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JIM SPECHT

1930–2006

Jim Specht's name may not sound familiar to many readers; he has not been active in the International Palm Society since mid-1980. Prior to this, he was very active, and held the presidency of the California society in the 1960s. In 1967 Jim was instrumental in creating the first California newsletter, which has evolved into *The Palm Journal*.

When I first began to notice palms and their exotic beauty, Jim Specht was one of the first two people I contacted (Ed Moore was the other). Jim was very helpful in getting me started in my early gardening adventures, and especially generous with his time and encouragement. Jim introduced me to stable litter as a mulch in the garden; I continued to use this as long as it was available from local stables. Unfortunately those mulch sources go directly to landscapers or nurseries now, and I am unable to obtain any.

Jim lived in the San Diego State College area near La Mesa. He had palms in his garden that were totally foreign to me in the early 1960s. At that time, only 20–30 palm species were available for us to grow. Jim introduced me to *Copernicia*, *Acrocomia*, *Dyopsis lutescens* and *Ptychosperma*. Jim and Alice were both teachers in the Santee school district; prior to that, he was an engineer and then an auditor for the City of San Diego. I attribute his skillful designs, his ability to instruct me and others and his great organizational skills on setting up the newsletter and being local president to

those teaching skills and organizational talents. He also was quite a tennis player, so he did more than gardening in his free time. Around 1989, Jim and his wife Alice built a new home on Mountain View Drive, near Normal Heights. I was astounded that he could leave his paradise home to start all over. However, he quickly created a new show place. Then in 1993, he and Alice moved to the big island near Hilo. They built a house there, and landscaped it quickly and fabulously as well. In 1995, his health began to decline, and he and his wife moved back to San Diego to be closer to their two sons. This time they moved to Rancho Bernardo. He had developed Alzheimer's disease, and it became very difficult for Alice to care for him around the clock. Eventually Alice and their sons moved Jim Specht to a fulltime care facility nearby.

Jim was very generous with his time and his plants. He donated numerous plants to the San Diego Zoo and Balboa Park; the large *Ravenea rivularis* above Palm Canyon is one of his plants.

In 2005, the Southern California Palm Society chapter honored him at our January Banquet with a Lifetime Achievement Award. I was one of many local palm society members who received valuable information from Jim Specht, and I know he made strong associations with other palm growers in Hawaii during his brief stay there.

JIM WRIGHT