PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

JOHN "JACK" WHITEHEAD, EXPLORER AND SCHOLAR

Jack Whitehead, one of the more obscure CSSA Fellows, was recognized as an explorer and scholar when the society honored him in January 1941, making him one of the early Fellows. At the time, he was working at the University of California, Berkeley Botanical Garden. Jack is best remembered botanically for Graptopetalum filiferum (S.Watson) J. Whitehead, a new combination he published in the CSSA Journal in May 1943. He transferred the species from the genus Sedum. where Sereno Watson had described it in 1888.

Jack was born June 27, 1888, in Old Kilpatrick County, Dumbarton, Scotland. He received training in botany and horticulture at the Scotland Botanic Garden, Glasgow. The Ceylon Tea Company, London, England, provided Jack with his first professional job. The date of his immigration to Canada is not recorded, but in 1909 he entered the U.S. at Seattle, Washington. From there he went to Southern California and Mr. Doheny, a wealthy oil man. employed him as a horticulturist.

In the late 1920s and the start of the Great Depression, Jack jumped at the chance of a job in Kingman, Arizona, where he constructed the Gypsy Garden Auto Court. Alice Victoria Copeland, a biology teacher at Kingman High School, captured Jack's attention and they were married in 1931. Originally from Rochester, New York, Alice had homesteaded near Kingman. In 1932, Jack disposed of his interest in the Auto Court and gained employment at George Williston's service station in Kingman. Later, the Central Commercial Company hired him to work in their furniture department.

But his first love—horticulture—beckoned. In 1934 Jack moved to Superior, Arizona, as horticulturist at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Between 1936 and 1938, he also had a chance to collect plants, making collecting trips for the Carnegie Desert Laboratory, Tucson, Arizona. He accompanied noted botanists Thomas D. Mallery, Forrest Shreve, and Ira Wiggins on a 2,000 mile expedition to Baja California in 1935. On one return botanical trip from Mexico in 1937, Jack was refused entry into the U.S. at Nogales, Arizona. Immigration wired Seattle, Washington, who confirmed his legal entry into the U.S.

Desert Laboratory, Tucson, Arizona. Unfortunately, this collection was destroyed by fire in the late 1930s. Jack was deeply affected by this loss and he was discouraged from seriously collecting again. However, during his last years near Kingman, he made studies and collections of the plants of Mohave County, Arizona. He collected several hundred plants, and a few years before his death, presented them to agave expert Howard Scott Gentry. One set is in the Desert Botanical Garden, Phoenix, and another set is deposited in the Gentry Herbarium at the University of Arizona Herbarium, Tucson.

May 18, 1939, was a red letter day for Jack—he became a U.S. citizen. That year Dr. Thomas Harper Goodspeed, director of the UC Berkeley Botanic Garden, hired him as a horticulturist to work in Strawberry Canyon. Also in 1939, Jack was elected to the CSSA board of directors.

In 1949 Jack moved to Los Angeles and became a horticulturist for the Hancock Research Foundation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles. By 1950 he was advanced to chief horticulturist for USC's campus plantings.

In the late 1940s, Jack and Alice visited several herbaria in the eastern U.S. to study Mexican ferns. Howard Gentry was very interested in developing a flora of Mexico, and Jack showed ardent interest in the project. Jack examined the fern collections at Harvard University and at the U.S. National Herbarium. However, the staggering amount of fern materials that Jack encountered on this

survey convinced him that Mexican ferns were beyond his ability; he dropped the project.

By 1955, Jack was 67 years old and retired from USC. He returned to Kingman, Arizona, and being ever resourceful, he constructed a small house on a 320-acre homestead in the foothills of Hualapai Mountains, near Kingman; he and Alice lived there for 25 years. But in July 1980, the Whiteheads moved to Phoenix so Alice could receive medical treatment.

In the summer of 1982, Jack suffered a stroke and was hospitalized. Realizing that death was near, he insisted on dying at home and requested with vehemence that he be moved from the hospital to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Buy her, Phoenix, where he had been living. His wish was granted and Jack died quietly during the night on September 2, 1983, at age 95; he is buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Los Angeles. He requested no funeral or ceremony, and no obituary was published.