It has been six years since I last contributed to this series about my life with succulents. Parts 7 and 8 consisted of a history of the ISI (International Succulent Institute; more recently, International Succulent Introductions). Now we turn to a significant event occurring in February of 1962.

After working eleven years as Assistant Manager of the University of California botanical garden in Berkeley, California, I received a most interesting letter from William Hertrich, Curator Emeritus of the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California. It read more or less as follows:

Dear Mr. Kimnach.

Knowing of your interest in plants (including cacti and other succulents), would you be interested in taking charge of the Huntington Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California?

I believe you have visited here once or twice. There are two hundred acres, including the Cactus Garden, Water Garden, Shakespeare Garden, as well as groves of eucalyptus, citrus and camellias.

The position of Superintendent will be available in a year. If you are at all interested in contemplating a change, we would be very glad to hear from you.

Of course I had heard of Mr. Hertrich (Fig. 1), renowned for his employment by Henry Huntington to design and develop his private estate, as well as to supervise the maintenance of his mansion, later the site of his outstanding art collection. Naturally I was flattered and at the same time excited by the possibility of applying for such an attractive job.

Despite my satisfaction with the Berkeley position, after eleven years I had grown less enthusiastic with the duties there for two reasons. First, due to the lack of a degree in botany, I was not allowed to conduct research at the garden. Second, although I found eight hours a day growing plants very pleasant, I missed the intellectual challenges of taxonomy. It seemed possible that at the Huntington I would be able to conduct research as well as partake in horticulture by delegating the work to an increased gardening staff in a much larger garden.

I replied to Hertrich that I was indeed interested in the position. Soon after, I heard from the Director of the entire institution, John Pomfret, earlier the President of the College of William & Mary in Virginia. He summarized what my duties would be: in addition to developing the gardens, I would supervise the janitorial maintenance of all the buildings, including the Art Gallery and Library, manage the cafeteria for public and staff, and maintain the roads, irrigation system, and reservoirs. I would also be responsible for the upkeep of some 150 acres of non-public, mostly undeveloped grounds, in contrast to the entire Berkeley garden of only some ten acres. Unlike the latter garden’s dozen or so gardeners, I would have a staff of around 150 building and garden personnel.