard Books, New York, 1991.

send the books. And I would send them out to people I thought were most appropriate, if they had some special knowledge. It depended on what the subject matter was and who might be available to do it.

It's a fairly demanding task. One of the most frequently neglected aspects of book reviewing is reading the book itself in the first place. And I found that it daunted many of the people I sent books to, and I never got the reviews back; they kept the book. So it was a hazardous business. To make sure that books were reviewed, I very often did it myself.

Riess: And isn't there a certain predilection in reviewing to be highly critical, so that the first thing you want to do is find the problems and construct your review around the problems?

Waters: Yes. It's particularly difficult with gardening books, because there isn't much you can say about the prose in many cases, is there?

Riess: Unless it's wonderful.

Waters: Unless it's exceptionally good, yes. But so many of the books consist of just catalogues of plants. The other thing is that criticism needs to be handled lightly.

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Riess: From the point of view of the author, you want to be sensitive.

Waters: Yes, but also readers. You've only got to find a few blunders, and list them, to put people completely off the book, especially if you labor the point. So, when I had people reviewing books, I tried to suggest how they might handle that criticism in such a way as to not give it excessive emphasis. In other words, keep the thing in perspective.

Almost anyone who writes a book will make a mistake here and there. For example, once or twice I suggested that one could summarize the defects in a book at the end by suggesting that "...in a subsequent edition, which I feel is almost inevitable for a book of this quality, these things might be straightened out." That kind of light touch enables one to point out the need for revision without hammering the damn thing out of existence, because it can happen.

Timber Press

Riess: I have a letter from Bob Conklin at Timber Press.

Waters: Oh, you know him, do you?

Riess: I have met him. Timber Press would be one of the presses that would have been sending books to you on a regular basis?

Waters: Yes.

Riess: In this letter he talks about meeting you. Do you remember?

Waters: Yes, he was down here. I think he was surveying the countryside, so to speak, in respect to publishing on the West Coast.

Riess: You took him to Chez Panisse, he said.

Waters: That's right, yes. It's some years ago now.

I think that I was fairly frank about what I saw then as a need for stricter editing. I think I was frank about that, and I think he accepted it as a fair criticism. He told me about his plans to add editors to the staff.

Richard Abell, who founded the press, also came to see me when he was beginning, and so did the author of his first successful book, which was J. D. Vertrees' book on Japanese maples.[5] Vertrees was up in Oregon, the typesetting for the book was being done in Santa Barbara, and Vertrees was dashing backwards and forwards between Oregon and Santa Barbara, checking galleys. And at the time, it seemed odd to me, because you don't want the author checking his galleys. It wants a fresh eye, doesn't it?

Riess: Yes, it certainly does.

Waters: The author made the mistakes. Somebody else has to find them.

I'm not quite sure why Vertrees called on me, but I'm fond of Japanese maples, and so we probably talked about those, and about proofreading, I expect. And subsequently, a number of the books that Timber Press got out showed a want of editing. I guess *Pacific Horticulture* pointed this out--I know we did once or twice.

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[5]*Japanese Maples*, Timber Press, 1978.

So probably, almost inevitably, I must have discussed this with Conklin, and as I said, he assured me that he was determined to improve editing in the press. And he has, there's no doubt about it. They have more editors, and their standards are better.

Niche Magazines, and the Journal's Niche

Riess: And Timber Press also considered publishing a garden magazine?[6]

Waters: Yes, when they contemplated this magazine, that would only have been about a year or two back, Conklin's daughter came down and talked to me about it. (Again we were in Chez Panisse--it's a good lunch place.) I was a little surprised, because one doesn't launch magazines lightly. That much I could say! [laughter]

I probably pointed out to her that *Pacific Horticulture* had begun almost thoughtlessly. I mean, we did no survey of the field, the need for it and so on, we just saw it as important that the climate conditions on the West Coast weren't being served by other publications, mainly because they were in the East, that's all. It was as simple as that. And therefore, people must want such a magazine. [laughs] And I think the rest of us saw it in those very, very simple terms.

But it is a fact that for some reason or other, despite the popularity of gardening, when people become somewhat competent in gardening, they stop reading for some reason or other. So if you are trying to cater for people who have gone beyond the rudimentary aspects of gardening, you're speaking to a shrinking market.

I think that the RHS has discovered that too. The old RHS journal with smaller format, before it became usual magazine size, which it is now, tends to have a similar tone. That's why Conklin reached not for the RHS journal in looking for his comparisons, but to the *Plantsman*, which was launched, I think, in response to criticism from older members, the real enthusiasts of the Royal Horticultural Society, when their regular journal became

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[6]Conklin to Riess, 7/28/98: "I suppose the most flattering thing I can say in conclusion is that as we at Timber Press have contemplated from time to time the idea of starting a journal of our own, the publication that comes most readily to mind as a model for the kind of thing we might like to do is *Pacific Horticulture*."

"popular," as they say.[7] Because the discussions of plants became less deep, less profound. And the *Plantsman* meets that need, but it has always been on the fringe of viability.

Riess: Would you say that *Pacific Horticulture* has always been on the fringe of viability?

Waters: Well, no, because we've been quite frank about our need for donations in addition to subscriptions. As the RHS journal itself said about *Pacific Horticulture* on one occasion, it has much in common with public broadcasting over here. It says frankly to the public, "We can't keep this going without extra help, so please send." And that's what we did. Without that, it probably wouldn't survive.

Riess: What you say is very interesting. In an ever more sophisticated market, beyond a certain circulation you probably have reached the maximum number of people who need the information that you offer. Is the niche for *Pacific Horticulture* such that there will only be 20,000 people?

Waters: Well, it's hard to know. I think that--[pause] It might be possible--a cleverer editor than I was might be able to present that information more attractively. That is feasible, I suppose.

Riess: So that it becomes a must-read.

Waters: Yes. That's right.

Improvements: Prose, Pictures, Presses, Pleasure

Waters: How might that be done? Well, my own efforts went towards organizing the material, for example, in an article, so that it flowed more naturally. Trying to make sentences more simple, so that they more quickly and easily conveyed their meaning. Well, this is just improving the writing.

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[7]Conklin to Riess, 7/28/98: "PH is unique among garden journals, both because of George's high level commitment to quality and because of its regional focus. While there are a few other publications that are somewhat similar (the *American Gardener*, published by the American Horticultural Society, and the *New Plantsman*, published by the Royal Horticultural Society in England, come to mind) none has either the "feel" or the regional orientation of PH."

And then along with that, to try to improve the pictures. And then gradually, trying to use them more imaginatively. That came rather late in the game. In fact, it only came once the whole process of production went digital--we stopped pasting up boards and constructed the whole thing on the computer. This was something that Sharyn and Walt Gayton helped us into.

The Gaytons had been with us almost from the outset. In fact, Olive, who had been editing a publication for the local iris society, was using them to typeset that publication, I think even before we launched *Pacific Horticulture*. So it goes way back. They were then known as Evening Dawn Graphics, and they were known as Evening Dawn because they did almost all their work at night, when the world was quiet and they could concentrate. But they dropped that name later on and just became Gayton--.

Riess: Gayton Design.

Waters: Yes.

I think I mentioned in our earlier talk Pat West, who was one of our volunteers, and who set up the arrangement of advertising in the magazine with uniform borders. When she could no longer continue, we took that work to Gaytons too, so then they began doing the advertising for us.

Then, after we lost Dave Harrell, of Medallion Graphics--he got a job with UC Press and closed down his business--we took more work to Gaytons. And also I mentioned Laurence Hyman who had set up the original design of the magazine, he launched his own publishing house, Woodford Press. He now has an office in one of those grand buildings on Market Street in San Francisco--he's really gone up in the publishing world.

So that all tended to move us towards Gaytons. What we took them in the end was essentially the design that Laurence had established for us, and they agreed to continue more or less along the same lines.

But then, pasting up boards, which we continued to do long after almost everybody else had gone to computers, eventually became impossible, because people no longer had the machines to set type in those long galleys. Gaytons now had the computers that would enable them to do it, so we went digital with them.

I fought it for a long time. I needed assurance that our quality would not suffer. But it did provide the opportunity to more easily, for example, use photographs as insets within other photographs and so on, without having to cut little bits out and

paste them in, which is very laborious. You can do it on the computer quite quickly.

And at that point, I tried to use pictures in more imaginative ways and to use them, as it were, to draw people in to the articles.

Riess: Earlier, you said to me something about training people, something like that, to stick with the printed material, not to rely on pictures.

Waters: "Training" wasn't my word, but still, carry on!

Riess: Do you know what I was referring to?

Waters: Yes, I know what you mean. I think there's something in my affection for words that amounts to a kind of defiance that says, All other magazines are going to flashy pictures on every page, but we're not. We're going to have at least one double-page spread in every issue with words from edge to edge. [laughter] And I maintained that.

There was a certain practicality in it too, of course, because I still had lots of black and white pages to fill. I couldn't put color on every page if I wanted to, because the money wasn't there to do it. So yes, this is perhaps also a justification for a situation that I couldn't change anyway. But nonetheless, I do love those pages with words from edge to edge, and I don't feel the need to defend myself in that respect.

But I do realize that you can't go on fighting a losing battle. And people now are so used to color in every aspect of their lives, and the standard of photography and picture reproduction on the printed page has reached a very high level of quality, so there is also a pleasure in using that material well in a magazine, as well as words. So why not have some pages all words and other pages beautifully done with pictures? That seems a reasonable compromise. So I tried to make use of color pictures as well as I could.

For example, in my own photography very often I use what's known as a medium format camera instead of a 35 mm., which is almost universal everywhere else.

Riess: What format?

Waters: It's 120 roll film, which is known variously as 2 1/4 square or 60 mm. But it does give you a tremendous area of film to deal with.

Riess: We introduced this particular discussion by talking about whether 20,000 is the circulation niche. You were speculating about how *Pacific Horticulture* could grow.

Waters: That's right, yes. And that was the way I was trying to do it.

Riess: You're still on the editorial board?

Waters: I have a title, Editor Emeritus. But I don't interfere. If the editor calls me, I talk over his problems with him.

Riess: You said that you asked your ex-editor Owen Pearce to read some of your pieces. Are you being asked to review in that same way?

Waters: Not on a regular basis, no.

Publishing Horticultural and Garden Books

Riess: Whether Timber Press starts a magazine or not, I can't think that there is profit in it. Is there much profit in publishing?

Waters: I guess that they must be making a success of it up there, because their staff--they were celebrating, what was it, twenty years or more? I'm not sure now. Anyway, I got a circular there with a free T-shirt in it that says "Timber Press 20 Years" or something like that. And they've now got a staff of a dozen or more people. So they must be doing well.

I think that's because the mechanics of producing books are now so automated. I remember early on, I did an editorial about garden book publishing, and it brought a letter from a guy in San Francisco who had been an editor in a book publishing house. He applauded what I was saying about, for example, the fact that since gardening books, along with cookery books, had become such a hot item in the publishing world, everyone was trying to climb on board. People who had never published a gardening book in their life before decided that they couldn't afford to leave this bonanza untouched.

And whereas at one time, for example, in Britain--well, Collingridge and Country Life were the two big publishers of gardening books, and they kept editors on their staff who were capable of assessing the merit of a manuscript, because they were specialists. One or two others published guidebooks, for example, and others published architectural books, and that enabled them to keep their editors honed, as it were, and able to say, "Well, this

manuscript isn't worth a lot, we shouldn't touch it," or "Yes, this is first-class stuff, let's do it."

Now, almost everyone in Britain who has a publishing house publishes gardening books at some time or other. The question of maintaining specialized editors no longer arises, because they do so many kinds of books.

And this guy wrote to me saying yes, he had been editing and he agreed entirely. The publisher he had worked for had employed accessions editors, readers, and copy editors, but now one guy was expected to do the lot, and what took three months now had to be done in three weeks. There was virtually no serious editing being done, and the reason was that accountants saw that since mechanization had so reduced the cost of producing books, the big cost factor now was editing, so we had to get that down just as we'd got all the mechanical aspects down. The only way to do that was to crunch the time available and the number of people involved, and that was how the process had gone.

I felt that my criticism was justified. And I don't know how we came to be talking about books!

Riess: Maybe the reason I think there must not be much money in it is because so many flower books, for example, are remaindered. Stacks of books that were $39, for $5.98. And there's not very much substance to them.

Waters: That's right.

Riess: You probably didn't deal with such books in your reviews?

Waters: No, they were just froth. We would tend to ignore them. But once a publisher has a production line going, I suppose, if you've got all these people employed, you have to keep them busy, don't you? So even if the margin on a book is very small, it's better than not producing anything at all. So they have probably got the economics worked out. They print, say, 5,000 copies of a book, they're probably remaindering it at a price which is still covering their actual production costs. So they haven't lost anything.

Riess: How did you do with the *Pacific Horticulture Book of Western Gardening*?

Waters: Our book? Well, that was started on two counts. One was that we were coming up to our tenth year of publication, and it seemed to me that if we could have a book with the magazine's name on it in bookstores, since very few bookstores carried the magazine itself,

I thought, Well, this is a promotion device. We can celebrate our tenth year with a book--an anthology--and at the same time get into bookstores and bring the magazine to people's attention.

And for that reason, I thought it would be better if we could find a publisher who had access to bookstores. Timber Press didn't at the time. I think Conklin has tried to get into the bookstores now, more recently, but at that time, they didn't have the access.

Riess: But you had considered them?

Waters: Well, yes, they were worth considering, but they would be dealing with mail order, and the magazine itself was already dealing in mail order, so it didn't seem that we would gain much publicity that way.

At the time that this was being considered, I had enrolled in the professional publishing course down at Stanford, which they do every year. One of the lecturers was David Godine. I talked to him about it, and he said, "Oh, I'm a subscriber to *Pacific Horticulture* and I like the idea. Why not just let me publish it?" He had an arrangement with, I think it was Abrams, to feed his books into their distribution system. That seemed a good idea, so that was the way we set it up.

It didn't actually come out on our tenth anniversary, because there were one or two snags we met on the way. For example, he had envisaged just taking the magazine negatives that our printer kept for us and using them as they were to make new plates. I felt that our magazine typeface, Palatino, was too light for a book. Magazines are regarded as somewhat more ephemeral than books, and therefore a lighter typeface seems appropriate, whereas I felt a book should have something with a little more substance in it, like Baskerville, which looks as though it's intended to remain there.

In the end, David Godine agreed we'd reset the whole thing. This gave us the opportunity also to tidy up the editing. Over the years my editing had changed, I hope for the better, as I learned the job. So we were able to be more consistent throughout the book. But by the time we'd sorted it all out, our tenth anniversary had gone by. Nonetheless, we went ahead and got the book out.

Godine distributed it through bookstores, and we advertised it in the magazine. I don't know what it has actually done--I think it must have done something, but you know, it's not measurable, and even if it were measurable we wouldn't have the

facilities to measure it. So we have to take it on trust that it has done the magazine some good to have the book out there.

Riess: Did you have to get permission from your authors to reproduce their articles?

Waters: I don't know whether we had to get permission, but we did write to all the authors. And the suppliers of photographs and drawings, because we reprinted some of them, too. In one or two cases, we took new photographs. Two or three authors we weren't able to reach; their letters came back "no known address." So I just filed them to show that we have at least tried. But all agreed except for those two or three.

Lester Hawkins and the Mediterranean Garden

Riess: Lester Hawkins certainly turns up frequently in that book.

Waters: Yes. Nine of his pieces are in it. I felt that he'd been such a fine contributor to *Pacific Horticulture*, not only in that he met deadlines, which very few other people do, but that he was writing so vigorously and so originally about gardening in the West, that it would be a good thing to have his stuff in some more permanent form. That was a factor, I think, in doing the book.

I was confirmed in this view later on when Helaine Kaplan Prentice, a landscape architect and author of a book on California gardens,[8] got in touch with me with the idea of arranging to reprint Lester's stuff. When I said that most of it was being prepared for our book, she turned to other projects. But obviously, she had a similar opinion of Lester's writing.

Riess: What is his importance in Western gardening? Does he represent the beginning of a school that currently has manifest itself?

Waters: There was certainly a recognition long before Lester began writing on gardening that this climate required that gardening be approached in a different way; he wasn't entirely original. But I think that Lester's articles in *Pacific Horticulture* presented the argument for gardening with Mediterranean climate plants much more forcefully. And he was able to demonstrate how plants that

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[8]*The Gardens of Southern California*, Chronicle Books, 1990.

originate in Mediterranean regions all over the world could be brought together to make not only entirely satisfactory gardens, but also pleasing, as pleasing as those most often copied from northern Europe and which are so inappropriate here.

And then, in addition to that, of course, the need to revise our gardening practices was made even more urgent by the occurrence of tremendous droughts, which we began to speak of in *Pacific Horticulture* less and less as droughts, because this implies a sudden occurrence of an unusual kind, whereas in actual fact, we were dealing with a climate in which water was permanently in short supply. The use of the word "drought" was misleading. So gradually in the magazine we stopped using that word, because all these things were tending to contribute to a wrong conception of what we are dealing with. We are dealing with an arid climate; even though one tends to think of that as being predominantly a southern California phenomenon, it's also true up here for most of the year.

Riess: That put you in the position of bringing the bad news, when perhaps often people really want to see the green English gardens and perennial borders.

Waters: Well, that's right. I entirely agree with you. You can't really afford to be constantly thumping that tub, you just put people off. So obviously, we didn't turn the magazine entirely over to that idea, but these thoughts had to be constantly reiterated in different ways. And, as far as possible, in beguiling ways, and Lester succeeded in that.

The greatest difficulty that we had to overcome was the presentation of these gardens, not only in words but in pictures too. If they can be made so attractive, then let us see them illustrated. And that is where the problem is acute. There are still too few that are sufficiently photogenic.

There are several reasons for the scarcity of those pictures. First of all, almost invariably these gardens try to reproduce in some way or another naturalistic landscapes, which don't photograph too well. Even in England, where the naturalistic landscape was so dominant in the middle of the 18th century--the Capability Brown landscapes--they don't photograph too well either. There are just a few scenes that you can get, usually where in the middle distance he had a stream with the hills behind, and almost invariably a structure like a bridge or a mausoleum or something near the water. You could photograph that and get a good scene. But a lot of the rest of it was just shallow grassy hills and clumps of trees. Very difficult to make an arresting picture out of.

Well, what the gardening books coming from England show you now isn't a Capability Brown landscape. It's a definitely artificial one, much more photogenic, because usually an architectural feature is placed at the focal point of the garden. And all the rest is kind of dressing around it. Or it's some ancient Cotswold cottage with buttery yellow stone and tile roof, which looks so superb--again the garden becomes a kind of frame for that house. And all this is so easy for the photographer, it's a pushover.

But when you then start advocating a landscape of Mediterranean plants, some of the finest features are not photographable. For example, the aromas that these plants give off, which are heavenly in a garden. You can't photograph them. So you have what seems a shapeless jumble of grayish foliage, and the photographers throw up their hands in despair, even though the garden is a delight to wander in. They can't do anything with it. So that's one problem.

And the other is, of course, that so far there are too few of them. Photographers looking for conventional gardens have hundreds of places they can find their pictures of brilliant tulips against grassy greens and so on. But there are very few places yet that have made a really first-class job of using Mediterranean plants. They do exist, but we need a lot more of them before showing them on a regular basis in magazines.

Riess: If Lester Hawkins was kind of father of the movement, he's long-gone.[9] So this is slow--.

Waters: Oh, yes. It's a very slow process. And we're fighting centuries of tradition, and emotional depths which these gardens have reached in people who in the main originated in the East or in Europe. And a tremendous amount of existing literature, with more being produced each year. Compare this with the little bit that's published here and in other Mediterranean climate countries.

The balance is gradually improving. There is now a Mediterranean Garden Society which was established in Greece four or five years ago. But, when we published Lester's articles, we illustrated them with his photographs from the countries he visited--in Greece, in fact, and in South Africa, Australia. And his photographs were mostly of plants in the wild.

Riess: Handsome flaxes and so on.

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[9]Died January 22, 1985. See obituary, *Pacific Horticulture*, Summer 1985.

Waters: Yes. The plants themselves are superb. You can get close-ups--you can photograph them. But you can't find the gardens yet in sufficient number in which these plants have been exclusively and successfully used.

George's Interviews with Garden Designers

Riess: One of the emphases in the magazine is Strybing Arboretum which has a new entry garden. Is that a Mediterranean garden?

Waters: Oh, you're talking about Roger Raiche. And you were asking [in a letter sent by Riess to Waters] also about the gardens that I was doing in those interview articles.

Riess: Yes. Are these people the offspring of Lester Hawkins?

Waters: No, I don't think that there is necessarily a connection.

No, these people are just exploring all of the new plants that are available--I say new, I mean they're obviously not new plants, but they are recently introduced into horticulture here. And they're taking a rather theatrical view of gardens, as places to have a bit of fun.

In the main--the series I did in *Pacific Horticulture* I think started with Marcia Donahue.[10] I'm not sure exactly where that began. And then there was one I did with Peter Newton.[11]

Riess: I don't know that name.

Waters: Peter Newton? He's up in the Napa Valley, has a winery up there, and he's a keen gardener. He's an English fellow. He has a very large garden up there.

And then I spoke with Michael Bates,[12] who had done some work for Peter Newton in his garden, and who is a designer in his own right, living in Sonoma. His own garden is somewhat of an English garden, since he's also an Englishman, and we concentrated on that during our conversation. But Michael has designed some unusual

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[10]*Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1989.

[11]*Pacific Horticulture*, Summer 1992.

[12]*Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1993.

gardens, in one of which there is some remarkable restoration and conservation of native trees and wildflowers.

In the main I was looking for people who had something to say about gardening, together with something that I could photograph. So I wasn't looking for any particular theme, just someone who seemed to have an unusual angle on gardens and was able to say it well. In the main, the so-called interviews were conducted on paper. I'm no good at taking notes when I'm talking to anybody. I tried one of these things [tape recorder] once, and I couldn't transcribe a word from what I had done. [laughs]

Riess: You mean you weren't there with a tape recorder?

Waters: Oh, I visited them, and I talked, and got a sense of the garden and what their point of view was, and then I sent them written questions and invited them to jot down their notes, their answers. And then I would enlarge upon what they'd said, and ask a few more questions and send it back again.

Riess: Of course, that works.

Waters: It works. It has some merit, which implies a significant demerit here. [laughter] Which I won't bother to enlarge upon. And that is that the interviewee can think about the answers more carefully, so that when they've eventually not only written it down and sent it to me, but got it back from me, edited, they can reconsider.

Riess: Well, and you know you can reconsider too.

Waters: [laughs] But who keeps the tape?

Riess: You can ask that the tape be destroyed, if you really wish.

Waters: Oh, is that right?

Riess: Yes, but the tape is moot. The thing is getting people in the process of thinking about something.

Waters: Well, I appreciate the fact that somebody else has accepted the job of transcribing it.

No, there are advantages and disadvantages [to using the tape recorder], and--well, I wouldn't have missed this for the world. It's so rare, isn't it, that one gets an opportunity to talk about himself to someone who's actually interested in staying?

Riess: Indeed. So, in doing articles you've been doing for *Pacific Horticulture*, you're trying to bring to the public some new ideas, but you don't think you are reporting on a direction in which garden design is going?

Waters: No, no. I think that all we're doing essentially is saying that here are people who have some notions about gardening that you might not have considered. That's really all, it doesn't amount to any more than that.

Riess: But in the interviews you present them as clever gardeners and thinking people.

Waters: Yes, that's right. By sometimes throwing out ideas, as you do, which attempt to challenge what they're saying so as to stimulate them. For example, I seem to remember that I made some comment about drainage problems that Peter Newton was having in his garden, and so on.

In the case of Bob Clark,[13] I suggested some ridiculous notion of a garden of tears. He seemed to be trying to make gardening fun. I picked on the theatrical aspect of that and suggested that the reverse might also be true, that not only could you make people laugh, but what a challenge it would be if you could actually reduce them to tears during a garden visit. You know, it was nonsense, but it seemed to me to be worth throwing out as an idea to see what came of it. He had some ideas about how it might be achieved.

And anyway, why not? Certainly in the 18th century, this period that we were talking about, there were gardens that deliberately tried to stimulate emotional responses. So there is a precedent. And those emotional responses included humor. They had devices that played pranks on the visitors by dripping water on them.

There was a famous weeping willow that Joseph Paxton, I think it was, constructed at Chatsworth that has a secret valve the owner could turn on as his visitors passed under the tree. It was actually a bronze tree full of pipes that poured water down. I don't think that was the only one; several places in Europe had surprises of one kind or another for visitors.

Riess: When you began as editor there weren't interviews in this same sense that you've been doing interviews.

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[13]*Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1997.

Waters: It goes back to--oh, I don't know, the early nineties, I guess. The last one was with Bob Clark, and that appeared I think in one of Dick Turner's first issues. But it was all conceived and prepared while I was editor. Just that it didn't get printed until he took over. I think that was it.

Riess: I was thinking maybe it represents another direction in gardens, that when you interview someone in this way, it is more about the ego, or the artist, some general change in that direction.

Waters: I see, yes. Well, in the case of Peter Newton, the garden does certainly contain some original ideas. It's a series of gardens, really, Newton's place. One of them his wife designed--she is Chinese in origin--a marvelously conceived example of a Chinese garden, on one side of the house. And further down the hill is a whole string of gardens, each one different.

That was somewhat original. But on the other hand, it's outside most people's scope because of the vast amount of money that was involved in making that place. So after that I was quite glad to find someone who was working on a smaller scale. I met Michael Bates over lunch with Peter Newton.

I suppose what it amounts to is this: that if you find someone who has something to say, the probability is that they're exploring somewhat new ideas and doing something original. Isn't that probable? Maybe that's how it happened.

Riess: It is, it is. [tape interruption]

Waters: [responding to a further question about the function of interviews in *Pacific Horticulture*] There has been all along a difficulty in getting articles about gardens. Now, magazines in a position to pay are at an advantage, because they can take someone who is established as a good writer. Wayne Winterrowd, for example, was writing for *Horticulture* in Boston. Not recently, but he was a few years back. Good writer. They commissioned him, say, to do an article on a particular garden. That's fine. We weren't in that position.

And writing well about gardens isn't easy. So I was starved for this kind of stuff. I couldn't employ people and tell them to go and write an article for me. So in a way, the interviews developed as a method of getting good articles about gardens into *Pacific Horticulture*. And that meant essentially reflecting, yes, a person, the gardener, as well as the garden. I think therefore we gained a double advantage that way--an extra advantage, I should say--in that we got something of the ideas of the gardeners themselves as well as a description of the garden.

That was the springboard, as it were, from which it all came. I was desperate. Gardens that are open to the public are easier to cover; they always have someone, perhaps a volunteer, who is doing public relations for them. For the publicity, they turn out an article of sorts. But it tends to be somewhat recognizable as a public relations exercise.

I wanted something livelier, and about private gardens. So this just seemed one way of achieving it. I know that if I had gone into those gardens myself, I would have had difficulty producing a good article about them. It's tough going, I mean to write with some originality. You can list all the plants, but what idea does that give a reader of the garden? Nothing at all. It's just a list, just a catalogue.

One has to get somehow a sense in original terms of what the garden is like to be in. Photographs help a little in that respect, but in the end, you have to evoke the garden in some way, in a way that hasn't been done before. I mean not in phrases like "undulating lawns." We've all heard of undulating lawns. I don't want to hear about undulating lawns! [laughter] I want to get some feeling that I'm in that garden. That takes rare skills.

Riess: Well, that's very interesting, that's a really good answer. And it's a practical answer that goes to what you were dealing with there at the magazine.

And to repeat a question from earlier, do you think the magazine has been following trends in gardening?

Waters: Not consciously, no. Just as I say: when you find somebody who is enthusiastic--Roger Raiche, for example, is absolutely dedicated to plants and gardens. As a matter of fact, Roger Raiche was a very quiet and shy young man--he was working at the [UC] Botanical Garden, as you know, for many years. And I think he might be going back for a few hours a week. He's a tremendous asset to the Botanical Garden because of his devotion to plants and gardens. Enormously conscientious worker.

But he suddenly opened up, and I remember going to a talk that he gave to the California Horticultural Society a couple of years ago. I thought, Roger Raiche? Shy, stammering? It was a revelation. The man was brilliant. I mean, enthusiasm just radiated all over, and he sort of blanketed the audience with it. It was incredible. And I thought, This is a different Roger Raiche, and so it proved to be.

Naturally, I thought, Well, now, here's someone I would like to see in *Pacific Horticulture*.[14] Some of that enthusiasm will emerge in some way. And I hope it did.

Riess: Oh, it did.

Waters: I seem to remember that when I was looking at it, that I had to tone it down a little bit, because it was almost too colorful for words. But that was the idea.

Well, that was basically it. Here was someone with ideas, someone who had thought about gardens, in a constructive way. Therefore, it must be of some benefit to others to read about it, I would have thought. There was nothing more than that.

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Waters: In the Bay Area there is a trend towards--well, among certain enthusiasts, anyway--towards this use of gardens to create theatrical scenes to suggest ideas and so on. And as I've said, it's not completely new--the history of gardens shows such things cropping up from time to time. Topiary, for example, was, and is, a definite theatrical aspect of gardening. Different materials and other ways are used in achieving the effect, but it's an artistic avenue that almost anybody with a garden can pursue. Even the man in England who fills his garden with plastic flowers[15] or painted plaster gnomes[16] can be said to have done something similar.

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Waters: This theatrical style in gardening does seem to be a widespread trend. At the Hampton Court Show and at the famous Chelsea Show one seldom sees gardens with traditional sculpture--Cupids, unicorns, lightly clad nymphs--instead there are strangely shaped pieces of metal, dragons in terra cotta, swan shaped vases in multi-colored and sometimes poorly executed terrazzo, and clusters of objects vaguely resembling hot dogs impaled on striped poles. It is described as contemporary design,[17] but often the bright

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[14]*Pacific Horticulture*, Fall 1997.

[15]Jane Owen and Eric Crichton, *Eccentric Gardens*, Villard Books, 1991.

[16]Candida Lycett Green and Andrew Lawson, *Brilliant Gardens*, Chatto & Windus, 1989.

[17]*The Garden*, Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, July 1998, p. 519.

colors are distracting and the shapes somewhat at odds with the tranquility expected in a garden. On the other hand such ornament can be contrived from found material, and then it enables those of limited means to include something eye-catching that gives zest and variety to a small space.

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Riess: The magazine could be a showcase for people who are garden designers, who are in the business.

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Waters: To some extent *Pacific Horticulture* has been a showcase for garden designers. Harland Hand described his garden in the first issue[18] and from another standpoint in a subsequent one.[19] And in various ways design has been a theme in many issues. Remember my mentioning the ambition of bridging the chasm between gardeners--the plant enthusiasts--and designers in its pages? That ambition was difficult to realize through trained landscape architects because their writing was often larded with terms (synergism, antithetical) and phrases from their academic training that tend to obscure their meaning for ordinary gardeners. In the same way, botanists use Latin terms that are unfamiliar to the general public. Not that all gardeners are unaware of their meaning; only that in reading and everyday conversation they latch on more readily to familiar words, and lose concentration quickly with esoteric language. Russ Beatty and Ron Lutsko, both academically trained landscape architects, expressed themselves well in *Pacific Horticulture*, but I needed more articles than they could provide.

With greater interest in gardening there emerged a number of garden designers who knew plants and in some cases had design training, but were not qualified landscape architects. These people were able to make a living designing gardens, usually by working on the site and making the garden as they might if they were the owner, and not necessarily from drawings. In Harland's case commissions came from those who admired his own garden, and there are others, extremely capable gardeners, who took up design work after helping friends and neighbors in their gardens. These people see gardens in terms more concrete than most trained landscape architects and they express themselves in ways more easily understood by ordinary gardeners.

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[18]*Pacific Horticulture*, January 1976.

[19]*Pacific Horticulture*, Spring 1978.

In the main it is these designers with whom I had the "conversations" written up in *Pacific Horticulture*. Had I seen the possibilities of the series sooner it might have begun earlier and run longer, but previous issues of the magazine are not without design interest. Elizabeth Wilkinson provided a series illustrating several design features: paths, arbors and trellises, fountains, Japanese bridges and such like.[20] And David Mason[21] had a two-part article on the history and design of water gardens in 1994. In the fall of the same year Michael McKeag[22] described the design and construction of his garden of native plants, including a stream and a pool. Of course, a knowledge of history is important to designers, and the magazine has had many contributions touching on aspects of the history of gardening and garden design. But I hope that my successor as editor will be able to keep the magazine open to the work of young designers.

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Fair Treatment of Plant Groups, Payment to Authors

Riess: With the various plant groups, rhododendrons, roses, and so on, did you attempt to make sure that if you had something about rhododendrons, you also had something about roses, and about hostas--how much did you care to keep pleasing the various sectors, the enthusiasts?

Waters: It was difficult to include everything I should have. For example, there are areas that I deliberately pursued, and in some cases never did quite get what I wanted. I was able to find a couple of people to write on ferns, one in the Northwest and one in Los Angeles. Bromelliads I managed to get represented. Bamboo more than once. There were a couple of articles on palms, but never did I get comprehensive treatment of them, although it is an important group. I worked on a person in Oakland who was well informed and I think would have done well, but then unfortunately died before he could begin. Irises, because of my contacts, we've treated more than once. Rhododendrons, okay. Camellias, too.

Fuchsias--that's a strange thing. Victor Reiter in his day was a first-class man on fuchsias. He bred them, and his

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[20]*Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1984, Summer 1985, Summer 1986, Spring 1987, Fall 1987, Fall 1993.

[21]*Pacific Horticulture*, Spring and Summer 1994.

[22]*Pacific Horticulture*, Fall 1994.

reputation survives in the fuchsia world because of it. But he had dealt with them extensively in the old journal, so he never really wanted to attempt it again, even though we were now in a position to illustrate them in color. I was offered a manuscript by someone in southern California on fuchsias, but it didn't seem adequate, and so I declined it.

Riess: If you are only going to have one such article for quite a long time, then that requires that it be really quite scholarly?

Waters: Well, thoroughgoing rather than scholarly. Yes, there has to be something on the history and the development and so on, and about the plants as they exist in the wild. And what has been done to make them garden-worthy. Well, that's problematic, and requires considerable effort on the part of the author, and comparatively few people are prepared to do that. Sometimes if I was able, I would graft in a section or two to help to fill out an article that was otherwise satisfactory.

But that's why, in more recent years, the foundation has been building an endowment, the object being to establish a fund that would yield adequately to pay authors.

Riess: To pay certain authors or all authors?

Waters: Well, that's a good question. I felt that it should pay all of them, and pay them equally. I know that a number of publications have two scales of pay, one for the established writers that they want to retain and one for the others. But I felt that we should budget for a reasonable payment that would not be insulting, and that should be offered to everybody.

It's a slow process--endowment funds aren't easy to build up. But it's happening. Marge launched the fund, and as she did so often with *Pacific Horticulture*, got it going with a substantial gift, and it's since been--there have been, let's say, accretions. [laughs]

Riess: There was the article in Summer 1995 by Graham Stuart Thomas. Why would he write free for you?

Waters: Well, I knew him in the Garden History Society in England, and so he was a good friend and ready to oblige.

And in fact, when it came to the twentieth anniversary issue, a great many of my friends in Britain responded with articles, which I asked them to angle towards the Western U.S., and they did it more or less successfully. That included not only friends in England, but some of my best friends in the U.S., for

example, Allen Lacy on the East Coast, Pamela Harper, Kevin Connelly, Carol Greentree. You know, the people who had been stalwarts right from the very beginning, I thought it was appropriate to include them all, as far as possible.

That was another device to give me something to write home about, so to speak. Get the word out to everyone that *Pacific Horticulture* was still here and offering something out of the ordinary. Apparently, statistically, only 5 percent of magazines launched actually survive beyond five years, something like that, a very small number.

Marcia Donohue's Garden, and Other Berkeley Gardens

Riess: *Pacific Horticulture* for me is more of a coffee table magazine. I have to deal with the fact that my garden is just so many square feet, basically a rug in the foreground of my neighbors' gardens.

Waters: There's a start for a magazine article, isn't it? [laughter] "My garden rug." You're really, I suppose, defining very small city gardens.

But you might think about Marcia Donohue's garden. Her idea was, This is my canvas. And what am I going to do with it? She, of course, approached it in an ebullient fashion, just took her bowling balls and her coils of wire and statues--she's sculpted a lot of the stuff herself, of course. But also she went down to the bayside and brought back, I suppose, stuff that people had dumped there, old bricks and broken tombstones and things like that. She just made the garden out of anything that took her fancy. And since she had a great fancy for plants, then a great variety of them as well.

In the end, what she did was to concentrate peoples' attention within the garden, thereby making meaningless what was beyond it. Nobody pays attention to what was beyond the fence. You can't, there's so much within the garden demanding your attention. You can't even get to looking at the houses on either side, because the next step you take, something new emerges. She captures the visitor, as it were, and forces them to view just that section that she has made.

You can do something like it without that ebullience, for example, with hedges. You consume some of your territory with hedges, it's true, but then within those hedges there is the possibility of a garden of miniature plants. Find all the

smallest jewels. It would require studying the plants fairly well, because most of those small plants have rather special requirements. A lot of them are from high Alpine areas or from deserts, but not all of them are impossible to grow.

Those demands, the requirements of the site, the restrictions that it places on you, mean that you've got to work that much harder. It's rather like the miniature portrait of the kind fashionable in Elizabethan times. I mean, imagine the person having to work with a one-hair brush to put in the detail! That's the kind of thing that tends to happen in gardening in those circumstances. But what you create is the more astonishing because of it. I think it can be done.

I have for a long while nursed the idea--and I've started taking a few photographs--of Berkeley front gardens. Inspired by that old Scottish folk song, "People Who Have Gardens." Do you know it? It's a little song sung by the working lad or woman who passes gardens on the way to work and back every day. It expresses gratitude for the people who made them because of the pleasure they give. And I thought the gratitude well earned.

I haven't concentrated on the project sufficiently to force myself to get all the photographs I would need, but there are some lovely things, particularly at the time when wisteria comes into flower. There's one, I haven't a photograph of it, and I don't think the plant is there now, but in that section of Marin just above The Alameda, there was a large house with a porch which had white wisteria on it with very long racemes of flowers. It was just like a waterfall in flower.

George Waters finishing a bicycle race, probably 1945.

G.W. notes: *"Although never a winner of bicycle races, as a young man I enjoyed the social life and hard riding that my racing club (the Bath Road Club) provided. The dark clothing and Shakespearean tights were a hangover from Victorian rules requiring competitors to be inconspicuously clothed, and covered from neck to ankle. By the 1940s the garb had become decidedly conspicuous. This picture at the conclusion of a 50-mile time-trial was taken in Pangbourne Lane, near Reading, by Vic Furnari."*

VI THE EDITOR ANSWERS VARIOUS QUESTIONS

[Interview 5: September 17, 1998] ##

Bicycling, After the War, and a Lost Film

Waters: [continuing a conversation begun off tape about bicycling] I didn't tell you about my bicycle? I used to race, but I didn't win anything. I wasn't very good. But that was part of the social activity of bicycling, because the people who did race needed supporters, during long distance races, for example, to hand out drinks and things like that.

In those days, bicycle racing was all amateur. There was no significant professional activity in Britain at all. Now and again, a British club rider would go over and compete in France, in the Tour de France, but they very rarely got anywhere, because they just hadn't the rigorous training and experience in mountains for it.

I had been through France and a little of Italy way, way back on a bicycle. I told you about that, didn't I? 1947?

Riess: Italy on a bicycle?

Waters: France and then northern Italy, a little bit of northern Italy.

Riess: I doubt you did. I'd have pursued it with a vengeance. And I would have asked you what you were particularly looking at.

Waters: Nothing in particular. I was just such a keen bicyclist.

Riess: Did you see a lot of devastation from the war? It must have been a rather extraordinary time to be biking around Italy.

Waters: Most significant was the number of widows trying to make a living renting out rooms. But on the other hand, places like Cannes, one could hardly see any sign of it. There wasn't much damage in the

south of France, which is where I spent most of the time, I suppose.

Later, when I was still working at Kodak, I made a movie of bike racing. We had access to some Kodachrome film, and we borrowed three 16 mm. movie cameras, the wind-up kind, you know, mechanical. We, myself and two colleagues, distributed ourselves around the hundred-mile course. It was on public roads. And because it was on public roads, it had to be held very early in the morning. At three o'clock we drove out to the area just beyond Reading where the race began about five o'clock in the morning.

It was called a time trial, because on public roads in those days, you did not hold mass start races. Every rider was dispatched on the second--at one-minute intervals. They were instructed that even if they pass one another, they should not crowd, one should not take shelter behind another. They would go straight past. So it was essentially each man riding against himself.

Anyway, we photographed this, and I remember editing the thing in a rather amateurish way and putting titles in and little bits of descriptive text, spliced into the film. And I showed it to some members of the club. And then it vanished. That whole effort vanished, about twenty minutes of color film. No copy was made.

So I wrote to people in the club today, not only about the film, because I wanted to find out where it was, but mentioning other members of the club at that time, quite famous people. There's no recollection, no memory. Virtually no response. I did get a letter back once or twice, and I pursued it with the few leads that I got, but most of the people I mentioned are totally unknown now. Even their names aren't remembered.

Riess: It does seem like a likely kind of history to do.

Waters: Oh, yes. The club was founded in 1886.

Riess: What was the name of your particular club?

Waters: That club was called the Bath Road Club. It took its name from the main road between London and Bath, on which its races were generally held. A great many of its members were record-breakers. Indeed, the club badge was the Union Jack. It represented Britain in international events. So it was quite a remarkable club.

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Waters: I traveled everywhere by bicycle, and all my leisure time was spent cycling. For accommodations I used facilities provided by the Youth Hostels Association. The association made use of any building that it could acquire, and some of them were historic and beautifully located: ancient castles, old mills, remote cabins, anything with a dry roof that could be converted to provide kitchen, common room, and dormitories, so long as it helped young people reach places of interest and beauty.

Many of the memories I have of this period are of journeys made alone. There is greater sense of escape, and wilderness leaves deeper impressions of awe when one is alone; companions sometimes detract from those sensations. Using Youth Hostels it was possible to travel alone, and in the evenings to enjoy good fellowship and conversation among travelers from all walks of life, and from many parts of the world--perhaps find a companion for a few miles along the road in the morning if a conversation asked to be continued.

The Youth Hostel in Winchester, an ancient water mill, was a favorite for weekends during those years of wartime rationing. The hostel was managed by two elderly refugees from Europe. These kind and resourceful ladies were wizards at augmenting meager allowances of scarce food with more easily obtained ingredients and spices. Their table at dinner was invariably dominated by a huge and seemingly bottomless iron pot of delicious stew. And we hungry youngsters left our benefactors in no doubt of our appreciation. When urgent duties precluded an overnight stay at the hostel some cycled up from Southampton just to dip into that iron pot.

My YHA membership cards, rubber-stamped at each hostel, listed many others visited in England, Scotland, and Wales. Alas, my little wad of cards, lost long ago during frequent changes of address, is no longer at hand to remind me of the place names. One remote hostel at Ponterwyd, in Wales, remains in mind for the stark simplicity of the accommodation and the passion of political argument around the table. Despite arriving through teeming rain in blackest night over rocky tracks, the debate kept us from our beds until two in the morning.

In this way I explored much of the country, sometimes riding at night to enjoy the "bleeding eve on the road to Wales,"[1] and hear the chorus at dawn. Now, many years and many more miles away, the scent of a lighted kerosene lamp and of smoke from burning wood has me once again on a country road descending

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[1]A. E. Housman.

quietly into any of a hundred sheltered villages where windows are beginning to glow through the dusk and chimneys send wisps of smoke into the cool evening air.

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Obstacles to Preserving Archives

Waters: But I mention the bicycle race movie because it led me to realize how hopeless that situation of keeping records is. Even the American Iris Society, in which Olive is very active--incidentally, if you want to get in touch with her, you should just give her a call and make some arrangement--it has established a library which is a sort of archive quite recently in Silverton, but it has no professional archivist. And since they're nearly all volunteers, if the person who has initiated the establishment of this dies, then they'll be floundering around looking for somebody else.

Or maybe a volunteer will be found, who volunteers simply because nobody else came forward and will have no idea what to do with the stuff. So even where there is someone nominally responsible, there isn't always the ability or resources to make sure that it continues.

Riess: Not even at the national level.

Waters: That's right, it's the national society. The library was mooted and somebody came forward and said that yes, we have the opportunity to establish it somewhere in Tennessee. And the whole bundle of stuff was moved to Tennessee. When it got there, they found that all the promises were empty, and there was in fact no facility provided. So it stayed there for a little while just in cartons or whatever, and eventually it was shipped to Silverton in Oregon, and the city of Silverton, because of the presence there of a very famous nursery, which owns many acres of land, the city of Silverton made available some part of a building for them. But that's all. I believe somebody goes there from time to time.

But you see the difficulties they're up against. Again, there's a great deal of horticultural history associated with the society. But really no resources for maintaining an archive.

People have said to me, "Well, lord, you have a wonderful library of horticultural books, George. What are you going to do with it?" I've just said, "Well, I shall offer it, if it survives me, but only to a library that has a professional librarian."

Histories of Nurseries, and Passing Trends

Riess: I was looking at Graham Thomas's perennial garden book. In it he says that he hopes garden historians will do a full history of nurseries before all the records disappear. I wonder if that was something *Pacific Horticulture* tried to do. And what do you think about the importance of documenting the history of the nurseries?

Waters: Oh, I would say that in Britain there's probably a fair amount of literature there. For example, in the publications of the Royal Horticultural Society, certain people such as Arthur Hellyer, I remember, wrote a number of articles on small specialist nurseries in Britain.

Riess: Perhaps he's talking about what a study of nurseries would tell you about horticultural trends, or some such.

Waters: I would say it's more likely to occur in small, individual efforts such as Arthur Hellyer's and those of others like him. For example, a member of the Garden History Society, John Harvey, has investigated the stock--you know, the plants that were available in certain nurseries through trade lists from the 17th century onwards.[2] Here in the Bay Area, a man called Butterfield--long dead now, I never met him--he wrote regularly in the *California Horticultural Journal*, recording the dates in which certain plants were available in nurseries in this area. And Elizabeth McClintock quoted him frequently in her articles in *Pacific Horticulture*.

So there are these records, but I don't think there's a comprehensive record, because it would require a mammoth effort with tremendous financing, wouldn't it?

Riess: Did you think of the history of individual nurseries as a subject to pursue on a regular basis in *Pacific Horticulture*?

Waters: Yes, and it happened from time to time. Marshall Ollbrich, for example, did an article on Ed Carman. I'm sure you've encountered that one. And Charles Burr, who was a nurseryman himself, he I think became a writer on horticultural subjects, and contributed things on the Walter Clarke Nursery, Leonard Coates Nurseries, and Henry Hyde.

And Carl Purdy, in northern California, was mentioned approvingly in an article by Elizabeth Lawrence in Spring 1978.

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[2]John Harvey, *Early Gardening Catalogues*, Phillimore, 1972.

Then, in an excellent article on calochortuses in Spring 1981, Farwig and Girard severely criticized Purdy for the extent to which he dug up native bulbs in California and shipped them off to Europe in vast quantities. It provoked a letter from Purdy's grandson in Fall 1981, and the correspondence concluded with Farwig's reply in Winter 1981.

Riess: What about Theodore Payne?

Waters: Payne was somewhat more inclined to collect seeds and make them available in California, but Purdy is said to have shipped bulbs, not seed, to Europe in vast quantities. Lester Rowntree also collected seeds for sale, and was often mentioned in *Pacific Horticulture*, particularly by Virginia Lopez Begg in the Summer '94 issue.

Farwig claimed that a number of mail-order houses distributing across this country were offering bulbs provided by Purdy to people who had no conception of the climatic needs of calochortuses. So in most cases, they were just being cast to the winds. They wouldn't be cultivated. Of course, that happens a lot in gardening anyway, but Purdy's destruction of wildflower habitat, in Farwig's view, was unforgivable.

Riess: I think it sounds like an interesting study. I'm assuming that perennial plants go the way of apple varieties, where it gets down to a few favorites and you have a search to find anything different. Of course then you have people who are specialists in the rare and antique apples.

Waters: Yes, that's true to some extent, but there are also fashions in gardening. For example, perennial plants are enjoying an enormous vogue now, whereas twenty to thirty or more years ago, and certainly in the fifties, the vogue was for evergreen shrubs--camellias, rhododendrons and things like that. So there are not only waves of fashion, but cycles too.

Riess: Then you hope to have devoted nurserymen who keep a stock of perennials--like Ed Carman or somebody like that.

Waters: Yes, that's right. And when the popularity of certain kinds of plants declines, then there are nurserymen like Ed and others who manage to keep things going. Or the case which Gertrude Jekyll made about old-fashioned plants was that they were preserved in the gardens of unsophisticated gardeners, the people who didn't garden self-consciously. [laughs]

Riess: Out around the outhouse.

Waters: That's right. And she was able to recover some of these.

Because of the enormous popularity recently of roses, especially the old-fashioned kinds, there is now a Heritage Rose Society that devotes itself to finding these old roses. And they find them in churchyards and so on. In fact, their exploits in discovering them have been the subject of books written just on that: going out and finding these old roses. It's quite fascinating.

Riess: And that's fun, that kind of search.

Waters: Oh, yes.

More on Archives, Editors, and Bike Racing

Riess: To go back to what you were saying about the archives of the Iris Society, if a group had a journal, doesn't the archival material gather around the fact that there is a journal? The journal is the magnet for all of the history of the organization.

Waters: Only partially. They [the Iris Society] do publish the minutes, but usually in six point type, because apparently, they're seen as a necessity but nobody really wants to read them. So they're kind of pushed to the back.

That again depends upon the editor. Societies tend to have their ups and downs too. There have been--in my own experience with the American Iris Society, and the British Iris Society too--good editors and not-so-good editors. Some editors realize the significance of getting people to write about certain things, to make sure that they are recorded--they have posterity in mind, in other words, so they devote part of the publication to that. There are other editors who don't see the significance of that at all and just publish, knock into shape, so to speak, whatever comes their way. They don't deliberately set out to ensure that the publication takes a certain stand or contains certain kinds of material.

So there are these ups and downs all the while. And then again, of course, what an editor can bring about depends to some extent on what kinds of membership his society has. For example, I was looking through old copies of the magazine that my cycling club [the Bath Road Club] published, and I suddenly realized there that the same thing was happening: that there were certain periods in which the editor saw to it that the oldest members of the club

wrote about their own early experiences, and so the magazine suddenly takes on a certain tone. And then at other times, the thing becomes positively frivolous in the kind of stuff that it publishes.

There was a man who was editor most of the time that I was active in the club, who wrote himself some extraordinarily fine accounts of the races that the club was organizing. Even though each rider was riding individually, he managed to make it sound like the riders were neck and neck, whereas in fact, of course they weren't, they were well spaced out. And especially the account of the event--the one that we photographed, as a matter of fact--in which the first hundred miles in less than four hours was accomplished. That was quite an achievement, and from his description of it, one can almost see these riders in the last miles available to them in order to reduce the time that they're recording, and how the winner managed to bring about his triumph in almost the last ten miles of the event. It was really quite extraordinary.

That gives you some idea of how dependent these organizations are on the particular people they attract. I imagine that cycling has taken on a totally different complexion since that time, largely because of the enormous popularity of the motorcar. There were virtually no cars on the roads at the time that I'm speaking of, because of rationing of gasoline and postwar shortage of vehicles.

So people would take the machines on which they were going to race, they would equip them with road wheels, as they called them--the everyday wheels--they would carry their racing wheels, which were specially lightweight and equipped with paper-thin tires. They were hung on metal brackets on the front of the machine, either side of the front wheel. There'd be a tent strapped on the back of the bicycle on a carrier that was removed for the race, and they would camp near the starting place.

In the early morning they'd creep out, pump up a paraffin stove, boil themselves a cup of tea, eat a sandwich, strip their bicycle, get into their racing clothes, compete in the race, and then do the whole thing in reverse.

Now they come to the race in cars with their racing bicycle fastened to the top, already gleaming and perfectly oiled and so on. And after the race, instead of going for a ride with their colleagues, they want to put the bicycle back on the car and go home, or to watch television. I don't know what they do, but they certainly don't cruise around the countryside as we did with our

racing wheels still there, and the perspiration encrusted on our bodies. Although they must ride for training at some time.

So these volunteer organizations are blown by the winds of fortune, whatever way the membership takes them.

The Royal Potential of Horticultural Societies

Riess: The organizations that make up the Pacific Horticultural Foundation, did you have to be present for their meetings, as editor of *Pacific Horticulture*?

Waters: Well, the board is made up of representatives of those societies. I attended also some of their local meetings from time to time. I didn't do it on a regular basis.

I probably attended meetings of the California Horticultural Society most often, because it was the organization that I had first joined. I attended meetings of the societies in southern California and in the Northwest only rarely, because they were distant, and it seemed to me there needed to be some special reason for doing so. So I relied on meeting their representatives on the board from time to time.

It's interesting to note that when the California Horticultural Society was founded, the people who set it up--Victor Reiter, for example, was one of them, and he gave me some idea about this--the idea I think in their mind was that it would eventually become, as it were, the equivalent of the Royal Horticultural Society in California.

I'm not quite sure how realistic they thought that was.

Riess: That meant a sense of high purpose?

Waters: That's probably the best way of interpreting that idea, yes. But the whole history of gardening and horticulture in Britain is so extraordinary that the idea that one might in some way repeat it in California seemed to me improbable. But perhaps that's not what they had in mind.

Riess: When you gathered this from Victor Reiter, you thought it improbable?

Waters: I was somewhat surprised, yes, but perhaps that was because I was interpreting the idea too literally. The people interested in

gardening who founded the RHS included some of the wealthiest industrialists, people such as John Wedgwood of the famous pottery family, who is regarded as the founder, and his friends, Sir Joseph Banks and other titled people. The connection ran through the landowners and aristocracy in the country, people who set the fashion, and who were imitated by the envious, and eventually by the country at large. They said essentially, Gardening is the thing, and everybody who possibly could did it. That's why gardening has this reputation even now in Britain.

But here, although Jefferson and others had estates and made gardens, there never has been titled aristocracy and their trendsetting example.

Riess: Even the Garden Club of America?

Waters: It has certainly contributed to gardening's popularity, but the difficulty here, of course, is that being such a vast territory, it's almost impossible to establish a manner of gardening that is applicable to the whole country.

It just isn't feasible to write as Thomas Andrew Knight (1759-1838) did in the early days of the RHS, on fruit, recommending the varieties that do best. Of course, his recommendations wouldn't apply necessarily in Scotland, but would apply over a sufficiently large area of the country for Mr. Knight to become widely read and influential. Knight was a wealthy landowner and experimentalist in horticultural and agricultural crops, and in animal husbandry. He was the second president of the RHS.

Riess: There is an effort at Strybing to have social San Francisco as patrons, kind of blessing the garden shows.

Waters: Well, the garden shows you're speaking of, the San Francisco Landscape Design shows at Fort Mason, were once sponsored by Friends of San Francisco Parks and Recreation. The shows are now run commercially, with the Friends benefitting financially from the opening gala party.

Riess: I sense that they, the Strybing Arboretum Society and the Friends of Recreation and Parks, aspire to bring in names, more so than Cal Hort.

Waters: Oh, yes. There's a very good reason for that too, of course.

I'm not quite sure how they title these things, but as the city support for parks and the arboretum has tended to be withdrawn, the Strybing Arboretum Society and the Friends of

Recreation and Parks have been obliged to woo moneyed people in order to raise funds to meet their objectives and obligations.

What I'm getting at is that the people who founded the RHS were taking the initiative. They weren't wooed by a group who were saying, "We've got to keep this arboretum going come hell or high water, and only with your help can we do it." That's a totally different situation. These people come and do good work, and are somewhat flattered to be invited to sit on such a board.

I think some of the people who come to the board of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation are also flattered. I don't know. But certainly the board of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation has never been, except in a few rare instances, of great financial help to it. But that's the motive for the Strybing Society to recruit the well-to-do, because they may make large donations, and somehow they've got to find the money. Horticulture is labor-intensive, you just can't maintain an arboretum without hiring staff and paying them reasonably well so that they will stay with you. So that's an expensive operation.

Riess: So, there is perhaps more cachet in belonging to one group than another? But when I occasionally attend California Horticultural Society events, it seems like there is a hierarchy there of insider information.

Speaking for the Greenhorns ##

Waters: [responding to Riess's remarks off-tape about feeling peripheral at CHS meetings] California Horticultural Society--that's a group where earnest gardeners discuss gardening earnestly. Is that what you mean?

Riess: Well, yes, it's like joining an exercise class that everyone else has been in for a long time.

Waters: In many cases, of course, they are professional gardeners, nurserymen, and people who work, for example, as horticulturists in the arboretum.

Riess: I feel the suffering fools gladly thing.

Waters: Ah, I see, yes. That would make people who were not so well versed in the game feel self-conscious, wouldn't it? And if they were also not only self-conscious but also sensitive, then they wouldn't be able to endure it for long. That's true.

I don't know how you get around that. It's true of almost anybody going into any organization, isn't it? "I'm a greenhorn, what do I do?" I know that Olive is extremely good in organizations when she senses this is happening in speaking to newcomers, and she believes as soon as it's possible, to actually offer them a job to do. I think that's the way. But a majority of organizations don't do it. I think probably it's even worse in Britain than it is in the U.S., because of British reticence.

Did I mention an incident in connection with an iris show I was helping with once? The show had been set out in the hall, the doors were open, the public were invited in. And then lo and behold, the public did come in. A young couple no one had ever seen before started wandering around, gazing at the irises, wide-eyed in amazement.

And a small group, including the society president and myself, muttered to themselves, "Look, there're some visitors." And someone said, "Should we talk to them?" The president said, "Oh, no, no. If they want to know anything, they'll ask." [laughter] And they went on chatting among themselves. And of course, the visitors walked out and didn't say a damn thing. They wouldn't have asked, because they felt too shy.

I think that in this country, in America, most people have come to realize that if there is any initiative to be taken, it should be taken by the people whose event it is, not by the visitor. But at least it had yet to seep through in Britain at that time.

Riess: Yes, it's much like a church--certainly it is the responsibility of the church to shake the hand of the newcomer.

Waters: Yes, that's right. And sometimes they have a hospitality committee whose job it is to welcome these people. But in Britain, if you mention the words "hospitality committee," there would be guffaws, I'm sure. [laughter]

Riess: Well, and we can laugh, but!

Waters: But you're right, it is needed. In my experience, even with someone dedicated to the task, it's seldom sufficient. A lot of people get away, as it were--slip between the cracks, is the phrase--who might become good members, but there it is.

Riess: Yes, well.

Waters: "Nowt queerer than folks," is the old saying, isn't it?

Riess: What did you say?

Waters: The old Yorkshire saying is "Nowt queerer than folks"--you can't cope with all the varieties of people that there are.

Practical Writing Tips

Riess: You sent me a collection of copies of letters you wrote nursing along would-be writers. I'd like to use some of these in the oral history as appendices. Do you think that would be awkward?

Waters: Oh, no. I guess it's all right.

Riess: They are interesting because they answer the question of how you did it, how you acted as an editor.

But what I have not asked was what you relied upon in the beginning, like usage manuals or any sort of how-to models?

Waters: Well, certainly the editing for me was difficult. That's one reason why, for example, Nora came on board, and I think we did discuss her. She was a great help.

Writing and editing aren't the same thing, of course. Editing, what you're largely concerned about is being consistent, making sure, for example, punctuation is used in the same way throughout the publication. Otherwise, people get confused. And writing, of course, is a matter of ideas, and as far as possible, originality.

I think I mentioned that getting involved in debates earlier on--that means to say street-corner discussions very often, arguments of a political kind or a sociological kind--that there must have been a process of training going on. As you know, I didn't get that kind of thing out of a university. I'm not quite sure whether that was an advantage or not, but I do regret it, frankly. Because from what I know of university life, there's an enormous amount of debate goes on, mostly outside the classroom or lecture hall. But it must be an enormously stimulating environment. So for better or worse, I got that on the street, so to speak.

I suspect that's what's showing up in my writing--mental agility, perhaps. A lot of the reading I tried to do to equip myself for those debates early on forced me to think very seriously. I was dealing with ideas which were often difficult to

comprehend. For example, Karl Marx is not an easy man to read, but I did feel that I had to read it and try to understand it. Mostly I was influenced by William Morris--especially his *News from Nowhere* and *Dream of John Ball*. But also by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, George Orwell, Bernard Shaw, and others.

And I was also, I think at the same time, trying to understand why it was that some people's writing was easier than that of others to read. That they expressed themselves, generally speaking, more lucidly. So that was perhaps a part of the process.

Riess: One of the manners in which you speak, I don't know what it comes from and I don't know whether it applies to you as a writer or an editor, is that you often cast something as a question, or you often say something followed by, Don't you think? That's not an American thing to do. I wonder how that applies here. I assume it's genuine, that it's a respect for the other person's opinion?

Waters: I do think that I listen to the people I am talking with. I'm not just leading off, I'm trying to understand their point of view, and if necessary to point my contribution to the discussion in their direction.

Riess: That's a good debating technique, or at least a way of controlling both sides of the issue?

Waters: Well, what I mean is that in answering, that I am actually responding to the point they made, when I say "point it in their direction." I'm not ignoring it. This is an attempt to explain what I mean. And I think the process of listening to your companion is part of being respectful. It's the greatest respect.

Riess: I'm wondering how this would help you as an editor, and perhaps even as a reader. You are more engaged in what they're actually trying to say rather than having it match your preconception of what they should be saying.

Waters: Of what I've supposed they've said.

I advise people that they should read good authors in order to become good writers. If they want to improve, that's the way to do it. And that they should read with one eye on what is being said and the other one on how it's being said, as it were. As though the eyes could do two jobs at once. But that was just a figure of speech to convey that one should read critically.

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Waters: I also often mention Quiller-Couch on the art of writing. He usually signed himself "Q," and said in Victorian language what Strunk & White said in our day. "Q" advised us to think of the reader, not just with the head, but with the heart as well. He means that the writer should try to feel every difficulty a reader might feel in understanding. After all, the writer is familiar with the ideas expressed, but readers may be coming to them for the first time.

George Orwell helps with the mechanics of this process in the essay "Politics and the English Language." He urges writers to ask after each sentence, does it say exactly what I intend; and, can it be expressed in fewer words?

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Waters: And then the other kind of advice is here [referring to letters]. I came across a page where I'm advising somebody against the didactic tone, which people are inclined to adopt when writing about gardening: "Do this, do that, and do the other," which I thought was horrible. [laughs] This was a time when the botanical garden at the University of British Columbia, their friends group, came aboard *Pacific Horticulture*. They used to publish a fine newsletter called *Davidsonia*, and they decided that it would be more effective and economical to drop that and distribute *Pacific Horticulture* to their members instead.

[refers to a letter] I began by thanking the prospective contributor of an article that had formerly been published in *Davidsonia* and suggesting that the subject, which was the use of unusual plants in hanging baskets, would be welcome in *Pacific Horticulture*.

> But I venture to suggest that changes in treatment will make the article more suitable for our readers. The didactic tone should be removed as far as possible. For example, the seventh paragraph on page 72 of *Davidsonia* could be rewritten in some such way as this: 'Plants with leaves that have bold and clearly defined patterns of variegation look cleaner and crisper from a distance than those with vague and soft changes in color.' You thus avoid telling readers what they should choose.
>
> And on page 74, it should be sufficient to explain the dangers from drying winds without saying, 'A windy site should be avoided.' Your readers are flattered when, within reason, you take for granted their ability to

see simple solutions once you have laid out the problem."

I invariably felt that there are certain tones in writing that readers are flattered by, and part of that is the assumption that they don't have to have things rammed down their throat.

While it's not relevant here, there was one particular man in Britain who wanted desperately to write for me. He was employed at Kew as a horticulturist. He came to California, and I spent a whole day taking him around to botanic gardens and places like that, and all the time we were in the car, he was quizzing me closely about what he should do to write for *Pacific Horticulture*.

Eventually, he sent me some manuscripts, and they were so detailed in their explanation of even the most mundane events that it was utterly tedious. I wrote back to him, pointing out that he could leave much more to the reader's imagination, and would get their sympathy by virtue of the fact that you were allowing their imagination to work for you, and flattering the reader by implying that they had an imagination, and that this excruciating detail could largely be ignored. I never heard from him again.

[resumes reading]

In going over your article, you will also find places where the didactic style lengthens sentences unnecessarily and gives them a tone unattractive to sophisticated readers. Phrases like, 'It should be kept in mind that,' and 'Various factors should be taken into consideration.' These add nothing to your message and are best avoided.

And so on and so forth.

It was a necessary part of the process because few professional writers were available to a publication that didn't pay. And in any case, most of these are people engaged in gardening, and they do have something to say. It was largely a matter of getting them to say it in a way that people would want to read. That was a tough process.

Riess: It can be hard to be critical in a good way, I think, and not stoop to sarcasm.

Waters: Teachers tend to do it, don't they? University professors, I think, are often criticized for that kind of thing, because they've got an audience as well as a victim.

Riess: Did you find yourself writing and rewriting your letters to your authors?

Waters: I used to think very carefully about them, and yes, I tried to be scrupulous. I think that you can forgive a lot that is carelessly spoken, but once it's put down on paper it should be as close to the actual fact as possible. "Is this precisely what I want to say?"

Yes, I find myself slipping into carelessness occasionally, and only by going back and saying, Is this it?--at the time of first writing it isn't obvious, that carelessness. You think you're being quick and smart.

Riess: Yes, the quick and smart thing. I think that's very much it.

Waters: Yes, and only by going back to it is it recognizable. Even just an hour later, you've calmed down a little, and the excitement of creation--and there is some excitement even in a letter like this, there's a certain excitement attached to it. That excitement perhaps blinds you to these things, but after an hour or so--longer is better, but you often haven't got longer, you've got to get the damn thing off--you can spot those things and get rid of them.

That's why I find the computer transformed my writing. It's so easy to delete and replace things. It's much more difficult with a piece of paper, because the writing is such a scribble.

Riess: It didn't transform how you wrote, but it's the ease?

Waters: That's right. Well, I think it transformed the way, also, to some extent. Because it was easier, I was more inclined to do it. So it did help, yes. I suspect that a lot of my old original handwritten letters would make me cringe if I saw them again, but fortunately, they're gone. [laughing]

Decisions in Making Up an Issue of the Journal

Riess: I looked at the index to *Pacific Horticulture* yesterday to see who your main contributors were over the years. You were writing a lot of the pieces.

Waters: Elizabeth too.

Riess: Yes, but you, far and away the most, and not just editorial pieces.

Waters: Articles as well, yes. That's right.

Riess: Did you keep a backlog of articles in the event the issue would be short?

Waters: I tried to. My problem was always that when I saw something good coming along, even if it had just arrived, I would think, God, I must use that right away! And displace things which I felt were less good. So eventually, the backlog tended to consist of things which I had set aside. [laughter] So it was kind of an awful situation to arise, but I couldn't help it.

Riess: That could be awkward for an author who expected to see his piece.

Waters: Well, yes, one had to develop a protocol for dealing with these things, and not to promise authors that their articles would appear in certain issues. I very quickly disabused myself of that. It was dangerous. Because even at the very last moment, and for reasons that had nothing to do with quality, space would not be there. If certain pictures were to be used, and they would take up a certain amount of space and couldn't be made smaller without losing impact or whatever, then something had to go.

And then it was decided--the decision was made purely on the basis of how much excess text had to be removed. For example, if we needed one page, then a one-page article would go, regardless of what it was, because there was no other way of putting the magazine together. There were so many things that affected it. If somebody was ready to cough up $500 for advertising space, then we were never so flush that we could resist that, and we would throw out an article if necessary to make room for it.

There were all kinds of considerations, and it wasn't just a matter of quality of writing.

Riess: Was there a seasonalness to the articles, a timeliness that you had to pay attention to?

Waters: Not very much, frankly. I mean, we just didn't have the flexibility to be entirely seasonal. I suppose in a way I would have had to plan ahead much more than I did. I see that the new editor is tending to devote issues to certain themes, rather than to the seasons. People often commented on the fact that there seemed to be a certain appropriateness in the articles assembled in *Pacific Horticulture*. And I was often given credit for that.

Riess: Appropriateness in that they tied together--they made a package?

Waters: Yes, that's right.

Riess: But you think that's unconscious?

Waters: Not entirely, but certainly it was nothing that I felt that I was in very great control of. If I was able to do it from time to time, it was a happy accident, so to speak. But as to making things seasonal, it would imply having an autumn issue--.

Riess: They're called "fall," "winter," "spring," and "summer."

Waters: That's right. That's only to stop them all crunching up together and coming out all in the beginning of the year. [laughter] "Now, this one will have to be later." I mean, we couldn't pay the printer otherwise.

So no, a deliberately fall issue would have articles about planting bulbs and things like that, and that wasn't our style anyway. But if I did have an article on bulbs, which were to be planted in the fall, then I would try to get it into a fall issue, that's true, yes. But occasionally, it didn't work.

Personality, and Pat Talbert's Pieces

Waters: I felt that a small magazine like *Pacific Horticulture* requires a certain personality, and I felt that it was the editor's job to provide that, because he, after all, was on the payroll, and he was the only one there who could give it any consistency of tone. I felt that we were not in the situation of a big publication, the staff of which tends to be somewhat anonymous. And that's, of course, corporate policy, because they know they're going to lose people from time to time. But we don't have that. The editor is all we have, so we've got to sort of hang him out to show him, and let people see that what's in here is his fault--or, if you like it, well, then some credit is due.

I don't think a small magazine can survive very long without some kind of personality or character. So that was one of the reasons. And in fact, over the years, I did deliberately set out to write more and more, for that reason. I felt that people were likely to stay with this thing because of some character they see and enjoy in it.

Riess: You wouldn't print something that you weren't engaged by, just assuming that other people would find it interesting?

Waters: I found that some of the things that I did not like myself too much did appeal to the readers. So I was always--yes, I was

inclined to welcome the things that I enjoyed, and largely that was it, but occasionally I had to pinch myself and say, "George, perhaps the readers would like this." So there was a kind of dichotomy there.

Riess: And what would be the difference? What is this kind of middle category of article?

Waters: Well, one of the things that I was won round to came from Pat Talbert, in Oakland, who was writing way back. When she first sent me something, I was a little dismayed. And in the end, however, I did see something in what she was doing.

She was writing as a raw beginner. "Easily Grown in Any Soil," I think was the title of her first piece. You know, the phrase you see on the back of seed packets all the time: "Easily Grown in Any Soil." She started from that point, and I thought, Well, this is about as far from *Pacific Horticulture* as you can get. But on the other hand, I had to admit that there was truth there and charm in her expression of it. But her style was a bit off the wall--is that the phrase?

Riess: Yes.

Waters: "Anything goes."

Riess: Yes, but that's often used positively, actually, "off the wall," to mean creative and original.

Waters: Well, that's true, but this bordered on the ungrammatical, incomplete sentences and things like that, which a lot of modern writers seem to find acceptable, but I could never swallow.

Riess: When it means an incomplete thought, yes.

Waters: That's what I felt it was, yes. Or perhaps just the overuse of periods. [laughing] Sort of scattering them about like pepper on the page.

Anyway, in the end we got this thing in a shape that Pat and I agreed on, and published it, and it created quite a stir. I got a lot of good response to it, readers commented favorably on it. And she wrote several articles. There was always an element of misgiving in me, but I had to acknowledge that she had talent.

Riess: How you decided whether or not to publish those pieces brings up my feeling of in-groupiness in horticultural groups. The question is whether the journal wants to educate a new population, as for instance *Sunset* magazine does, or not.

Waters: Well, you're right. It's why so many people tend to call it a journal.

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Waters: It's been something of a struggle to try to present the thing as a magazine rather than as a journal, and as something that almost anyone would enjoy, rather than a scholarly thing that is simply there to record the thoughts of the great.

I suppose one of its difficulties is that it's got a foot in both camps, and whilst you're trying to place on record some of the horticultural wisdom of professionals, you can't easily create from that a magazine that is going to have wide popularity, because so far as I can see, the magazines that are most popular are the ones tending to appeal to nonreaders. You know, Let's make things short and sweet and get to the point, and move on to something else. Whereas, if you're going to dig deeply into horticulture, then you've got to work at it a bit, haven't you?

Yes, you're right, it does talk to that. I was striving for a balance that would have something in each issue for both kinds of readers: weighty stuff for those in need of it, and something lighter that provides easy reading. After all, the distinction isn't always between one kind of reader and another, but also between the moods and needs of one reader at different times. I was in the end, I think, grateful to Pat Talbert for providing some of that balance. But she moved on to something else.

Riess: I wonder how many of your readers keep back issues.

Waters: Well, someone who is moving house, probably going into a retirement community, called, and only yesterday delivered to my front door a complete run from Number One onward. So they had obviously kept them. They were going to a smaller place and have no space for them any more, but didn't want to see them go to the scrap heap.

Riess: Your doing an index--there was some demand for that?[3]

Waters: Oh, yes. We occasionally get requests for back issues from people who want to have a complete run. Not always libraries, sometimes private readers. Someone who had a fire in their house and lost a lot of copies wrote almost tearfully to say, "I've got to replace

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[3]*Pacific Horticulture Index, 1976-1995*, compiled by Joan Citron and Joan DeFato, Published by the Pacific Horticultural Foundation.

these somehow, please let me know." And so on. It happens from time to time. So a good number of people keep them, yes.

During a gardening life, interests change. They find suddenly that they've become enthusiastic about plants that at one time they never knew about at all, and so they want to go back to see what the publication has said about those plants. Because unlike many other gardening magazines, we don't start again going over basic subjects every four years. It may be that they've got to go right back to the beginning, the earliest issues of *Pacific Horticulture*.

Some of the best stuff that was written on bamboos was in the second or third issue in *Pacific Horticulture*. There have been subsequent articles on bamboos, but of a totally different kind. The first one discussed them almost ecologically, about the tendency for bamboos of a certain species to flower all at once around the world. It's a strange phenomenon. That was gone into in the early articles, but only mentioned subsequently in passing. But over the years, those three or four articles would represent quite a substantial body of material on bamboos. I think that's probably why people save them.

The Armchair Gardener

Riess: There is so much published garden writing. I wonder, can one get as much pleasure reading about gardening as doing it? For instance, the book I am reading by Allen Lacy on gardening and the senses, and Katharine White's classic writing about the pleasure of reading garden catalogues.[4]

Waters: Yes, I think gardening has attracted some very good writers, in this country especially, recently. From Eleanor Perényi and Katharine White--.

Riess: Eleanor Perényi? I don't know her.

Waters: I know of only one book by her, it's called *Green Thoughts: A Writer in the Garden*.[5] She has written on other subjects and is a

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[4]*Inviting Garden: Gardening for the Senses, Mind, and Spirit*, by Allen Lacy, Henry Holt, 1998; *Onward and Upward in the Garden*, by Katharine S. White, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1979.

[5]Random House, 1981.

much-traveled and highly opinionated gardener. But aren't the writers on gardening we enjoy most invariably opinionated?

And of course, before them there was Elizabeth Lawrence, down in North Carolina, an extraordinary writer. Some of her writing was reprinted recently. Allen Lacy got a university press there to reprint a collection of her newsletter contributions, which he edited for them.[6] Among those chapters from Elizabeth Lawrence is some of the most moving writing about gardening I've ever read.

Literature on gardens in Britain in the 18th century includes some really weighty arguments. They were debating, vis-a-vis the garden, the very nature of beauty itself: sublime versus the beautiful, definition of taste. The writing is wordy, of course, because that was the style of the time, but it really is marvelous stuff. Humphry Repton, Richard Payne-Knight, William Gilpin, Uvedale Price were some of the main contributors.

Riess: When did you become acquainted with that writing?

Waters: When I became interested in the Garden History Society. I was marginally aware of it before, but once I was involved with the society I organized a slide lecture which we mailed around the country to people who used them in lectures to help publicize the society. I just had to get steeped in the literature at that point.

Riess: Now that you have stepped down from editing *Pacific Horticulture* you must have more time for reading whatever you want. What are you reading these days?

Waters: Oh, after so much obligatory reading about gardening, I'm going through a period of literary gluttony, of reading most anything and everything that catches my fancy. And my fancy runs from Dick Francis' mysteries to Eric Auerbach's philosophy, via Frederick Hackwood's history of brewing beer.[7] And there's Stallworthy, the editor of a book of love poetry.

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[6]*Gardening for Love, The Market Bulletins*, by Elizabeth Lawrence, edited by Allen Lacy, Duke University Press, 1987.

[7]Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, Princeton University Press, 1968. Dick Francis, *Come to Grief*, *Putnam*, 1995. Frederick Hackwood, *Inns, Ales, and Drinking Customs in Old England*, Studio Editions, 1985. *A Book of Love Poetry*, edited by Jon Stallworthy, Oxford University Press, 1974.

Riess: An anthology?

Waters: An anthology, yes. An extraordinary collection from Catullus to Cummings. I have been trying to compile from memory a list of recent books that I have read, and I'll send you a page from that list. You'll get some idea from it.[8]

Riess: Are you getting ready to write something?

Waters: No, not really. I don't know whether I've got the staying power for a book. I just don't think I have.

Riess: Would it appeal to you to put together all of your articles from *Pacific Horticulture*?

Waters: Well, it was suggested to me, as a matter of fact. One of the people who suggested it gave me the name of a woman who is acting as an agent for garden writers, such as Allen Lacy. I sent her a few pages, and I haven't heard a word since, so I kind of have a feeling that it probably wouldn't go down. There isn't enough substance there.

Riess: I know that one of your other interests is chamber music and choral literature. Do you think it is possible to get the kind of enjoyment reading about music as actually making music and going to performances? Like with the garden reading.

Waters: I've enjoyed some biographies. Berlioz, for example, was a superb writer as well as being a composer. His memoirs are quite wonderful reading. He writes as a music critic, I suppose, but his stories about trying to get performances of his own work in Europe at the time that he was writing are absolutely hilarious, sometimes excruciatingly painful. And there was a wonderful biography of Edward Elgar which I read recently.

On the other hand, one of my favorite singers, Janet Baker, wrote an autobiographical memoir, I suppose you'd call it, *Full Circle*, and I was disappointed in that. I would have liked a broader view of the music world. And likewise, I was disappointed with Daniel Barenboim's memoir, too. It was terribly stiff and uninformative.[9]

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[8]See Appendices.

[9]*The Memoirs of Berlioz*, David Cairns, Trans., Panther, 1970. Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*, Oxford University Press, 1984. Janet Baker, *Full Circle, A Journal*, Julia MacRae, 1982. *Daniel Barenboim: A Life in Music*, edited by Michael Lewin, Scribner's, 1992.

Riess: So it in no way gives you the pleasure that music gives you.

Waters: Oh, no, no.

Riess: Whereas reading about gardening, you can really get your hands into it.

Waters: Well, I'm so much on the fringes of music--a professional musician might pick up some of the other literature, I mean the more esoteric stuff maybe. I imagine a real musician would pick up a technical book on composition and get a hell of a kick out of it. In the same way, a well written book on gardens or gardening can carry me away.

A Note on a Trend

Waters: You made a point earlier that I'd like to pick up. Talking about the interviews I did with gardeners, Marcia Donohue, for example, and several others, in *Pacific Horticulture*. You remarked on the nature of their gardens, the fact that they were almost theatrical in their decoration. And you pressed me on whether this represented a style in gardening, and by implication, whether *Pacific Horticulture* was pushing this as a style. I guess I was evasive, because I certainly wasn't pushing anything, and I wasn't quite sure now why I picked on those people. I think that I chose them simply because in meeting them I found they had something to say.

But since then, and looking at reports in the RHS journal, a magazine called *The Garden*, I find similar tendencies in many of the garden displays at Chelsea Show these days. They also contain all kinds of weird and wonderful things that I'm sure were never present at the shows when I began going to them in the fifties. So possibly there is a style of gardening evolving, particularly in small gardens.

Small gardens do present special problems that you don't have in a large one. A garden you can walk about in provides such a variety of plants and changes of vista by turning the path this way and that. But if you have a very small yard, then how are you going to get the interest into it? And one way, of course, is to include outrageous things, unexpected things.

One of my interviews--with a man in Oakland--he had decorated the roofline of his garden shed with mannequin legs. You know, the things used in store window display? (Perhaps they

don't show up in the photographs used with the article.) And they occur elsewhere in the garden. Legs are almost a theme. I don't think that I've seen anything quite like that in the pictures of Chelsea Show recently, but quite close, quite close. Quite outrageous things.

Chelsea in the fifties and sixties was plants, generally speaking. There were displays from people who were offering garden chairs, for example. Sometimes they were canvas garden chairs with striped material which was almost gaudy, but the show on the whole was sedate, and the emphasis was on plants.

But nowadays, it's quite different. The gardens on display in the early Chelseas were almost always rock gardens on what was known as the bank, which was invariably assigned to rock gardens, and they were beautifully realistic scenes, except that you knew that the plants in them were garden plants, they weren't wild plants. But the rock work was a lesson in geology: the laminae were perfectly arranged to look as though they occurred there naturally, not placed on the bank overnight. But I think those displays, the rock garden displays, are almost entirely gone from the show.

And in the rest of the displays, the plants would be the thing, and there were superb collections of rarities--in many cases rarities. But nowadays, the photographs show display gardens similar to some of those I photographed for *Pacific Horticulture*, with odd things sticking up here and there. So clearly, there is a trend, and I suspect it has to do with the freedom that people are feeling in creating gardens for themselves in small spaces, and the need to make them exciting, without the opportunity of directing people through acres of landscape.

George and Olive Waters' Garden in Berkeley

Riess: What about your own garden?

Waters: I'm afraid there isn't really much to say there. My attention was so taken up with the magazine that the garden was somewhat neglected. In fact, the fire marshall came around on one occasion and said, "You know, you really have to cut those weeds down. They represent a hazard." [laughs]

Riess: Have you lived on Napa Avenue since you first arrived in Berkeley?

Waters: Yes.

Riess: Did Olive have a garden there already?

Waters: Yes, that's right, it's the same garden, the same piece of land, anyway. It has changed. It kind of sloped off, and there was at one point a bank that had some rocky steps, which were somewhat hazardous I suspect. Difficult to negotiate. So we got in a contractor who made three terraces out of it, so that we had three levels instead of an indefinite slope going this way or that.

There was a concrete pool, the inevitable kidney-shaped pool, from a previous owner, which was leaking, and nothing could be done to stop it leaking, so that was taken away. A simple design was adopted that is vaguely reminiscent of a traditional Persian garden with Mediterranean plants: paths crossed at the center, and the center devoted to a--well, if it had been more of a Mughal garden, it would have been an eight-sided pool, and this might have become an eight-sided pool one day, but *Pacific Horticulture* got in the way.

Riess: A Mughal garden?

Waters: Yes, according to Sylvia Crowe and Sheila Haywood, in *The Gardens of Mughal India*,[10] the octagon reconciles the material (square) with the spiritual (circle) aspects of life, and the shape is used in garden pools and other aspects of design.

So this was almost a barely recognizable gesture towards the Middle Eastern origins of Western gardening. But because of the existence of a sort of garage building, and various other oddities in the way, one had to make compromises. So one of the paths is not at right angles to the others.

Riess: After you got that structure organized, what did you plant?

Waters: Olive's passion for irises means that most of the planting space became devoted to bearded irises. But there are a few other things there.

There is a dissected leaf Japanese maple, which sits on the middle terrace and has made a cascade of foliage down to the lower one, which is quite a triumph. And beneath that, a little variegated leaf begonia in the shade of it, which normally is grown in a pot indoors, but flourishes outdoors and makes quite a marvelous ground cover.

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[10]Thames and Hudson, 1972.

And against the wall of the garage--which is no longer a garage, it's just a place where the gardening tools are kept--there's *Lapageria rosea*, the climbing bellflower from Chile. It has those wonderful waxy tubular flowers. It almost feels like you're rubbing polyethylene--they're so thick and waxy, it's quite unreal. If you rub two flowers together, they actually squeak. [laughs] That gives you some idea of the substance and texture of them.

And what else is there? Oh, there's an arbor which is almost completely smothered with "New Dawn" rose.

Riess: Is the whole thing under redwood trees?

Waters: Well, there are a couple of them--they are neighbors' redwood trees. Being such a small city garden, you can't escape the effect of neighbors. These were almost certainly just chance seedlings which took over, and when they reached a point of some size, as they did in the seventies--and that was a period when trees were being hugged by almost everybody, if you remember, so nobody would dream of cutting them down--by the time people thought they were getting too large, they were almost too big to cut down. It would cost thousands of dollars to take them out. They have become much larger, and now cast such a shadow on the garden that it's sometimes difficult to get irises even to come to flower any more. So it's quite serious.

Riess: And where are the weeds?

Waters: Oh, they've gone now. The fire marshall's words had a salutary effect. I used a technique which a number of people have found successful whereby you cover all the bare ground with three or four layers of newspaper, and keep it in place by covering it with wood chip mulch.

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Waters: Which has the effect of making the newspaper ground cover less unsightly.

Riess: Then the newspaper--

Waters: --rots away. But by that time, most of the weeds have been smothered, so the garden is under control again.

Riess: One thing about Cal Hort meetings is all the fine plants that are offered. People must like to press plants upon you.

Waters: One brings them home now and again. I get much more fun in raising plants from seed, so I amuse myself that way.

Riess: Do you have a cold frame and all that sort of thing?

Waters: No, no, I just protect them from too much rain, things like that. But no, I've raised irises, pulsatillas and alliums and all kinds of odd things from seed. They don't always flourish, but it's fun just getting them into flower. Nowadays I'm raising Japanese maples from seed, just in hope of finding something out of the ordinary.

Riess: Do you use your garden as an outdoor studio for your photography?

Waters: Oh, well, incidentally. I don't plant it especially for that. I have photographed things that have then been used in *Pacific Horticulture*, yes. But no, not deliberately. Some people have made gardens of acres for that purpose, and no doubt made a good living out of it.

Riess: When you were talking about smaller gardens, you referred to "yard" rather than garden. Do you have a feeling about the word "yard"?

Waters: [laughs] Now, that's an Americanism, isn't it?

Riess: Yes.

Waters: I think that the word "yard" took off in America because of some sort of egalitarian instinct which discourages the use of high-sounding words like "gardens", don't you think?

Riess: Yes, back yard, front yard--yes, that's right.

Waters: Of course, it was also a farming term, a legitimate farming term, to describe a part of the territory adjoining the house usually, where the tools were kept and maybe a few vegetables were grown. A rather loose term. But yes, I find myself doing it because it's in such common use.

Riess: Would it have been used in the magazine, the word "yard"?

Waters: I wonder if it ever has? I would have looked earnestly if I had seen it. I would have been forced to ask why the word "yard" was being used rather than "garden", and whether a distinction could be established which would justify using "yard" instead of "garden". But I don't think I've ever been confronted with that.

The Difference a Good Photograph Makes

Riess: When you took on the editorship, what were the standards of photography in the magazine under Owen? Black and white mostly?

Waters: Yes, it was mostly black and white. Owen was a good photographer.

Riess: And the photography was part of his job as editor?

Waters: As editor, yes. The pages were smaller then, and all pictures tended to fit within one page. The photography was never quite as significant, by virtue of the fact that the printing process wasn't exploited as fully as it now is.

For example, I tended to push my printer to use the finest dot screen possible in order to get the best detail in pictures. It's much easier for the printer with a coarse-dot screen, because with the finer screens there's always a possibility that the ink will merge them and make a blotchy effect.

And each picture, as I say, was fitted into one page. In *Pacific Horticulture* we sometimes pulled them across two pages. I don't think that in the old journal, it ever was attempted. With the switch, the pictures became more significant, and probably more numerous, because we had more pages, and they were larger pages, and some pictures were in color. So photography became more significant with the new layout. I don't think Owen was forced to think about illustrations quite as much.

Riess: In the old layout, it's more like you know there's a picture there but it's not the first thing you look at.

Waters: Doesn't catch the attention, that's right. One of the reasons for the change to larger pages, in the end, was to make use of color. Larger pictures have impact, of course.

Riess: How was it handled with any given article? Some of your authors must have sent photographs along with their articles.

Waters: Yes.

Riess: Was that a sensitive thing? Did you have to re-photograph?

Waters: Oh, yes, and again, as with the text, I sometimes wrote photographic critiques as well, pointing out why pictures were not satisfactory, encouraging them in some cases to try again, and sometimes they did. And sometimes there was an improvement. And

of course, inevitably my advice was, first of all, Use a tripod, for god's sake! Use a tripod to make use of smaller apertures.

Riess: Would it make the difference in an article being accepted?

Waters: Oh, sometimes, yes, if good photographs weren't available. As a matter of fact, I got around to sending a manuscript back only recently that had got lodged in my files from a while ago. I had felt that the subject was good and the treatment not too bad, but we just had to have better pictures to illustrate it, and those pictures never did turn up. I think partly because what was being described was not widely practiced: the idea of growing climbers up into trees, making use of a tree that may once have served a purpose, but now needed a new role in the garden.

In Britain, you can find gardens where superb things have been done with great Himalayan roses which vault into trees up to a hundred feet high. So to try to illustrate the subject with a little twist of ivy just beginning to embrace the branch of a tree--you couldn't take it seriously, could you?

Riess: No, you couldn't. And ivy--please!

Waters: That's right. So yes, articles sometimes were rejected because pictures weren't available.

Riess: Did you have some kind of a photo bank? Photographs from people like me, who might send them off to the editor saying, "Here, you can have this, use it any time at all."

Waters: Oh, that did happen, but it's problematic. First of all, I was invariably starting with a manuscript, and then looked for pictures to illustrate it.

During the search I sometimes contacted those who had offered pictures and said, "Here, I have a manuscript, I want a picture of this plant and that." But then they couldn't oblige, because that didn't happen to be the picture they had taken. And if I encouraged them to go out and get it, it was rarely possible. They just weren't prepared to go to those lengths, sometimes because they didn't have the botanical knowledge to recognize the plant I wanted, do you see.

The one person who did help, Saxon Holt, and who is now quite well established in the horticultural field, came to me and said, "Look, George, I've been doing commercial photography for advertising"--people want their products photographed to go into advertisements and so on, he had a studio in San Francisco--and he said, "I'd much rather do garden photography."

Having warned him there wasn't much money in it, and certainly not in *Pacific Horticulture*, he said, "Well, never mind. I can see that the only way I can make the change is first of all to get my stuff published." And I could see that he was a competent photographer. He said, "I'll do whatever you want. I admire the magazine. I'll go anywhere and take any pictures you want."

So that's what he did. He knew I wasn't going to pay him, but at least he got published, he was getting experience, he was finding out what was needed, and he did some splendid work. There was an article on insectivorous plants once that he illustrated. He went to a nursery where they raised insectivorous plants and took some superb pictures.[11] In fact, he used them in his portfolio subsequently, because we printed them so well. And that was another reason why photographers would like to come into *Pacific Horticulture*: most other magazines use poorer paper, and pictures don't look so good. But on good coated paper, they tend to sparkle.

So he served us well and we served him well, because now he's doing assignments for *Sunset* and *Horticulture* magazine, and several books. He's published all over the place.

Filing Systems, and More on Photographing

Riess: I'm interested in your filing systems, especially for photographs. Tell about the ingenious ways you have that allow you to lay your hands on things when you want to?

Waters: [laughs] It is difficult. Saxon Holt, for example, now has an assistant to look after that side for him. She has instructions to send me whatever I want without question, and without billing.

But it is a problem, and I've talked to lots of other photographers. They have great difficulty. Because in a garden picture, there will be so many elements, but usually, in any filing system, you can list a few but you can't list them all. It would take forever. So there is no entirely satisfactory system. Some get over it by just taking up with an agency, and the agency takes on the problem, but takes 50 percent of the proceeds too.

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[11]In, "Plants that Eat People," by Bob Hornback, *Pacific Horticulture*, Winter 1994, p. 29.

But that's better than having your pictures lost in a file at home, isn't it?

So far as the negatives are concerned, and the two-and-a-quarter transparencies, I file those in envelopes by date, and under the date I have the subject matter. So that relies very heavily on memory, of course. Sometimes I can go so far as, Well, that was late eighties, maybe '88 or '89, and go fairly quickly to it. If I can only roughly say, Well, it was some time in the eighties, then it takes longer, of course, because I have to go through more envelopes.

Riess: So you haven't done the crossfiling.

Waters: No, but as far as the 35 mm. slides are concerned, and these are more numerous, I have begun in the last two years to take them out of their boxes, which are simply marked with date and subject matter, in the cartons in which they come back from the processing house, and sort them under subject headings of Plants, Landscapes, People, and the landscapes including water, for example, and those which contain significant lawn, and those which have historical value, and so on. And cross-reference them that way. But it's a long, tedious process, and I give a few hours to it every week.

Riess: Is this a kind of archive that's being handled well? Does the Helen Crocker Russell Library keep an image bank, do you think?

Waters: I'm not sure. They do have some slides, and I have used them, but their pictures are used in projectors a lot. And that, of course, has a dreadful bleaching effect on slides. When they've been used several times in a powerful projector, they fade very rapidly. That makes them almost unusable for a good publisher who will be very critical. So that's a bit difficult.

There are two horticultural archives that I know of. The Smithsonian has set up a collection on historic gardens, and I imagine that that would probably be a good place to send my garden pictures ultimately. They've approached me several times. The Garden Club of America is trying to coordinate this and direct the stuff towards the Smithsonian. I think they may have inaugurated the collection in the first place, I'm not sure.

But when they approached me and I pointed out that most of my American garden pictures were on two-and-a-quarter square film, and duplicating them was fairly costly--I actually got the best quote I could for them from a firm in New York whose duplicating work has been highly praised professionally as being the best in the country--they lost interest. I certainly couldn't part with

the originals, so that was that. But in the end, I suppose that would be the place to send them.

And then there's the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, at Carnegie Mellon University. I've been sending them black-and-white prints from any portraits of horticulturalists, botanists, landscape architects I happen to encounter who will stand still for me for a minute.

Riess: Do you always have black-and-white film with you?

Waters: Yes. I have about five cameras of one kind or another, and one of them is always loaded with black-and-white. With the two-and-a-quarter camera I can switch film magazines from black-and-white to color in moments.

Riess: Do you do your own lab work?

Waters: No. I have done from time to time, but not routinely.

Riess: Art nature photographers are so in love with the out-of-focus, the sharp edge against the fuzzy background.

Waters: I think that has its place, doesn't it? I mean, for a portrait, for example, it has its place. The problem sometimes I find is in fact getting the background sufficiently out of focus. Because if the fuzzy bit of background is just possibly recognizable, it will take people's attention, [laughing] because the viewer immediately wants to know what it is!

Riess: Anyway, there's art photography, and then there's *Pacific Horticulture* photography.

Waters: I tried to maintain technical standards. I was, and still am, very insistent on it myself, for my own work. And that doesn't preclude the possibility of preferring good composition to bad. Even technically good pictures can still be well composed. So artistic standards aren't neglected necessarily.

Occasionally, I have printed pictures which have purely artistic merit. I remember one close-up of a flower in which the dewdrops were more prominent than the flower itself, simply because I thought it was just a superb picture. It's not characteristic really of the magazine at all. But an editor has to have a few perks. [laughs]

Inside the Front Cover

Riess: Another tangent, why did you make the authors' names in the table of contents genderless?

Waters: That's right, I went to initials. Why did I?

I did it originally because that page, inside the front cover where the masthead is--I thought the rest of the magazine was very nicely designed, but that page was a mess. It was crowded with all kinds of things. It remained a jumble for all those years because I didn't want to adopt the style of so many magazines whereby the masthead was moved onto one of the text pages. I thought, We can't spare it. We're not printing enough pages as it is, and to print more pages and use them up for that just struck me as being a horrible proposition.

So all the miscellaneous information was crowded on the inside front cover, along with the contents list, and sometimes by giving the full names instead of just the initials, a contents entry took an extra line and made it even more crowded. I thought, We'll just put the initials here and save space that way. Some authors only gave me their initials anyway. I thought, Well, why don't we treat them all alike?

And one or two readers did protest, but--.

Riess: But you had a description of contributors in the back?

Waters: In the back, yes.

Riess: Always? You've always done that?

Waters: No, no, that came along later. What happened was that, adopting from the old magazine, we used to have a byline with the name of the author, and their town, the locality. After a while, that made the magazine look far too parochial, because most of our contributors were coming from the Bay Area, and we were trying to sell this thing in Los Angeles and up in Seattle and so on. So I thought, Well, we'll get rid of that byline and just have the name.

Not that we were hiding their location, because it very often occurred in the article anyway, but I saw no reason to make an issue of it. The fact that they come from Orinda, say, is that

all that significant? It's what they have to say about the garden that's significant.

And then because there was interest in who these people were, we adopted the contributors column at the back, where they could see exactly who it was they were reading. So that's how it all evolved. And the use of initials in the contents column was largely a matter of trying to reduce the crowding on that page.

When we got an award from the Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta way back, the judges' comments were overwhelming--I mean, I blushed to my very boots with the praise that they lavished on the magazine--and the only point of criticism was the inside cover. They said, "Marvelous, wonderful, splendid, perfect, but oh my god, that inside cover!" And I thought, What can I do?

One of Laurence Hyman's ideas was to use a screen, a 30 percent screen against the information on the left-hand side of the inside cover, which we used for a number of years. Well, that merely added to the feeling of crowding and eventually I dropped it in favor of a single line down the page between the two columns. I felt that helped a little.

But no, it was a pain for me to the very end. I never found a solution to that problem, because those people--I mean, the societies and their representatives on the board and so on deserve some acknowledgement, they had to be there. By attrition, I got rid of the names in the editorial advisory board. As they died off, I just didn't replace them. It was all just an attempt to somehow reduce the amount of type on the page.

Riess: That's interesting. So it was not a gender thing.

Waters: No, no, no. Anyway, it's genderless by virtue of necessity, and that's a good thing, isn't it?

A Medal the Size of a Dinner Plate, 1990

Riess: Yes. The award from the American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta, is that an annual award?

Waters: They give a series of awards to their member societies. And a certain kind of publication is chosen each year for the award. For example, it might be a guidebook to an arboretum. It might be an educational piece, or a newsletter, and so on.

The only occasion on which I've been aware that the award was to go to a magazine [category]--we entered, but I suspect that it was probably the only magazine that was entered anyway. I can't think of any other member society of the AABGA that publishes a magazine. So I don't know what the opposition was, what the competition was. It was probably negligible, I would say.

Riess: The Garden Club of America Sarah Francis Chapman Medal, was that very significant?

Waters: Well, the Garden Club of America, oh yes, whatever they do is significant. They know how to put things on. They know how to stage an event.

The Pasadena Garden Club is a member organization of the GCA, and they nominated *Pacific Horticulture* for the award.

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Riess: Was there a financial award too?

Waters: Oh, no, it was just a citation and a medal, huge--[gesturing] about this size, like a dinner plate, huge. But they know how to present an award so that the thing has meaning--the setting, the crystal chandeliers, the audience of thousands stretching as far as the eye can see, in a hall in the Waldorf-Astoria.

Riess: Did you have to make a bit of a speech?

Waters: Oh, yes, good lord, yes.

Riess: What did you talk about?

Waters: Oh, I don't know. Can't remember now.

Riess: It's a platform. Were there drums you wanted to beat while you had such a large audience?

Waters: Oh, yes, I probably--as far as I can remember, I talked about the opportunity that California had provided me for producing a magazine, which was a career I had never at any time in my life previously contemplated. And then from that, the need for a publication devoted to the special requirements for gardening on the West Coast--the reason for bringing it out in the first place, of course.

Riess: The splendor of it all, that's when the Garden Club of America begins to look like the American equivalent of the RHS.

Waters: Oh, yes. But the Garden Club of America--I'm not sure what their constitution says about objectives, but I suspect they weren't quite the same as those of the RHS.

The Garden Writers Association

Riess: The Garden Writers Association of America, you were made a fellow of that in 1989. That brings me to ask about the importance of professional associations, your peer group of garden magazine editors and writers, and what you might have gotten out of that.

Waters: I was involved with them [Garden Writers Association of America] in about the mid-seventies--well, about the time the magazine was launched. I suspect that what we did was to try to find opportunities where we could take our new product and show it off. The Garden Writers seemed an obvious place: here is another magazine. Although, of course, it wasn't the kind of magazine that most of them were interested in, because these people were trying to get paid, and we weren't in a position for paying people.

The situation was rather unusual. The Garden Writers Association at that time was almost moribund. On the West Coast at that time there was a fellow called Jim Wilson who was quite a live wire. He was working, I think, for a seed company. He decided that what the Garden Writers should be doing was organizing symposia whereby we could get them together and talk about professional needs and do a bit of educating and so on.

Wilson was in contact with a young couple, one of whom was on the staff at Stanford. So they contrived to get one of the lecture rooms at Stanford to hold this symposium. Emily Brown, a member of the board of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation, was a member of GWAA, and she took Olive and me along to that symposium.

There was a second symposium, also at Stanford, a year or two later, and I was invited to give a talk. So I decided to talk about writing, which seemed not a bad subject for garden writers. I think I'd seen enough of newspaper columns on gardening to realize that a talk on writing was not a bad idea. And really all I did was essentially to rehash Strunk & White on the subject, and throw in a few colorful examples of what I'd read and show how it might be improved, and so on.

To illustrate the point, I explained that people looked for guidance to the most-read literature of the time, which was

political speeches and advertising. I held them up as poor examples of the use of language, since both were trying to confuse the issue, not to explain it. And therefore, one had to look for better examples.

Anyway, that's how we got involved in Garden Writers, and symposia became annual events. The organization has seven or so regions over the country, and each region tends to hold its own symposia, one of which is the annual meeting of the association.

Riess: By way of an award, you were made a fellow.

Waters: I honestly don't know quite why. I suppose simply because I stuck to it and tried to maintain good standards.

As you know, we haven't paid anyone, and I don't think that members of the Garden Writers Association have been banging at the door of *Pacific Horticulture* looking for opportunity to be published. But I think it's probably true that when the RHS publication was in danger--there was a period when it sunk to a pretty low financial level, it began even to look tatty--that *Pacific Horticulture* was being held up as an example for them. Likewise, it's shown certain standards in the U.S. which have now become more or less commonplace.

For example, the American Horticultural Society has greatly improved the quality of its publication, and I can't help feeling that it's because they recognized that there are people out there who are doing better. Now I think that *Pacific Horticulture* is no longer able to regard itself as being exceptional in that respect. I think a lot of other publications are doing something similar. *Garden Design*, for example, has come along since and maintained a very high standard of color printing, and there are others.

But I still suppose that it's true that if they want real substance in their articles, then gardeners probably have to come to *Pacific Horticulture*.

Riess: You sound active still in *Pacific Horticulture*.

Waters: Oh, no, I don't do very much. When mail comes, I've been sending out a card that was printed specially giving the new editor's address and suggesting they alter the files, and gradually the

flow has been checked, and now presumably it's all going to the new guy. And I'm quite grateful. I've got other things that I can be doing. Talking with you! [laughter]

Riess: This is not a career move!

Unfinished Business

Riess: I see that you have one of my many lists of important people [magazine contributors, board members] in front of you.

Waters: Dick Dunmire has been a contributor to *Pacific Horticulture* from time to time. Of course, he's a remarkable man anyway, and you probably know about him. He's an encyclopedia on legs when it comes to garden plants, he has an incredible memory for plant names. But he has also studied literature, and he was a teacher at one time, which makes him a very able speaker. His knowledge of literature, and the way in which he brings out extraordinary quotations from literature to entertain while he's speaking, it's just amazing. Everyone I know is astounded by him.

Riess: And that would have been a talent that he wouldn't be able to use at *Sunset*.

Waters: I think he did, actually, because although he was in the garden department, he also appeared in their kitchen columns, and he was almost always, if they needed to photograph somebody doing something, whether it was in the garden or in the kitchen, usually it would be Richard. He used to do a column for them called "Chefs of the West." Have you read that?

Riess: Yes.

Waters: Well, you would find his extraordinary literary allusions coming up in there from time to time. Check it out. Of course, he may not be doing it now, you may have to go back to the old issues.

[looking again at the list] And Ruth Bancroft, of course, we celebrated her ninetieth birthday in the garden recently, didn't we? Remarkably youthful, an astounding person. And she's been a tremendous supporter of the magazine from the beginning.

I'm a bit unsure now who and what we've covered and what we haven't. Probably the best bet, if it's feasible, is for me to make good any insufficiencies in the written text.

Transcribed and Final Typed by Shannon Page

TAPE GUIDE--George Waters

APPENDICES

George was born and educated in England, where he became a keen gardener, cultivating in turn the productive greensand of Bedfordshire, the dry gravel of Hertfordshire, and the clay and marl of the Chiltern Hills.

He is also interested in history, and in 1965 helped found the Garden History Society, serving on its council for two terms.

To make the new society better known he arranged exhibits at the shows of the Royal Horticultural Society in London. One of these, a display of photographs illustrating changes in garden styles during three hundred years of British history, earned the Silver Lindley Medal of the RHS. He was greatly helped in preparing prints and staging the display by friends and colleagues at the Research Laboratories of Kodak Ltd. where he was himself employed for about twenty years.

George moved to California in the early 1970s and worked for a while in garden restoration and design. In 1976 he helped launch Pacific Horticulture to provide gardeners in the summer-dry western United States with their own publication and a forum for discussion of the special character of gardens in this extraordinary climate. George became the editor of Pacific Horticulture later that year, and discovered a facility with the language that had been dormant since childhood. He also became a photographer to provide more pictures than were available from the customary sources to a new and penniless publication.

The American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta gave Pacific Horticulture its Dorothy E. Hansell publications award in 1987.

George has had awards for his work on Pacific Horticulture from the California Horticultural Society and the American Horticultural Society. In 1989 he was

elected a Fellow of the Garden Writers Association of America. On May first 1990, in New York City, the Garden Club of America gave George its Sarah Francis Chapman Medal for outstanding achievement in literature and photography. The following month the Strybing Arboretum Society gave George and his wife Olive its Owen Pearce Award. Olive manages the circulation of Pacific Horticulture and so the joint award properly recognized both members of the team then at work on the publication.

PACIFIC HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION

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The California Horticultural Society
The Southern California Horticultural Institute
The Strybing Arboretum Society
The Western Horticultural Society

The Hall of Flowers
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California 94122

Please address reply to:

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Report

OF THE JOURNAL REVISION COMMITTEE TO THE PRESIDENT,

PACIFIC HORTICULTURAL FOUNDATION

At the Pacific Horticultural Foundation Board Meeting in January of 1975 a committee was appointed whose instructions were:

To revise the format, layout and content of the California Horticultural Journal, to promote a greater circulation and increased membership of participating societies.

To produce an issue in the revised form at the beginning of 1976.

The members of the Journal Revision Committee are Margedant Hayakawa, Harland Hand (joint chairpersons), Owen Pearce (Editor), Emily Brown, Fred Boutin, George Waters and Dick Hildreth, president of PHF. Helen Markwett was appointed in September.

The Committee has met sixteen times (including special meetings at the premises of printers and Sunset Magazine and for interview with designers and others) and feels now able to present this report of its activities, preparatory to making final arrangements for the production of the revised January 1976 issue. The Committee seeks the approval of the Board for its plans.

Color Illustrations

The use of color printing, although relatively expensive is important to the campaign to increase readership. The cost for a colored illustration on the cover and one or two plates elsewhere in each issue for a year is estimated at $1,600. No other single change will have as great an effect on circulation as illustrations in color.

Other Design Changes

The Committee very early in its deliberations concluded that a professional designer would be needed to enable the Journal to maintain a consistently attractive appearance. From the ideas already considered for improving the format and layout, it seems probable that the page size will be increased to about 7 x 10. This will give greater scope in the arrangement of titles, text and illustrations in pleasing page designs. It will also permit the use of larger illustrations enhancing the impact of pictures and of a slightly larger typeface which will make for easier reading and a bolder page.

Alternative papers are also being considered and the aim is to use one

giving good reproduction of half-tone illustration, while avoiding the reflections which distract the eye when reading from a glossy page. These variables are somewhat interdependent and all are modified by considerations of economy. Last minute changes will have to be made and no firm decision is possible at present about the details of layout and design, except to say that the January cover is expected to show the California poppy in color. This will be supported by two articles and is a suitable gesture with which to launch our venture.

Journal Name

A great deal of discussion has taken place, both within the Committee and with members at large, about the name of the Journal. Four ideas are uppermost in our minds: 1/ If a change is to be made, now is the time to make it.
2/ The scope of the Journal is to be expanded to include the Pacific Coast of the USA.
3/ The Pacific Horticultural Foundation as publishers was named for that purpose.
4/ A brief title is preferable and is appreciated in libraries.
We therefore propose that the Journal be called PACIFIC HORTICULTURE.

Promotion

Much must be done, especially with the January issue to bring the revised Journal to the notice of possible subscribers. We have no expertise in this sphere and would appreciate the help of anyone with experience of promotion or publicity. Our plans at present call for the preparation of an attractive brochure and extensive mailing campaigns to garden clubs, college libraries, and other possible subscribers. Early issues will carry tearout subscription forms. Any television coverage we can find will be used.

Our greatest promotional asset is the offer from Sunset magazine of a writeup in their February issue. This will be seen by over a million readers and is expected to at least double our circulation. Advertising space will be taken in Sunset and some other publications.

Objectives

We have attempted to anticipate the rate at which new subscribers will be gained. A response to the Sunset writeup of 0.02% would double our present readership. The rate of recruiting after the first year will perhaps decline. We hope to do better than this, but for budget estimates, it would be unwise to anticipate a greater response to our promotion drive. The attached figures show how growth and costs are related. At the end of a three year period our readers should number more than 5000 or enough to cover our costs with some over and we believe that we should then consider giving the editors some remuneration. We may also be prepared to pay for articles and illustrations.
This increased readership is expected also to give increased membership to our four Societies. It is also possible that other horticultural societies on the Pacific Coast will wish to join the Foundation and we would welcome the strength they can add to our organization.

Costs

The attached figures are largely self explanatory. Some facts additional to those already given will help to make them clear.
1. The Journal has been subsidized by the Editor, who has drawn no expenses. This must not continue and allowance has been made in the budget for this

and for additional travel for promotional purposes.

2. Mailing of the Journal must be placed in the hands of a professional organization able to make use of modern machinery for addressing and labeling and of computers for renewal reminders. A start has already been made on this.
3. The California Horticultural Society has guaranteed $5000 in support of the Journal Revision Project. The other societies within the Foundation are also considering financial support.
   Private donations totalling $2100 have also been made to the project.

ESTIMATES FOR ENLARGING AND PROMOTING THE CALIFORNIA HORTICULTURAL JOURNAL

Size data	Proposed	Present
Number of copies/issue	4000	2000
Size	7 x 10	6 x 9
Pages	60-80	40-44
Costs/year		
Printing & paper	$15,200	$6,400
Color printing	1,600	--
Design & layout	1,200	--
Illustrations	200	--
Editor's expenses	1,000	
Secretarial	1,200	
Promotion		
Extra copies	2,000	--
Brochures, travel, mailing	500	
Advertisements	1,000	--
Mailing	1,400	
Income from advertising not taken into account -- small sum	$25,300	$6,680

Sales and income estimates				
Yearly cost to the four societies			7,200	7,200
Cost to be borne by new subscribers			18,100	
No. of $5.00 subs needed to meet above:		3620		
Year 1 new subs		2500	12,500 (yield)	
Deficit	$5,600			
Year 2 new subs total		3600	18,000 (yield)	
Deficit	100			
Year 3 new subs total		4700	23,500 (yield)	
Excess	5,400			

Contents

The present Journal caters in the main to enthusiastic plantsmen whose interest is in the rare and unusual plants and methods for cultivating them. Other subjects are dealt with of course, but little space is devoted to the needs of these many enthusiasts, not yet ready for the rare and unusual and to whom many of the technical terms used are unfamiliar.
In Pacific Horticulture we will continue to provide articles for the specialist, but in the added pages, also offer a helping hand to the beginners.
The excellent standards of the Journal will be maintained, in respect of botanical accuracy, proof reading and so on and we are confident that this will be appreciated by the many intelligent beginning gardeners who are ready for something beyond what is offered in Sunset magazine.

Authors will be encouraged to contribute from areas throughout the geographical region we intend to serve.

The January issue, to be called the Spring issue, will contain articles on the following subjects:

1. Announcement about the changes and ambitions of the revised publication.....Dick Hildreth
2. The California Poppy (the cover subject)
   a/ Natural history.....McClintock
   b/ Hybridization for garden use.....Ralph Gould
3. Sasanqua Camellias.....David Feathers
4. Desert Gardening.....W.E. Schmidt
5. Plants from seed, germination techniques.....Dick Hildreth
6. Seed exchanges, information on seed sources.....M. Hayakawa
7. Landscape use of roses.....F. Boutin
8. Old Roses, a personal anthology.....G. Waters
9. Planting from containers.....Lyal Pyett
10. Concrete in the garden.....H. Hand
11. Native plants in garden meadows.....Roxana Ferris
12. Notes from the Botanic Gardens and Arboreta (a regular column).....J. Kipping et al.
13. House plants (a regular column).....
14. Topical notes (a regular column).....
15. Dutch Elm disease.....W.D. Hamilton
16. Composting for beginners.....D. Pettit
17. Plants for the Strybing Sale.....C. Stroud
18. Planting on Mounds.....Charles Kliem
19. Hybrids of native plants.....Lester Hawkins
20. Squibs, as space fillers.....

Advertisements in the Journal will be seen as a service to readers and to this end will be edited to give information on the availability of plants, equipment, services and supplies.
Classified advertisements will be invited also, and the income from both kinds of advertising will partly offset the publication's expenses.

M. Hayakawa
H. Hand
joint Chairpersons,
Journal Revision Committee

18 September 1998

Some Books Read Over the Past Twelve Months

Newby, Eric: Love and War in the Apennines (mem)
Benson, E.F.: Make Way for Lucia (fic)
Dawkins, Richard: River Out of Eden (sci)
MacCarthy, Fiona: William Morris (biog)
Desmond, Adrian: Huxley, Devil's Disciple to ...(biog)
Lee, Laurie: Cider with Rosie (mem)
-- --: A Moment of War (mem)
-- --: As I Walked Out (mem)
Macaulay, Rose: Towers of Trebizond (fic)
Moore, Jerold: Edward Elgar (biog)
Bennett, Arnold: Clayhanger (fic)
Robertson, Adele Crocket: The Orchard (mem)
Migot, Andre: Tibetan Marches (trav)
Stone, Lawrence: Causes of the English Revolution, 1529-1642 (hist)
Berlioz, Hector: The Memoirs (trans. David Cairns)
Theroux, Paul: Kingdom by the Sea (trav)
Crick, Bernard: George Orwell (biog)
Shelden, Michael: Orwell, the Authorized Biography
Fisher, M.F.K.: Long Ago in France (mem)
-- --: To Begin With (essays)
Gledinning, Victoria: Anthony Trollope (biog)
Morris, William: The Ideal Book (essay)
Ondaatje, Michael: In the Skin of a Lion (fic)
Barker, Pat: The Ghost Road (fic)
Nabakov, Vladimir: Speak Memory (autobiog)
Davies, Robertson: World of Wonders (fic)
-- -- : The Manticore (fic)
-- -- : Fifth Business (fic)
Frazier, Charles: Cold Mountain (fic)
Silone, Ignazio: Fontamara (fic)
Brenan, Gerald: A Life of Ones Own (autobiog)
-- --: Personal Record (autobiog)
-- --: The Face of Spain (autobiog)
Woodham-Smith, Cecil: The Great Hunger, Ireland 1845-9 (hist)
Powell, Anthony: The Acceptance World (fic)
Doerr, Harriet: Stones Of Ibarra (fic)
Mehta, Ved: Shawn's New Yorker (mem)
Douglas, Norman: Siren Land (trav)
Knight, Laura: Oil Paint and Grease Paint Vol 1 (autobiog)
Graves, Robert: Goodbye to All That (mem)

George Waters

PEERING THROUGH THE WEB by Olive Rice Waters

Retracing the path which led to involvement with *Pacific Horticulture* and the American Iris Society

Members of my family were *readers*.

My tiny, spic and span maternal grandmother, H.B. Buroughs Griffin, kept a precious bookcase full of classics. I was allowed to lie on the davenport, feet up on the top rail, just so long as I was *reading*.

Trips to the library were a must, as often as I wished.

My mother, in spite of a busy schedule, always took an hour or two in the afternoon for reading. She came home from the library with a stack of books, some quickly put aside after she had *first* read the *last* page--the book might not be worth her time.

My mother's creativity was boundless. A favorite Depression-era avocation was rug-hooking, since it combined design with use of recycled materials.

When Mother was eighty-six the Indiana State Museum moved all the paintings out of a gallery so Mother could hang a one-man show of her rugs. From San Francisco I boarded a plane, my rugs in tow, to deliver them personally via taxi to the museum, there to join the sixty rugs on display. Mother was there to greet the show's visitors.

Mother's grandchildren continue this creative bent, as did my older sister, a retired art history professor now living in Kensington. Though she began her studies as a sculptor and painter, she turned to ceramics as complementing rather than competing with a painterly spouse on the faculty of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Both my daughters are Mills graduates. The elder is a textile artist with an MFA from San Francisco State; the younger has an MA in architecture from the University of Oregon. My son is a landscape architect with degrees from DePauw and the University of Oregon, and is a past president of Portland's Berry Botanic Garden.

Not to be overlooked in family influence was my dad, an outgoing man who loved talking to anybody and everybody. He molded my outlook on life and the world beyond books. I followed at his heels. He was ever dependable, as was a favorite uncle who, though brusque, was soft as butter underneath that brusqueness.

Something I find unbearable to relate: my younger sister, dead this spring after a long battle with hepatitis C which cropped up out of nowhere and took her, a valiant fighter, at the end. She leaves three stalwart sons and a bereft husband.

From high school through college my main interest was journalism. In the summer before my sophomore year in college, I was in competition with friends for a job with our daily newspaper. The job involved pounding the pavement, calling on merchants, banks, and passersby for subjects of interest to local readers.

Having nailed the job, I arranged my work so that I could attend college classes, both working and going to school fulltime, graduating in the usual four years plus carrying off honors in journalism.

The summer of graduation, with my husband, a classmate and newly minted magna-cum-laude, I was headed for Berkeley. He was to be a graduate student and teaching assistant in chemistry, where the department had instructors with such names as Calvin, Pitzer, and Ruben. The last, Sam Ruben, died a few years later, the tragic victim of an accident at the RatHaus, a wartime experiment using phosgene gas.

In late spring of 1943, Robert Oppenheimer was off to Los Alamos to begin his work on Manhattan Project. One by one as their doctorates came through, graduate students in chemistry and physics were off to join him.

After three years in Berkeley, two children born at Alta Bates Hospital when Alta Bates herself was still on hand to help deliver them, we were off via train to New Mexico.

Los Alamos was an exhilarating experience. All spouses were called in to help staff the operations. I worked in -C- stock, where orders were processed for scientific materials. Enrico Fermi would come in to pick up supplies and might be challenged, required to show his I.D. card, since he resembled the locals.

In dropping off the children at pre-school, run by the University of New Mexico faculty, I often passed a couple arguing in gutteral tones: Hans Bethe and Edward Teller. Niels Bohr, whose code name was Jack Baker, walked by on his way to the lab.

As during the Berkeley blackout, we didn't question our government's need to be prepared for war. We weren't asked if we approved nuclear testing. Los Alamos was like any other army post in wartime: these are orders, this is the work, don't question the powers that be. Mail was censored. Even Harry Truman, head of the Senate Budget Committee, was turned away at the post gate when he came to find out why so much money was being spent.

The spring when peace was declared we were off to join the Purdue chemistry faculty. Later we were to be involved in radiochemistry work at various pharmaceutical laboratories, and still later, at the National Library of Medicine in the nation's capital.

It was from Washington that I returned to Berkeley to resume my own graduate studies, so long postponed for family matters. I had been working as a copy editor for Federated Societies for Experimental Biology but really was interested in teaching. At Tolman Hall on the UC campus, I found challenges, a way of helping youngsters, and many friends both new and old. I was on my way to a Master's degree and teaching credential.

At the end of 1972's spring term at Cal, having just completed finals, I was off from San Francisco to Heathrow, headed for the UC Berkeley/Oxford Landscape Seminar. My interest was whetted by my son's work in designing a downtown pedestrian mall in Eugene, plus his interest in botanical gardens.

Also on my itinerary was a meeting in London, plus a leisurely tour in France and Italy. Planned were a week in Paris on the Right Bank, then time in Florence visiting museums and gardens; next would be a return to Paris for a week on the Left Bank near some favorite gardens. And I drove down along the Loire to Gien to visit the famed four-generation Cayeux Iris Gardens, with Jean Cayeux commenting on his hybrids.

In London, at the Golden Jubilee of the British Iris Society, strolling through a fine flower show at Vincent Square, I came across the Mercia booth. Here was an exhibit of iris pictures, accentuated with panels of stained glass. Holding forth was the exhibit's designer, George Waters, a Mercian taking time from his work at Kodak Laboratories at Harrow. He was editing the *Mercian*; I was editing the American Iris Society's *Region 14 Bulletin* serving northern California and Nevada. That was July. By the end of October he had joined me in Berkeley. This collaboration of shared interests has continued through many years of iris work and *Pacific Horticulture*.

Work is in progress now on my sixteenth iris calendar, this one for the year 2001. Our national society has twenty-four regions; I have grown irises in three of them, the most prolific being in the red tobacco soil of Rockville, Maryland, where the garden was magnificent.

The garden at 1914 Napa in Berkeley is pocket-sized; it was not with a garden in mind that I purchased the house, but that it was close enough to the campus to let me get to school if I had car trouble. The location has been so convenient that I have been here thirty years, and to my far-flung family it is the home which has been in the family the longest.

With George's tender loving care, all the irises have been dug and replanted--the beds look better than ever before. It is not a garden for show, but one to linger in and count the *lapageria rosea* blossoms each morning and remember to go to the Botanical Garden in Strawberry Canyon to buy more of these beautiful plants.

As to my part in the transformation of the *California Horticultural Journal* into the larger, color-illustrated *Pacific Horticulture*, I began by transcribing minutes of the format committee during the eleven months preceding the appearance of the first issue in January, 1976.

Though I have been a director for many years, and secretary of the Pacific Horticultural Foundation Board, my directorship comes through the California Horticultural Society. Each of the five publishing societies sends three directors to the foundation's board, as listed on the magazine's masthead.

The readership is the journal's most interesting facet to me. Content and design are for others; I like to know who is ingesting the materials. While the magazine has an editor, a circulation person, and at present a half-time business manager, my work has been voluntary. I make my own schedule and can be on hand when help is needed. And I like it this way.

In summary, *reading...writing...words*, but *people* hold the greatest interest for me. They always have, right from my days as a cub reporter.

Olive Rice Waters

October 1999
Berkeley, California

Notes on Correspondents

Blumberg submitted an excellent article describing experiments with vegetables in her garden. It required only a little revision to be easily understood by readers with no technical background.

Buchanan wrote some articles for me, then was taken up with the idea of book writing. The book manuscript discussed here was not published, but a later one of hers, on Native American gardening, appeared I believe, in the late 1990s.

Carol, in northern California, was a beginning writer to whom I gave advice and encouragement. She contributed a couple of pieces to the magazine. Her family name is deleted at her request.

Deutsch helped find me an article on butterfly gardens and became an interesting correspondent on a variety of topics.

Ewold took exception to references in the magazine to the German occupation of France during the Second World War, and to my use of the phrase 'tall bearded irises' in place of what she regards as the proper name, 'German irises.' Both my references were in her view examples of anti-German bias.

Francis and **Reimann** asked me to expand on the ideas in my editorial of Summer '93 for a symposium to be published by their department. I don't know the outcome of our correspondence.

Gessert, an artist in Washington, wrote a book review and the letter attempts to ensure sound and well presented criticism.

Gildemeister, a highly competent writer and gardener, needed better pictures for her contribution to the magazine.

Leamy contributed to *Davidsonia* when it was published by the Botanical Garden at the University of British Columbia. When *Pacific Horticulture* replaced their own as the publication distributed to supporters I encouraged articles from staff and volunteers there. Nothing came of this proposal for a revised version of an article from *Davidsonia*.

Russ is Russell **Beatty**, then a lecturer in the Design Department, U.C. Berkeley. He had written several excellent articles for *Pacific Horticulture* and I particularly wanted the one discussed here for our anniversary issue (Spring '96), but time ran out on us. I understand that Richard Turner is preparing a new version of it for a forthcoming issue.

Simley sent her letter to Mildred Mathias, one of our botanical editors, at my address. I invariably answered such enquiries unless the subject was particularly within the speciality of the editor named.

Smith is a well known nurseryman in the Watsonville area with special interest in California native plants. He wrote a fine survey of ceanothus and another of manzanitas.

Stromme wrote a couple of things for *Pacific Horticulture*, and asked my advice about writing and publishing books.

22 December 1996

Shirley Blumberg
PO Box 368
Mammoth Lakes CA 93546

Dear Shirley:

Your article on high altitude gardening is full of ideas and good information. While reading it I tried to put myself in the position of a gardener interested in your subject but unfamiliar with scientific terms and experimental methods. I found most of it easy to grasp, but felt that some readers would need a helping hand here and there. For example, in discussing the experiment, it seemed helpful to first summarize the idea behind it in a couple of sentences. This helps those unfamiliar with your problems when details have to be grappled with later on.

It is almost impossible to be too sympathetic towards readers following new ideas, however simple and familiar they are to the writer. In fact, the more familiar they are to the writer, the greater the risk to the reader and the more careful must be the hand guiding him or her over this unfamiliar terrain. This is never more the case than when the ideas are technical. With this in mind I avoided some technical terms, such as "variables," inserted one or two explanatory passages (on ultra-violet, for example), and rearranged one or two sentences to bring together matter that seemed related.

You may find that I have misunderstood a few points myself, and I crave your indulgence and your help in straightening things out. I admit to my confusion at the bottom of your page two, where the subtle change from high altitude to high latitude had me turned around for a while. This, I admit, was my own carelessness in reading, but perhaps others would trip here, too?

I also have avoided the numbered list, redolent more of scholarly endeavor than of pleasant reading. My suggested title, too, may be seen as an attempt at encouraging the novice, although perhaps a little fanciful for your taste?

Please read this draft with tyro gardeners in mind, and an eagle eye for errors and transgressions of mine. Mark up this copy with any changes and corrections you feel are needed and shoot it back to me as soon as you are able. But don't let it interrupt you holiday festivities!

With best wishes to you for lots of good cheer, and a New Year full of contentment.

Yours,

3 July 1990

Carol Buchanan
13625 179th Avenue NE
Redmond WA 98052

Dear Carol:

Back now from an exciting but exhausting dash round France with impressions of the utter worthlessness of visiting Giverny -- a circus, with hundreds pounding paths made for one or two -- and the soul salving serenity of Courances -- such superb proportion and balance in its simple arrangement of water, grass, and trees.

Your Prelude to Wordsworth develops several excellent ideas and brings them nicely to focus on the subject. The debate between Price and Repton is especially well presented.

The reference to scientific ideas on page 7 opens up the discussion to influences on esthetics beyond the debates of your protagonists, and might, with advantage, be taken further. In this chapter you are, after all, surveying the whole field of thought for influences on the esthetics of landscape; the investigation is sure to take you down paths that must be trodden slowly and with care.

The 17th century can be said to have seen a scientific revolution comparable in significance to the industrial revolution, and, of course, was its essential precursor. Harvey, Hales, even Newton, and other researchers did some, at least, of their work in this period. The effect was not only to bring a more questioning attitude to definitions of beauty, but also to weaken belief in old philosophies and religious dicta. Notions such as Thomas Burnet's conception of an orderly universe, explained in his Theory of Earth, lost credence as scientific thought developed. Ideas such as Burnet's had provided philosophical underpinning for gardening in the formal, geometric style, and the erosion of these beliefs helped, indirectly, to make way for the acceptance of naturalistic landscapes.

More directly, perhaps, scientific enquiry, by allowing greater understanding of natural processes, helped erase fear of the natural world (to which you refer), and lead to appreciation of plants in their natural forms as objects of beauty. The scientific revolution, which paved the way for the Age of Reason, was probably the most important influence on philosophy and esthetics in the 18th century.

Political tensions created by the challenge to old aristocracy from wealth accumulating around new industries also played a part. (The industrial revolution is generally alloted later dates, but its development was slow and its origins are found much earlier.) Sons of the newly rich took the grand tour, too, and their enthusiasm for the works of Claude and Poussin may be attributed, to some extent at least, to a background and outlook that questioned old attitudes and embraced ideas supportive of their quest for governmental power. In challenging the power of titled landowners the new industrialists sought justification in any philosophy sympathetic to their ideals. Inevitably they were attracted, in some degree at least, to the writings of Locke and Hume whose philosophy gave little support to priviledge and power as God-given rights. (The same moral conflict found expression in America in the War of Independence; it was worked out in Britain in parliamentary debates between Walpole and Pitt.) Questioning minds in such a revolutionary environment may well have seen formality in gardens as representative of the old order; the new naturalism as symbolic of intellectual freedom. At Stowe, Cobham gave direct expression to his political inclinations with such edifices as the Temple of Ancient Virtue and the Temple of British Worthies.

In this chapter you provide background to ideas about gardening that colored Wordsworth's outlook; was there not a vein of thought (and esthetics) removed from that of landscape and gardening that might have influenced Wordsworth and other nature poets? I can't call names to mind here, but am thinking of the modern conservation movement, by way of analogy, that is influencing the esthetics of gardening as much as do traditional concepts. Damage to the countryside was a concern then, too, I feel sure. Does Goldsmith suggest anything here, or the poets who provided lyrics for Schubert's songs?

When speaking of Linnaeus it is important to distinguish between his system of classification based on sexual characteristics, and his adoption of binomials. The former was useful for a while but is not now used, although relics of it remain in modern systems; the latter, in modified form, are with us today. On page 8 you seem to run them together in a dangerous way!

It would help your style, I think, to delete references to "people," as in the last line of page 7 and line 2 on page 8. Aim instead for a construction that assumes that people are the subject throughout. For example, nothing is lost by simply omitting "in people's minds" from the last line of page 7. On page 8 you might try something like "yielded exciting discoveries that overturned many long-held beliefs."

Try giving ideas -- your main thesis -- greater emphasis by omitting biographical snippets where they don't reinforce your

argument. I'm thinking of asides such as those on Brown's nickname and Pope's morphology and appetite. They are entertaining, but diversionary, and raise doubt about your purpose.

I hope these rather poorly organised thoughts of mine are helpful. I've enjoyed reading your chapter, and regret that, having taken time off in France, it had to be so hurriedly done. I trust that my reading was not so cursory that I have misunderstood some aspects of the work and wasted your time by discussing it.

Good luck with the publishers. Please let me know what Godine says.

With best wishes,

23 August 1994

Dear Carol:

The dangers of poor plant growth from roots unable to penetrate a barrier between nurseryman's potting mix and native soil seems not to be mentioned in old gardening books. This is probably because until the 1950s nurseries seldom offered plants in pots -- almost everything was sold bare-root. Another factor may have been that in years past it was assumed that all planting was done into cultivated ground where the soil had been thoroughly dug over the whole area whether previously planted or not. You'll no doubt have seen those drawings in old books showing how the ground is marked out so that it can be systematically trenched (dug) to a depth of two or three spits (spit = spade depth, approx. eleven inches). In soil so well prepared problems from changes in texture didn't arise.

Writers on gardening today seldom mention the method, although John Seymour describes and illustates it in The Self-Sufficient Gardener (Doubleday 1978). It is an excellent and attractive book, worth seeking out if you enjoy collecting good books on food growing. But then, Seymour was born in 1914! Sunset's Introduction to Basic Gardening (3rd ed. 1981) also describes a thorough method of soil cultivation. They call it double-digging, but it is really a method known as bastard trenching; the two are often confused. Double-digging goes to three spits depth, bastard trenching only to two. Elsewhere the Sunset book discusses planting from containers, and warns of the barrier that may be created between soils of markedly different textures. It suggests preparing a large hole -- twice the diameter of the pot and half again as deep, roughing up the sides of the hole, soaking the soil if it is dry, and adding a little organic amendment and superphosphate to the soil at the bottom of the hole. The writer of another book the title of which I have forgotten said that spades used in clay soil may glaze the walls of the hole thereby effectively sealing the soil and reducing to nil the possibility of water penetration. This seems plausible, but I've not seen it mentioned since. That writer proposed the use of a fork to reduce glazing while digging planting holes. Perhaps the Sunset writer had this in mind when roughing was mentioned. If done well enough roughing might also encourage a tendency in roots to grow radially rather than in circles within the hole, as your nurseryman mentioned.

Modern writers on tree planting advise against the previously widely advocated practice of adding amendment to the fill soil, claiming that this creates the difference in texture inimical to spreading root growth that you have spoken of. The argument is, perhaps, more pertinent to bare-root than to container plants. Container plants seem likely to benefit from fill that is intermediate in character between the nursery mix and native soil and appropriate amendment might achieve this.

But in this matter of planting holes and their filling I feel that most rules have limited application; so much depends on the character of the native soil. Good gardeners aware of the risks will use whatever method of planting seems

needed for the health of their trees and will take remedial action at the first sign of distress. For every plant, large and small, I have placed in the ground during fifty years of gardening the soil has been amended, and losses

have been few. Watchfulness is not the least of gardening virtues. The New Royal Horticultural Society Dictionary seems to have a similar view of it; there is little in the entry on planting shrubs and trees about soil preparation and nothing about barriers to water movement. The attempt by so many writers to codify everything for the benefit of new gardeners is misleading. Is it helpful in the long run to imply that there is always a right and a wrong way for everything, when we are dealing with plants of so many kinds in soils of such great variability under skies of total unpredictability?

This rambling letter was not in mind when I began; the idea was just to applaud your experiments, but it seems to have got out of hand. Maybe, however, you'll find a snippet here of interest or value, so I'll mail it unabridged, simply urging you in conclusion to send me your ms when done in the hope that you won't mind if I find it unsuitable after all. Will you risk it? Courage, my friend!

Sincerely,

7 October 1994

Dear Carol:

Inclusion of more quotes in your discussion does add variety and interest, but I feel somewhat at sea after the first couple of pages; as though you had left the tiller to your passengers. Perhaps it's time for a compass bearing; giving the piece a title, even just a provisional one, may help you.

The first page establishes the writer as a keen gardener now gaining experience. (The parenthetical interpolation in para 2 somewhat belies this, and may be better moved to a later page.) This tone is maintained through page 3, needing perhaps, only a little tightening of the language to establish an unwavering course. But with the Robin Lane Fox quote on page 4 I believe I see my difficulty. His methods are presented too baldly. Would it not be better to link his ideas with those in the preceding para? Something of this kind would be the minimum needed to provide the link and keep those other voices in second place.

"Robin Lane Fox seems to have run into difficulties similar to my own in propagating plants. In Variations on a Garden he tells of his pleasure in producing so many plants for free, and feels that his own starts, rooted in . . ."

Providing that link would, I believe, help keep your hand on the tiller, and avoid the drifting that I detected after a page or so. My uneasiness worsened on page 5, where several voices are heard without benefit of linking passages; it is as though their opinions have become your subject, whereas you should merely be calling on them for confirmation of your own view. This is especially marked in the para beginning, "Another interesting report in The Avant Gardener . . ." where a new subject, Peter Smithers' wild garden, is introduced. Here you seem to have shifted to editing a column of topical notes similar to Bob Raabe's Laboratory Report.

Avoid beginning a para with a reference -- the emphasis gained by words in that position is too valuable to be thrown away on secondary matter. Keep the emphasis on your own voice and ideas, bringing in others in support of them. Avoid referring twice to the same source; instead, demonstrate wide reading by using a variety of sources. The Avant Gardener is not the best reference because it is itself a compilation of quotations and references. Going directly to the UC report and to Smithers himself gives you greater plausibility among discerning readers, and avoids risk of mistakes originating in the secondary reference.

In this connection I should tell you a sad story of PH and AG: Pacific Horticulture was plagiarized in the Avant Gardener when material on yellow clivias was taken from PH without acknowledgement. I challenged Powell, the editor, and he excused himself, lamely, for what he said was a mistake, but it has made me wary of his publication. Unfortunately, his treatment in that same issue of another subject relating to PH was distorted, creating the impression that our information on drip irrigation was inadequate while AG's was more complete. He had no proper explanation for that, either. So, I prefer to avoid secondary sources, especially the AG.

The Smithers quote needs a lengthier linking, or in this case introductory, passage than most because of the change in subject from propagation to garden making and cultivation. The reader must be prepared for the change, and in your own voice. Smithers had something in a garden magazine recently. I saw it, and have just looked through recent copies of The Garden (RHS) believing it was there, but did not see it. If you happen to know where to look I may be able to find it. Until recently I had a file on him, but was obliged to discard it along with much else to avoid being forced from my office by papers.

In mentioning tightening the language I had in mind phrases such as "this vision has gradually become more realistic considering," and "sometimes I have regretted not putting time, effort, and money into soil amending and fertilizing. Now I'm finding pleasure in the advantages of slow growing plants toughened by the restrictions of their environment." (Page 1)

The idea of a vision becoming realistic is disconcerting. I suspect you have little choice but to say your vision dimmed. This is more conventional, but shortens and tightens the phrase, as well as making your meaning immediately clear.

The second example could be rendered: "Sometimes I regret not having put time, effort, and money, into soil amending and fertilizing, but find pleasure in slow-growing plants toughened by a rigorous environment." Here the past tense is suggested without the awkward "I have regretted," and I feel that the slightly ruminative tone is preserved in fewer words.

There are other places where similar economy is possible. I feel sure you will find them if you pause after each sentence to ask, does this say <u>exactly</u> what I intend? And then, could it be said in fewer words? In Q's words, "Think of the reader, not only with your head, but also with your heart."

Oddly enough, that splendid para on page 8 beginning "The other time for extra care . . ." may have been pruned a little severely. I read it with great pleasure for its heartfelt tone and the multiplicity of ideas that it presents so seamlessly, and ask, would line 8 benefit from the repetition of "are" before "wilting?" If so, word count might be maintained by deleting "the" preceding "midday."

By the way, I detected the merest whiff of self congratulation in the insistence (page 3) that you read about the simplified way of planting <u>after</u> having developed it for yourself. Readers are remarkably sensitive to that kind of thing, and it well becomes a writer to avoid all hint of it. I'm sure you can find a way of conveying the idea more reticently!

Yours, with envy for the quiet you enjoy up in those hills, but none for the heat of them,

20 November 1994

Dear Carol:

Please don't think of your drafts as embarrassing. The best stories, articles, and books too, are the result of multiple revisions from awkward drafts. Some of the most accomplished writers go through draft after draft in the process, and what is sent eventually to their publishers is usually worked on further before it appears in print. An editor at a big publishing house once described his career and some of the famous authors he had worked with in the Atlantic Monthly. He said it is not uncommon for manuscripts to be passed on from one editor to another when a work is felt more appropriate for a different publisher. Some great names insist on having unwanted m/s returned so that they may, themselves, send to the next publisher a clean copy free of the comments and criticisms they know will be in the margins of the first one.

The pain of writing thoughtfully will never go away. If you are critical of your own efforts, dissatisfaction may bring on even more pain despite experience and greater facility with the language. Yes, it is more difficult than gardening; that comes, as you suggest, from the privacy in which you garden and the public character of writing -- the ego is at stake.

My task is to help provide you with a basis for self criticism. You must practice your criticism, too, on everything you read: from Shakespeare to Pacific Horticulture, keep one eye on what is being said and the other on how it is said. You are coming along well. Don't despair and don't feel embarrassed -- not with me, at least. Our exchanges are strictly private.

In a while I'll send you my comments on the most recent draft. They won't be extensive; you have given the piece pretty well what it needed. My main concern at the moment is what illustrations it needs for publication. Of your suggested titles I like Learning the Limits best.

Have you given thought to the range of your future writing? I often wonder whether you are confined, by and large, to your home in the hills, or do you get out to other gardens? How will you extend your experience and subject matter if you don't travel and talk with other gardeners? The hermit's life is all very well, but it limits a writer to introspective and philosophical pieces. I'd like to hear your thoughts on it.

Sincerely,

31 August 1994

Barbara Deutsch
1919 Nineteenth Street
San Francisco CA 94107

Dear Ms Deutsch:

Thank you for your letter of 24 August, and the enclosed sample of Willow Boughs. That design of Morris' first made me aware of his reputation as designer. I purchased the Nonsuch Press edition of his collected writing many years ago, and the pattern was used on the end papers. It has been a favorite ever since and one day I hope to paper a wall or even a room with it. May Morris may have helped in designs that came from the Morris workshops, but I haven't read of it. She certainly made tapestries and did embroidery; Yeats' sister studied under May.

My first interest was in Morris' political ideas; only later did I become aware of the extent of his reputation as a leader in the Arts and Crafts Movement. When my interest in printing and type faces developed, there, again, was Morris shaking the Victorians out of their indifference to the clumsy type and sloppy design in use by printers of his day. A highlight of the mid-80s for me was an exhibit of Morris books and typography at the Bancroft Library. There on display was a copy his Chaucer in all its glory, Golden type and all. It was the first I had seen. Since that Nonsuch anthology I have read several other things, including a number of his Mediaeval romances, which, I was surprised to discover, are available in cheap paperback editions for devotees of what is known as Adult Fantasy. The more I learn the more I find to admire in him. Now I am able to appreciate the unity of his political thought and artistic inspiration. There can be no doubt of the breadth of his talent and his wide influence, even as a poet; he was offered the post of Poet Laureate by Victoria, but declined it.

Philip Henderson mentions Yeats' admiration for Morris, but doesn't give the quotation you mention. Henderson does quote Yeats as saying that Morris was the most loved of people in the way that one loves a child, and that he was a Mediaeval romantic. This is, as Henderson points out, only partially true. I can find no mention of Yeats in Mackail's pioneering biography. But it was written while May was still living, and many documents available now were probably hidden then.

I saw something on book design by Morris in the rare books section of Black Oak Books the other day. I dare not even ask the price, but would love to have added it to my collection! Perhaps in a day or so I'll find the courage to go in again and ask to handle it, at least. Black Oak is so temptingly close -- only a fifteen minutes walk.

Thank you for your observations and kind encouragement. May I extract the comment on the weeping torreya as a letter for the next (Jan. '95) PH?

Sincerely,

26 February 1995

Barbara Deutsch
1919 Nineteenth Street
San Francisco CA 94107

Dear Ms Deutsch:

Your delightful card (and addenda!) welcomed my return from Seattle, where I had been judging garden exhibits in the Northwest Flower and Garden Show. After only seven years it is already the third largest spring show in the country -- Philadelphia and, I think, Massachusetts are larger. I usually find something irresistible in the used book stalls there, and this time came away with the first of David Fairchild's several memoirs on his travels in search of plants for the US Department of Agriculture. I already have one or two volumes.

I agree that the butterfly quarterly mentioned recently in PH is somewhat superficial, but when considering the early efforts of enterprising editors, am invariably reminded of my own early blunders, and my tone softens.

Surely we aren't obliged to refer to Tilden Botanic Garden always as the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Tilden Park? Insistence upon the full title will do no good in the long run, no matter how valid the reasons for it may seem to those connected with the garden. Lay folk will use the shorter title for the same reason the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is known almost universaly by the acronym NATO -- it is shorter, pithy and no less precise once generally recognized.

Widespread acceptance of a shortened name is often a mark of respect -- of arrival, so to speak: the Royal Horticultural Society's Great Spring Show is called Chelsea Show, and the Royal Botanical Gardens, Richmond, has long been called Kew Gardens -- it is convenient and in no way derogatory -- quite the reverse, in fact. A shorter name in common use is the mark of reputation, and sometimes conveys affection. Notice how we drop the first name, and even titles, from the famous -- Lincoln, Jefferson, Nixon, Eisenhower -- without the least loss of respect. It is a mark of their status that we shorten names to Bogart, Cagney, or Garbo. What harm is there, then, in using the popular name Tilden Botanic Garden in a passing reference to it? The full name was appropriate, I agree, in the opening to Edwards' article for the Summer '92 PH, when the garden was the principal subject, but I would have urged use of the shorter name elsewhere in the text had the need arisen.

I haven't heard of Irene Wellingham's calligraphy, nor her More Than Fine Writing. I do have Morris's A Book of Verse, the decorated manuscript reprinted by Scolar Press and Clarkson Potter in 1981. Perhaps you alluded to that in speaking of Irene W and Morris? Please tell me more.

Sincerely,

2 August 1995

Sigrid Ewold
Box 1815
Mendocino CA 95460

Dear Ms Ewold:

Thank you for your kind and thoughtful letter of July 31. I find the points you raise so interesting that I have put aside correspondence already awaiting attention in order to respond at once.

I agree that stories of the Peace rose are romanticized for promotional purposes: one version even had the bud-wood leaving France in the last diplomatic bag out of Paris. And yes, the rose nurseries in Germany were, and are, excellent: Alain Meilland says that bud-wood of Peace was sent simultaneously to Germany and Spain, as well as to the US. As for German hybridizers, Wilhelm Kordes is among the most highly regarded worldwide today.

But in saying that bud-wood left France just ahead of advancing German forces I in no way wanted to suggest that those forces were bent on searching out roses for destruction. The idea was simply that correspondence and the shipping of roses abroad would be more difficult, if not impossible, once the country was occupied. Whatever misunderstanding my remark may have created, nothing in the nature of anti-German feeling should be seen in it, nor any charge of prejudice laid at my door. As a young man of military age I was subject to the full force of overheated World War II propaganda in England, but declined to participate in any hostile act, despite family loss and suffering. Instead, I turned my effort to refining blood plasma for medical use.

The German iris is a more complicated matter. Botanists have not been able to establish a natural habitat for it, and today consider the German iris to be a naturally occurring hybrid whose parents were probably native to the Mediterranean region of Europe. The listing, Iris X germanica, in Hortus III and other references designates that hybrid status. It is an exceptionally vigorous plant, as such hybrids often are, and is widely naturalized throughout the world, as well as in Germany. Why it is called the German iris is something of a mystery. Fritz Kohlein, in Iris (Timber Press, 1987), says: "It is certain that the origins of this sword flag were not in Germany, as its name Iris germanica, given to it by Linnaeus in 1750, implies." But the world of plants is full of enigmas: the English iris is native to Spain and France -- not to England at all; Azalea indica is not from India; Simmondsia chinensis (source of jojoba oil) in not Chinese, but an American native. So botanical names as well as vernacular ones may confuse.

Kohlein gives an interesting account of the development of hybrid bearded irises, from which it can be seen that the introduction of tetraploid irises from the Middle East and Asia Minor in the early years of this century gave rise to new genetic combinations that greatly broadened the color range of their flowers. So mixed now is the parentage, and so influential are the tetraploids in it, that it would be misleading to call them by the name of any

one kind of iris, least of all one that is not a tetraploid. But if it were to have such a name, why Iris X germanica? Why not instead I. florentina? I. mesopotamica? I. variegata? They and several others are represented in tall bearded irises.

And those original irises are all still with us. Perhaps the root of the problem is in seeing the term tall bearded irises as replacing the name Iris X germanica. It does not. The term designates a group of complex hybrids that are now so far from their origins as to need some less specific name, whereas the other names refer to botanical entities that, species or not, are self sustaining in the wild. No modern hybrid bearded iris could survive for long outside a garden.

Leo Jelitto and Wilhelm Schacht, in Hardy Herbaceous Perennials (Timber Press, 1990) also use the more descriptive term tall bearded irises, and while not discussing their development in detail, do make passing reference to Iris germanica as one of several in their parentage.

Mathew, whom I quoted in the article, takes a similar view of bearded irises, but suggests that Iris florentina, I. mesopotamica, and several others, may be subspecies of I. X germanica. This seems an odd stance to take while holding to the view that germanica is a natural hybrid. But it is clear that there are few absolutes in botany (or anything else for that matter), and the confusion represented here only underlines the fact.

In conclusion, may I ask whether members of iris societies worldwide, who have adopted the term bearded irises and encourage its use, are really guilty of deliberate propagandizing, or even unwitting complicity in it? From my own close association with those dedicated irisarians here and in England I must admit to the most profound doubt.

I hope this explains my viewpoint sufficiently, and that you will find in my garden scribblings only the benign motives that prompted them. As you see, few things are simple, and heredity in botanical matters is less clear than we might wish.

Thank you for your interest in Pacific Horticulture; I hope we may continue to deserve your high regard.

Sincerely,

20 August 1993

Mark Francis and Andreas Reimann
Department of Environmental Design
University of California
Davis, CA 95616

Dear Mr Francis and Ms Reimann:

Thank you for the copy of notes from your Ecological Garden Design Workshops and the invitation to comment on them. Many of your participants are professionals in garden design with a need to understand social trends as they affect demands upon their services. The piece in Pacific Horticulture to which you refer was merely my musing on the tendency for gardens to be regarded as conservation areas. I have no point of view on landscape design worthy of your consideration.

But in the spirit of discussion represented in the notes I offer some rather sketchy and incomplete thoughts prompted by my reading of them.

Some gardens are settings for the house; some are expressions of wealth; some are hobbyists' havens; some, the vast majority I surmise, are simply there to keep the site tidy. All, to some degree, reflect an outlook on the world. Do designers want it to be their own outlook that is reflected or their client's? Which is most likely to give long term satisfaction to the client?

Why not provide clients with the gardens they ask for rather than urge them towards an ecological ideal favored by the designer? Is it the designer's conscience that is being salved? Gardens of any kind are surely more wholesome than autos, armaments, deforestation, speculative development, and the poisoning of land, sea and air by industries locked in deadly competition. Persuading home owners to toe the ecological line in face of these horrors risks accusations of pettiness. Resentment generated by demands for domestic water conservation is already present among gardeners aware of the amount used in agriculture.

Clearer distinction seems to be needed between gardens freely designed with regard to local climate, soil, and topography (the Genius of the Place in all), and those that attempt fidelity to nature.

Are designers turning towards literal interpretations of nature from a paucity of artistic inspiration? Gardens as art draw inspiration from religious, historical, philosophical, domestic, and political mores, and from the site itself. Blended into an original design, these influences, while discernible, are seldom obvious. Nature literally reproduced ignores so many sources of inspiration and its origins are so obvious that questions of art seem scarcely relevant.

Thank you for stimulating me to further consideration of this thorny subject.

Sincerely,

23 March 1997

George Gessert
1230 W Broadway
Eugene OR 97402

Dear Mr Gessert:

Thank you for the review of Plants For the Future. I like your criticism of the book and your ideas on the need for debate on breeding and other methods for producing new plants. (But I recall the ferment at the outset of gene splicing, when scientists, philosophers, and other thinkers assembled to debate the ethics of the process. A manifesto appeared calling for great caution and the thorough examination of each new product. Where is that talk now? The Feds. allowed the first engineered tomato onto the market without a murmur, saying, in effect, "how would we test it anyway?")

As you anticipate, the review is rather long for PH. It would be best if we could remove about 200 words, but that may be difficult. I'd like to suggest a few changes, some of which, by tightening it overall, might even highten the emphsis on your most important ideas. Perhaps you can find other ways of shortening it.

You have a strong argument at the top of page 2 that might be more telling with a little rephrasing to shorten it. I suggest:

Malitz does not speak for all gardeners. Organic gardeners, and probably most others, want pest- and disease-resistant plants, but they don't want insecticide- and fungicide-resistant plants. Resistance to sprays of this kind is a genetic trait advocated by agribusiness. Crop plants resistant to herbicides and other chemicals for the eradication of pests and weeds could allow greater use of sprays. The goal is heavier crops, but the outcome may also be heavier use of chemicals and an increase in the health problems that seem inseparable from them.

Contamination and health hazards associated with agricultural chemicals have been known for years, but Malitz seems oblivious to them. "The potential is immeasurable," he says, "and progress to date has been astounding." He does not mention reports of herbicide residues higher in some urban areas that in the country, probably due to indiscriminate use of domestic lawn and garden products. Would herbicide resistant garden plants worsen this already serious condition?

The tone throughout is one of exaltation at the prospect of gardens and plants made exactly as we want them to be. Concern for the land and the environment is hard to detect. But many gardeners consider place something to honor, not overcome. Plants adapted to particular hardiness zones and soil types express place especially well, and place-conscious gardeners see no need to engineer drought-resistant kalmias or frost-hardy plumerias.

This is about 30-40 fewer words words than on page 2 down to "At the same time ..."

On page 3 I suggest deleting from "Forigene ... (line 3) to the end of the para. Then, at the mention of Florigene in the next para change to:

Florigene, an Australian biotechnical company that for almost a decade has been attempting to produce the longed-for blue rose, has already transferred genetic material from the nightshade family into the rose, dianthus, and composite families, suggesting some of the possibilities. . . and so on.

(By the way, am I correct in supposing that genetically produced plants would be cloned, and therefore lack the inherent genetic variation vital to survival in the wild? The thought came to me at the mention of genetic engineering as a way of rescuing endangered plant species. Cultivars of native plants, usually asexually propagated, are already subject to criticism from those who argue that their widespread use in gardens precludes the possibility of garden plants becoming a source from which lost species may be resuscitated.)

Consider too, replacing the section (P.3, 4th line up) from "In the mid-1980s . . " to the end of the para, with something along these lines:

Most of the achievements in genetic engineering that astounded us in the newspapers, such as firefly luminescence transferred to plants, remain unexploited. What we do see, and will see in future, are those products of gene transfer that make money for someone, and these products will be launched with little regard for their value to society as a whole. Jerome Malitz and other gardeners who are not particularly . . . etc.

With a few amendments of this kind it should be possible to get your review to a suitable length for PH. I hope you agree and can manage the reduction; it is a valuable contribution and needs to be read by gardeners.

Sincerely,

Heidi Gildemeister
Torre de Ariant
E-07460 Pollensa-Mallorca
SPAIN

Fax 347 153 1497
My fax 510 524 1914
26 November 1995

Dear Heidi:
Many thanks for the sternbergia piece. Among the photographs included with it, number one caught my attention at once as a well composed garden scene with sternbergias prominent throughout and shapely trees in the background. Under the loupe, however, the picture proved to be unsuitable for reproduction because so little of it was sharp. I wonder whether it will be possible to shoot that scene again in the near future?

May I venture to suggest how a better picture might be obtained? Having in mind the effort and concentration you bring to gardening and writing, it seems probable that you would want to apply the same diligence to photography. Picture number one is dated 1989 and since then you have probably already learned how, but I will take the plunge and send you my thoughts on sharp pictures.

Sharpness comes from a rock steady camera and extreme care in focussing the lens. Sharpness throughout the depth of a scene requires in addition the smallest practicable lens aperture. Small apertures demand slow shutter speeds. Slow shutter speeds plus rock steadiness are seldom possible with hand held cameras; some other support for the camera is necessary -- in other words, a tripod.

Very few of my own photographs are made without a tripod. A good tripod is not necessarily the lightest or most gadget ridden. Gitzo tripods, from France, are simple, well made, and reasonably light in weight. Weight is important in a tripod as a damper of vibration and a resister of wind shake. It is best to choose the heaviest one compatible with expected use. In wild places where camera and tripod must be carried long distances, I take the smallest and lightest of my Gitzos, but at home, or when gear can be carried in a vehicle I use a much heavier one.

As an additional aid to sharpness when using a single-lens reflex camera I release the mirror in advance of the shutter. Most modern SLRs have a knob or lever for this, and it allows vibration from mirror movement to subside before the exposure is made. A flexible shutter release is also worthwhile. I use a Rowi pneumatic bulb. It is provided with a reel of fine tubing which can be cut to convenient length for everyday use (mine is about 18 inches long). Several pneumatic devices from Taiwan and other Asian countries have proven unreliable, but the Rowi, from Germany I believe, is robust and I have used it for years on 35mm and medium format cameras without the slightest difficulty. Flexible wire releases are too short and stiff in my experience.

A picture that seems adequate when projected is often seen to be unsharp when examined under a loupe of five to ten times magnification. This is because the screen is viewed from a distance and breaks up the image. We reconstruct it in our mind as sharper than it really is.

Hope this helps without giving offense.

Sincerely,

Pacific Horticulture
W. George Waters, Editor
1914 Napa Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94707
(415) 524-1914

October '85

Mrs Bodil Leamy
The Botanical Garden
University of British Columbia
6501 N. W. Marine Drive
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V6T 1W5

Dear Mrs Leamy:

Thank you for your letter of October 29 and the enclosed pages from Davidsonia.

The subject you propose, the use of unusual plants in hanging baskets, would be welcome in Pacific Horticulture, but I venture to suggest changes in treatment that will make the article more suitable for our readers.

The didactic tone should be removed as far as is possible. For example, the seventh paragraph on page 72 of the Davidsonia copy could be rewritten in some such way as this: "Plants with leaves that have bold and clearly defined patterns of variegation look cleaner and crisper from a distance than those with vague and soft changes in color." You thus avoid telling readers what they should choose.

And on page 74 it should be sufficient to explain the dangers from drying winds without saying "A windy site should be avoided." Your readers are flattered when, within reason, you take for granted their ability to see simple solutions once you have laid out the problem.

In going over your article you also will find places where the didactic style lengthens sentences unnecessarily and gives them a tone unattractive to sophisticated readers. Phrases like "It should be kept in mind that. . ." and "Various factors should be taken into consideration. . ." add nothing to your message and are best avoided.

The fifth paragraph on page 72 should be your model. In it I would change only "number of species" to "variety of plants" and, perhaps, delete "as well as the color scheme," substituting "change" for "vary" near the end of it. Nonetheless, it is a good tight paragraph with a style most appropriate for Pacific Horticulture.

If you will rework the material along these lines, and suggest a few successful combinations (as well as individual plants) for baskets, I think the article may prove ideal

19 August 1995

To Russ
From George

Herewith a draft in which I have tried to suggest ways of bringing a more relaxed, conversational tone to the opening of your article. I felt a need to make more of the earthy images (flowery cottage garden, tropical jungle) and less of the abstractions (larger regional determinants, seemingly antithetical models). In adding passages here and there I may have overdone it, but found the ideas in them helped in steering the discussion towards the every-day and away from the formality of academia. If the suggestions help you towards the voice you found in Browning of the Greensward, then they have served the purpose, even if you scratch them now.

Let us look at the title, too. Perhaps something less stylistic? Those colonic headlines reek of academia. Perhaps we could find a plainer one that reaches towards the ordinary gardener's heart? With the strong trend to naturalism (Stephen Lacey brings it up in his contribution) maybe something like Your Eden in a Weed Patch would do? Or Wildflowers Replace the Greensward? We'll think of something.

Cheers,

Draft with suggestions for Approaching Eden: the Regional Garden in California

With the decline of interest in elaborate Victorian bedding schemes and excessive use of exotic specimen plants, garden designers have, since early this century, been at a loss for direction. At first, a few designers tried to come to terms with the mediterranean climate and semi-arid landscape, and their efforts found a kind of harmony adapted to California's climate and landscape in borrowings from Spanish and Italian architecture and naturalistic gardens loosely related to the Arts and Crafts Movement.

But there is goal, elusive and ill-defined, that is not satisfied by the results of this preliminary, tentative search for a style of gardening. The elements remain imported and reflect more of their lenders than of their borrowers. Wonderful as many of these gardens are, little is felt in them of a sense of home and region. They demonstrate a failure, so far, to come to terms with the climate and topography of the West in the way that, say, the Spanish have in their shaded patios and channeled waterways, or the English in their mid-eighteenth century landscapes blending aesthetics and utility.

Perhaps a regional style will always elude us. Surrounded as we are, like children at Christmas with too much of everything and insulated by mass-manufactured diversions, we are denied those experiences of earth, air, and water from which a shared sense of place emerges. Many are satisfied with the mishmash of European (mainly English) and Asian styles that constitute garden design here at present. For them, gardens are highly personal expressions of human needs, desires, and aspirations, in which the gardener finds a retreat from the chaos and trauma of a harsh and unwelcoming world. Why should that garden not be individual -- a dream world even -- incorporating whatever ideas

the gardener wishes? Why not, they may ask, do as we like?

True enough. Gardening is, after all, the peoples art, and through personal expression the finest gardens are created. But is there not some higher order within which we can do as we like? Are there no ecological and social constraints within which our gardens can express more than self interest or fashion? Can our gardens satisfy our fancies and life-styles while also responding to some larger regional need so that a shared vision may result in greater, longer lasting satisfaction for all?

Assuming that a regional identity in garden design is possible or even desirable, recognizing those things that might form it will not be easy wherever in the West we live. We are coming to see, and are sometimes forced to see, what does not contribute to our identity: it is not the rolling greensward of moist temperate climates back East; the flowery water-demanding English cottage garden; or the Rousseau lushness of a make-believe tropical jungle. Gardeners here and there in the West have attempted, some with slight success to make and maintain these gardens, but recognition of their incongruity is slowly growing.

The significance of our search is revealed when we step back to look at the qualities of the region in which we live, the vast changes over the past century or so that have diminished or forever altered the natural landscape, and the relentless manner in which we occupy and dominate the place we love. Added to these are the fires, floods, and rainless winters to remind us of the natural forces that govern our lives.

14 September 1995. To Russ Beatty from George re m/s Approaching Eden: The Regional Garden in California.

Dear Russ:

Here are a few thoughts following our recent discussions on your article. In the matter of my feeling, and your questioning, that the style is academic in places, let me mention as examples a few words and phrases that seem stiff, over-formal, or otherwise out of place for a general readership -- qualities that I summarize as academic.

Page 1.
Par. 2, line 1: "Today we are searching for that elusive, yet compelling goal" takes the reader somewhat for granted. Spoken, the phrase would focus the thoughts of an audience of colleagues and carry them along with you, but it is a mistake, I believe, to assume on the first page that all readers share your goal. Following a few pages of persuasion one might perhaps invite them to do so.

Par. 2, line 6: "seemingly antithetical models" could probably be replaced with "gardens of both kinds." You were probably led to this phrase by the sentence's opening "But even here we find obvious disagreement." Following this familiar scholarly parry in demonstrating familiarity with all sides of the question, the formality of "antithetical models" becomes almost inevitable.

Par. 3, line 1: "In our Euro/Anglo-centric dominated world of landscape and garden design," seems a somewhat forbidding way of saying, "Throughout the West, as in most other parts of the country, our gardens reflect European, especially English, influence and ideas." In later pages you concentrate on gardens rather than landscape design, which is OK with me. So I felt easy in omitting landscape design here.

Par. 4, line 5: "responding to some larger regional determinants so that the synergistic result," would, in some earlier incarnation of yours, I'm sure, have been said differently. How about "reflecting the surrounding landscape, our history and community, so that they give greater . . ."

Page 2.
Par. 3, line 2: Does "This statement is interpreted further by the late Wallace Stegner in," say more than "Wallace Stegner takes it further in?"

Russ, you implied that readers are more sophisticated than I assume, and will understand words like synergistic and antithetical. Many will, I know, but like me, will find their unfamiliarity tiring after a page or so. Simpler, everyday words are best used if the reader is to enjoy instant rapport with the writer, and follow him without hesitation into the intricacies of his argument. If you read again the vernacular draft in which I have tried to condense your intro, please consider the tone of it, rather than the ideas, just to see whether it seems worthwhile aiming for language of that sort. I know that you are under considerable pressure, but do want you represented in this issue, and will do all I can to help resolve these questions to our mutual satisfaction.

Cynthia Simley
151 East Noble Street
Stockton CA 95204-4522

8 August 1994

Dear Ms Simley:
Thank you for your letter of 27 July about your plans for a nocturnal garden. Mildred Mathias is away and has asked me to reply for her.

Your ideas for the garden are most original, and seem to call for artistic rather than horticultural or botanical aptitude. I can't help feeling that, whatever help you find, the success of the project will depend upon experiment and your own sensitivity.

My own experience of gardens in the evening suggests that pale flowers -- white, cream, pale yellow and pale blue -- will reflect moonlight more effectively than those of any other color. Moonlight has little red in it, if any, and colors such as crimson and scarlet, that reflect nothing but red light will look dull in your proposed garden. Colors that incline to red, such as mauve and magenta, would suffer similarly and are probably best avoided, too. Many white flowers are pollinated by moths and release their scent at night, so your nocturne may be played with accompaniment.

For patterns I suspect you would rely mostly upon leaves; among them the choice is wide, and limited only by climate and space. This will change as plants grow, and allowance must be made for this. From the delicate tracery of Japanese maples, especially the cut-leaf kinds, to the huge perforations of monsteras (Swiss cheese plant), you need only visit a respectable nursery to see the possibilities open to you. Plants with gray and silvery leaves may serve in two ways -- reflecting moonlight as do pale flowers, and making shadows, too. Many with gray and silver leaves are herbaceous plants one to three feet tall, and may need raising in pots and baskets for shadow play.

When the moon is at its highest most shadows will be thrown by leaves overhead onto the ground, and plenty of pale paving or gravel will be needed to capture them. Finely cut leaves show better shadows on smooth surfaces; large leaves will work on almost anything including gravel. Finding out what gives the best effect will take a while and be easiest with plants in pots; that way you can move them about experimentally, planting them only when you're satisfied.

Experiment will be the essence of your new garden. It is an artistic endeavor that will depend upon a personal response to the effects you create; some will bring an emotional response, others will not, and be discarded. I doubt if anyone has written on plants used in quite the way you envision. Peter Lower, author of several garden books who lives in South Carolina, wrote on gardens in the evening recently. I don't have the book, and can't give you the exact title, but I'm sure your public library will find it for you. It came out in the past three years, and may still be in book shops.

As for student help, perhaps it would be best to approach a local college such as the University of the Pacific (I believe that's what it's called) which is in your own town. They may even have a department of horticulture.

Please let me know of your progress.

Sincerely,

13 November 1988

Nevin Smith
358 Merck Road
Watsonville, CA 95076

Dear Nevin:

How is the arctostaph. project now? I know how difficult the job is and wish that I could help in bringing it to completion. More immediate jobs are always waiting to be done and repeatedly distract from longer term things like this one. But you said in your last letter that much of it is done, and I was greatly encouraged. Perhaps this is a good time to consider a new date to shoot for.

What about April? That leaves time to collect any new photographs that are needed and, given the wet winter we all pray for, allows plenty of evenings by the stove for the writing!

Is there anything I can do from here? Should I be ready to get photographs in February? And do you need more frequent messages from me to help keep the project in mind? Just let me know; I do appreciate the size of the task and the difficulty of pulling it off along with earning the daily bread. I persist, despite allthis, because it is an important article, greatly needed inhorticultural circles.

With my best wishes to you,

Nevin Smith
358 Merck Road
Watsonville, CA 95076

10 October 1994

Dear Nevin:

The manzanita article is splendid! Congratulations on a tremendous task well done. Here is a copy of the manuscript prepared for typesetting. Please mark it up with any changes you feel are needed. Try to ignore the symbols in square brackets; I'm sure you'll recognize them as signals for a computerized type setting machine. Little has changed from your original, but you may like to have my thoughts on reading it and reasons for the few suggestions incorporated in this copy.

1/ Grey or gray: we adopted the spelling "gray" some years ago, and must be consistent from issue to issue and within each issue.

2/ Clone: a widely and loosely used word imperfectly understood by readers. I urge its replacement with "plants," or if that is not appropriate, with another word or phrase that avoids ambiguity.

3/ Selection and population: in this context, more familiar to you than to readers. I suspect that many see them as jargon. The phrase "a plant selected from the wild" is clear but used alone as a noun the word selection leaves a shadow of doubt in the lay reader's mind. "Selection" and "clone" are used by some to avoid repetition of the word plant. I feel that losing the reader is too great a risk for so small a gain. The word plant is simple, unambiguous, and its frequent use inevitable in an article on plants.

4/ Fungous: the New Shorter Oxford discriminates between fungous and fungus, but Webster's Unabridged (2nd ed.) doesn't. Fungous will therefore be seen as a Britishism, to which I am understandably sensitive.

5/ Subspecies and variety: taxonomists have abandoned all pretense of knowing one from the other. We have therefore abandoned use of terms such as var. and subsp. in favor of simply appending the trinomial without introduction. (Why not, after all, since we don't insert sp. between generic and specific names?)

6/ Acknowledgements: to lessen the impression, already too common, that PH is a scholarly journal we omit formal acknowledgements along with lists of references. I hope you feel that mention in the text is sufficient acknowledgement.

7/ Fuzzy: first appearing in quotes on page seven, the use sounds slangy. Replacing it with furry, as used elsewhere, is clearer.

8/ Title: shall we add "a Gardeners Guide" to link up with your survey of ceanothus?

9/ Vandenberg: your informal use of this name for a plant of A. purissima is best deleted in view of the perhaps authentic A. rudis cultivar of that name mentioned later. Or is neither a true cultivar and single quotes around the name unintended?

Many thanks,

Illustrations

I will attempt to run the text complete in one issue along with perhaps a dozen pictures in color. I can do no less for such a monumental effort! From a preliminary selection of your slides I have the following list chosen for variety of habitat and subject, as well as pictorial and technical quality, and probable impact on the page.

1ARC-002, 2ARC-005, 3ARC-007. These are garden and habitat shots, the first shows A. 'Pt Reyes'in Strybing Arb. I would prefer to show a private garden such as is seen in -005 (Peggy Greer's), but the composition in -002 has so much more depth and interest. The second shows low-growing A. hookeri at Elkhorn, the other tree-like A. manzanita in the Napa Hills.

3ARC-002, 3ARC-008, 4ARC-004, 4ARC-005. All four are taken fairly close-up and have fine modeling: green fruit of A. manzanita, russet of A. glauca, and red-cheeked of A. tomentosa, plus A. uva ursi in flower and rich red fruit.

1ARC-010, 2ARC009. The first of these shows the rich brown bark of A. glauca in Henry Coe State Park, the second pink tinted young leaves of A. glandulosa. The bark picture is critically sharp somewhere near the middle of the bush, which leaves the prominent trunks a little soft in focus, but used small this will not be too obvious.

1ARC-001, 4ARC-007. Both are of A. viscida below Shaver Lake showing gray leaves and pink flowers. I have yet to decide between them; the sharper has shadow within the plant, which is slightly more distant and lacking detail, the other, though softer in focus, has a more intriguingly mysterious background.

1ARC-013, 1ARC-014, 2ARC-009. The first shows aphid gall, the second botriosphaeria. Both worth using unless you feel the need to displace them with pictures of other species or cultivars.

I had in mind using pictures of Gaultheria and Comanostaphylis, but realized that they would displace pictures of manzanitas, which are more important.

There is also a picture of a large cluster of flowers on A. pajaroensis. Wayne showed me a plant in a Berkeley garden that he thought remarkable, so I photographed it with a 60mm camera. I mention it because of the detail captured in the larger format. We could use it if you feel it worthwhile.

14 August 1992

Elizabeth Stromme
2411 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles CA 90026

Dear Ms Stromme:

Thank you for your interesting letter of August 7. Your stories on horticultural themes certainly break new ground and it must be dismaying to find publishers reluctant to help cultivate it. But their's is a conservative profession, so patience is needed in dealing with it.

My contacts in book publishing are few, and those I have confirm the hazardous nature of the business. Atlantic Monthly Press published a number of excellent garden books of literary rather than exclusively practical merit: the editor now works on Harrowsmith magazine and the AMP gardening department is no more.

On the brighter side: You are probably familiar with John Sherwood's crime stories in which the detective work is done by Celia Grant, owner of a nursery in England through which a great deal of esoteric plant lore is worked into his plots. I enjoyed his Green Trigger Finger, and Botanist at Bay, but none of the others have yet come my way. Grant seems to have a loyal following and I would expect that Scribner's Sons, the US publishers, might now be receptive to further horticultural themes.

David Godine, a small publisher in Boston, has a list of lesser known authors in high quality editions. Godine is himself a keen gardener and wants to extend his publishing further into that field. It may be worth your while sounding him out.

Timber press, in Portland, Oregon, tends heavily towards instructional books, but has now and then done things such as Bellis' Gardening and Beyond, a sort of private philosophical excursion into plants that may suggest Timber's willingness to consider unusual manuscripts.

Sending a copy of one chapter and an outline of the story to all of these, and to any other publishers who may possibly be interested, seems the way to proceed -- tedious, but probably essential if you no longer retain an agent. There certainly is no royal road to success here. Endurance seems the important quality to bring to the task.

I wish I were able to give more help, but offer my best wishes and the hope that you prevail soon.

Sincerely,

19 August 1993

Elizabeth Stromme
2411 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles CA 90026

Dear Ms Stromme:

It has taken me a while to respond, I'm afraid, and I must ask you to forgive me. In some odd way several manuscripts came along at the same time, and have had to be put aside for a lull in the production schedule.

The Gardens of the Villa Val d'Or blends taxonomy with garden lore and travel. It is a fine idea, plant names being too painful for most people to contemplate, and your sugar coating certainly helps down the taxonomic pill. It is also enjoyable reading, but the story leans more towards travel, and I would think that magazines with departments devoted to vacations would be pleased to see it. Wasn't a new mag. launched recently blending travel and gardens?

I've looked for ways to deal with taxonomy in PH, but among several ideas proposed and manuscripts submitted, have found nothing that meets our particular need. Most are too dull for words or are condescending. I have no better ideas of my own, and so the subject languishes. Should I try harder?

Thank you for your continued interest in Pacific Horticulture.

Sincerely,

4 October 1996

Elizabeth Stromme
2411 Sunset Boulevard
Los Angeles CA 90026

Dear Elizabeth:

Thank you for your letter and enclosure of 30 September. I had read the Tulipa saxatilis article in TSCG and was touched by the similarity it showed to my own experience of that tulip. I first saw it in Frederick Stern's garden, Highdown, in England, where it had naturalized and traveled great distances. Apparently the bulbs are somewhat rhizomatous.

My own attempts to cultivate the tulip in a garden further north in England failed. Here in Berkeley Marjorie Schmidt had a small field of it which suggested that it could become a nuisance. But I put in a few bulbs and am enjoying them. So far they are well behaved, inhibited, I suspect, by shade from Magnolia stellata. Last year I was obliged to trim the magnolia, which was interfering with the dome of Acer palmatum dissectum. This may give the tulip a chance to colonize the neighborhood, but that may not be such a disaster.

Your article reminds us that some wild tulips are preferable to the enlarged Dutch ones. (I'm reminded of William T. Stearn who, during an after-dinner conversation in London, amused everyone with a comparison of Turkish and Dutch national preferences in tulips as they reflect cultural concepts of feminine beauty.) Enjoyable as your story is, I prefer not to reprint it. For PH the tone needs to be a little more earnest. And as a rule I avoid reprints, having succumbed only rarely.

But if you should feel the urge to spill more ink sometime, do keep me in mind.

Sincerely,

25 August 1997

Louise Bustard, Assistant Curator *
Information and Customer Services
Glasgow Botanic Gardens
730 Great Western Road
Glasgow G12 0UE SCOTLAND

Dear Louise:

It's wonderful to hear from you and to learn of new developments in your department at the botanic garden. I'm sure you'll make a splendid success of the new exhibitions. Pierre Emile L'Angelier's sorry fate is an irresistible story to work into the exhibit in some way. You'll not want to play it up too much, of course, lest your visitors think they're at Madame Tussaud's Wax-works, but it doesn't hurt to have a little scandal to tickle the public appetite for knowledge. Perhaps you could make use of Pierre's fate by linking it with the introduction to a display of plants in the garden from which alternative poisons (less easily diagnosed than arsenic?) are extracted -- unless you think it may cause an epidemic of passed-on paramours!

And beware lest your sneaking admiration for Madelaine be put down by your colleagues to the subconscious operation of the spider principle by which post-copulatory males in some species are disposable!

Talking of disposables, I am no longer the editor of Pacific Horticulture. Perhaps the Fall '97 issue is still on its way to you, but in it you will find my fond farewells to contributors, readers, and others who made my task possible and pleasant. I stepped down because I feel that a draft of youthful energy is needed to propel the magazine into the next century. Letters of thanks and congratulations from many parts of the world have been surprising and deeply affecting in their numbers and the warmth of their kindness.

Your epilobium m/s is an excellent idea, plants of the genus being widespread. Epilobium angustifolium and other species, brought by accident or design from Europe long ago are naturalized here, and viewed with admiration or disgust, according to one's partiality for displaced natives. I will pass it on to the new editor, but before I do so, would like to make one or two suggestions for amendment:

In a mention of WWII bomb damage in London's Natural History (1945), by RSR Fitter,* there is a brief section (pages 230-34) on the work of EJ Salisbury and JE Lousely who are said to have surveyed these areas and published papers on their findings. (Separately, I assume, but other details aren't given.) In summarizing the surveys Fitter attributes the frequency of rose bay willow-herb on derelict sites to the abundance and mobility of its seed. There is no mention of it having lain dormant under buildings. This does not preclude the possibility that there was more than one source of seed, but does point to the need for confirmation, and perhaps a substantiating reference.

*Louise was working at Kew Gardens when she wrote two articles for Pacific Horticulture. This letter was in response to her draft for another, on willow herb, or fireweed. The letter includes news of her appointment at Glasgow Botanic Garden and plans for new exhibits there, and I comment on these, too.

Fitter also mentions an increase in the occurrence of elephant hawk-moths, whose larvae feed on willow herb leaves. This reminded me that, about the time I moved to Kings Langley, Hertfordshire, it was said that elephant hawk-moths were becoming rare because willow herb was almost eradicated by herbicides and by new building at the fringes of woodland where the herb was thickest. This was, of course, almost thirty years after the end of the war -- plenty of time for a plenty-to-poverty cycle, especially in this era of rapid change. I think your story would gain greatly from mention of the elephant hawk-moth, one of the handsomest of its kind in Britain, and from some sort of comparison of possible sources of willow-herb seed on bomb sites. If seed longevity proves to be invalid as an explanation for it, then the story passes into the realm of folk-lore -- an idea attractive in the circumstances to Londoners at that time that is worth including in the article on that basis.

Your opening paragraph is not appropriate for Pacific Horticulture and could be deleted and the two following condensed. A brief mention of the blitz, the extensive damage done, and the many sites, cleared but left vacant in some cases for several years, would be sufficient to introduce willow herb as a sort of symbol of resolution and good cheer. In these cynically grasping times mention of the defiant spirit of the people, however true, is best avoided.

I hope you will be able to find the time to make these few changes. If you would like my opinion on the new version, by all means send it to me. Otherwise you should note the new man's name and address: Richard G Turner, 4101 Twenty-Fourth Street, San Francisco CA 94114 USA. When the Fall '97 issue comes your way you will find him listed inside the front cover and in a formal announcement on page 64.

Looking forward to hearing from you again soon.

Yours,

* An early volume in that fine series published for many years by Collins called The New Naturalist. I am proud of my long run of them, extending beyond number fifty, which is on plant pollination, I believe. Those shelves are in another room, so this near-enough number will have to do. Is the series still running? George.

January 2000

HORTICULTURE, BOTANY, AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

The following interviews related to landscape architecture, garden design, horticulture, and botany have been completed by the Regional Oral History Office. Through tape recorded autobiographical interviews with scholars and professionals in these fields, individuals working in a wide range of gardens and arboreta, and members of native plant conservation groups, we are documenting over a half-century of growth and change in wild and cultivated California and the West. The interviews, transcribed, indexed, and bound, may be ordered at cost for deposit in research libraries.

Individual Memoirs

BANCROFT, Ruth (b. 1908), The Ruth Bancroft Garden in Walnut Creek, California: Creation in 1971, and Conservation. 1993, 149 pp. Interviews with the owner-designer of a four-acre dry garden in Walnut Creek, California, the Ruth Bancroft Garden, the first garden designated under The Garden Conservancy.

BRACELIN, N. Floy, The Ynes Mexia Botanical Collections. 1982, 25 pp. An interview with N. Floy Bracelin on the Mexia botanical collection and on Mrs. Mexia's Mexican and South American expeditions. Interview conducted by botanist Annetta Carter.

CARMAN, Edward S. (b. 1922), Pacific Coast Nurseryman, Award-Winning Horticulturalist, and Historian. 1998, 195 pp. Peninsula nurseryman discusses area nursery history, introduction of the kiwi and other New Zealand imports, propagation of rare and unusual plants, and the horticultural community.

CONSTANCE, Lincoln (b. 1909), Versatile Berkeley Botanist: Plant Taxonomy and University Governance. 1987, 362 pp. Dean and botanist discusses research in the biosystematics of *umbelliferae*; recollections of colleagues and graduate students.

DOMOTO, Toichi (b. 1902), A Japanese-American Nurseryman's Life in California: Floriculture and Family, 1883-1992. 1993, 360 pp. Life story of eminent nurseryman, tree, shrub, and flower breeder, bonsai practitioner; family, education, experience of racial discrimination; membership in California nursery and horticultural groups.

GREGG, John W. (1880-1969), Landscape Architect. 1965, 182 pp. First head of the Department of Landscape Architecture at UC Berkeley, professor from 1913-1946, talks about the relationship of landscape design to architecture in the early days of the profession.

ISENBERG, Gerda (1901-1997), California Native Plants Nurseywoman, Civil Rights Activist, and Humanitarian. 1991, 150 pp. History, through interviews with owner-founder, of Yerba Buena Nursery, a California native plant and exotic fern nursery in Woodside, California.

LAWYER, Adele (b. 1918) and Lewis (b. 1907), Lawyers, Inc: Partners in Plant Pathology, Horticulture, and Marriage. 1990, 273 pp. Husband and wife plant pathologists discuss research work for Del Monte Corp.; developments in fruit and vegetable varieties; breeding Pacific Coast native iris.

MCCASKILL, June (b. 1930), Herbarium Scientist, University of California, Davis. 1989, 83 pp. Discussion of curatorial functions, and public service role, of the UC Davis Herbarium, 1935-1988.

PEARCE, F. Owen (1897-1994), California Garden Societies and Horticultural Publications, 1947-1990. 1990, 86 pp. Founding of Strybing Arboretum Society; editing *California Horticultural Journal*; membership in garden organizations, and memoirs of plantsmen. Interviews conducted by Adele and Lewis Lawyer.

RODERICK, Wayne (b. 1920), California Native Plantsman: UC Botanical Garden, Tilden Botanic Garden. 1991, 166 pp. Family history and career of lifelong gardener, nurseryman; head of California section, UC Berkeley Botanical Garden, 1960-1976; head, East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden, 1976-1983.

ROTH, Lurline Matson (1890-1985), Matson and Roth Family History; A Love of Ships, Horses, and Gardens. 1982, 271 pp. History through interviews of landmark estate, "Filoli," house and gardens in Woodside California; Matson family history. Includes interview with horticulturist Toichi Domoto.

SCOTT, Geraldine Knight (1904-1989), A Woman in Landscape Architecture in California, 1926-1989. 1990, 235 pp. Distinguished practitioner's personal statement of her education and career choices; private practice for over thirty years, clients and convictions; lecturing in UC Berkeley's Department of Landscape Architecture.

WATERS, W. GEORGE (b. 1925), English Garden History, Western Gardening, and Creating and Editing *Pacific Horticulture*. 2000, 229 pp. The earlier careers and horticultural interests that led to a British gardener's re-envisioning and editing of the esteemed journal, *Pacific Horticulture*; detailed consideration of the journal's contents.

WIESLANDER, A. E. (1890-1992), California Forester: Mapper of Wildland Vegetation and Soils. 1985, 316 pp. Forestry management, education; soil and vegetation studies, mapping; native plants, and manzanita specimen plantings; history of East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden.

Multi-interview Volumes

BLAKE ESTATE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT. 1988, 582 pp. Interviews with family members, architects and landscape architects, gardeners, staff, and two presidents of the University of California to document the history of Blake House, since 1967 the University's presidential residence, and the Blake Garden, a ten-acre horticultural mecca utilized as a teaching facility.

Interviews with Mai Arbegast, Igor Blake, Ron and Myra Brocchini, Toichi Domoto, Elliot and Elizabeth Evans, Anthony Hail, Linda Haymaker, Charles Hitch, Florence Holmes, Clark and Catherine Kerr, Janice Kittredge, Geraldine Knight Scott, Louis Stein, George and Helena Thacher, Walter Vodden, and Norma Willer.

CALIFORNIA WOMEN IN BOTANY. 1987, 177 pp. Interviews with botanist Annetta Carter on the UC Berkeley Herbarium, 1930s to 1980s; Mary DeDecker, botanist and conservationist, on the desert flora of the Owens Valley region; Elizabeth McClintock, botanist, on the California Academy of Sciences Herbarium, collecting and interpretation, and conservation of rare native species of the San Francisco Bay Area.

THOMAS D. CHURCH, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT. Two volumes, 1978, 800 pp. A study of Thomas Dolliver Church (1902-1978), landscape architect, through interviews with colleagues in architecture and landscape architecture, staff, clients and friends, landscape contractors and nurserymen, and with Elizabeth Roberts Church.

Volume I: Interviews with Theodore Bernardi, Lucy Butler, June Meehan Campbell, Louis DeMonte, Walter Doty, Donn Emmons, Floyd Gerow, Harriet Henderson, Joseph Howland, Ruth Jaffe, Burton Litton, Germano Milono, Miriam Pierce, George Rockrise, Robert Royston, Geraldine Knight Scott, Roger Sturtevant, Francis Violich, and Harold Watkin.

Volume II: Interviews with Maggie Baylis, Elizabeth Roberts Church, Robert Glasner, Grace Hall, Lawrence Halprin, Proctor Mellquist, Everitt Miller, Harry Sanders, Lou Schenone, Jack Stafford, Goodwin Steinberg, and Jack Wagstaff.

LESTER ROWNTREE, CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT WOMAN. 1979, 344 pp. Memoir about Lester Rowntree (1878-1979), horticulturist, naturalist, and seed collector. Interviews with horticulturists, botanists, and family members: Margaret Campbell, Skee Hamann, Heidi Rowntree Melas, Robert Ornduff, James Roof, Cedric Rowntree, Harriette Rowntree, Lester Rowntree, Lester Bradford Rowntree, Nancy Rowntree, Rowan Rowntree, and Jo Stallard.

Volunteer Interviews

Interviews conducted by volunteer oral historian Mary Mead with the following five individuals relating to various periods and issues in the history of the California Native Plant Society.

BURR, Joyce E. (b. 1912), Memories of Years Preceding and During the Formation of the California Native Plant Society, 1947-1966, 1992, x, 120 pp. Botanic Garden site controversy, James Roof, William Penn Mott, Jr.; CNPS founding; G. Ledyard Stebbins, Alice Howard, Susan Frugé, Mary Wohlers; Huckleberry Trail, Citizens of Urban Wilderness Areas.

FLEMING, Jenny (b. 1924), Memories of the California Native Plant Society During and After Its Formation, 1955-Present, 1993, x, 108 pp. Personal interest in conservation, landscaping with native plants; CNPS plant sale, fund-raising; Bay Chapter since 1976; Tilden Botanic Garden Volunteers, Rare Plant Project; Sierra Club, US Forest Service.

STEBBINS, G. Ledyard (b. 1906), The Life and Work of George Ledyard Stebbins, Jr., 1993, vi, 145 pp. Developmental genetics, research in perennial grasses, Davis herbarium; CNPS Sacramento Chapter, and state presidency: Rare Plant Project, field trips, coordinating council, members; endangered species, North Coast-Central Valley Bio-Diversity Transect; Botanical Society, Friends of the UC Davis Arboretum, Botanical Congresses.

STROHMAIER, Leonora H. (b. 1911), Memories of Years Preceding and During the Formation of the California Native Plant Society, 1955-1973, 1992, ix, 83 pp. Ph.D. in plant physiology, work in food technology; marriage to Erwin Strohmaier; role of Berkeley Garden Club and Regional Parks Association in creation of CNPS, and CNPS early years.

WOLFE, Myrtle R. (b. 1904), Memories of Early Years and Development of the California Native Plant Society, 1966-1991, 1991, x, 92 pp. CNPS founding, and crises of fires, freezes; East Bay Regional Parks District; Tilden Botanic Garden; UC Berkeley Department of Botany, and Botanic Garden; James Roof, Wayne Roderick, other CNPS members.

INDEX--W. George Waters

Suzanne Bassett Riess

Grew up in Bucks County, Pennsylvania.
Goucher College, B.A. in English, 1957.
Post-graduate work in English and art history,
University of London and the University of California,
Berkeley.

Feature writer and assistant woman's page editor,
Globe-Times, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Oakland Museum natural science docent and chairman,
Council on Architecture. Free-lance photographer and
gardener.

Editor in the Regional Oral History Office since 1960,
interviewing in the fields of architecture, art,
social and cultural history, horticulture, journalism,
photography, physics, Berkeley and University history.