

Harland J Hand

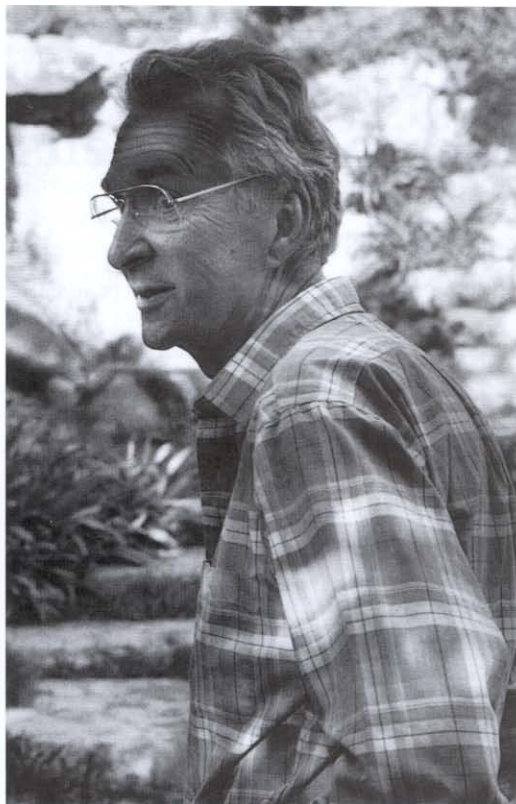
1922–1998

Harland's gentleness was utterly disarming, and his determination and dogged persistence, revealed in projects dear to him, surprised us all. Mastering the long steep slope of his garden in El Cerrito, California, the most dramatic example of his talent and strength of character, demanded great conviction, energy, and resolve. Based on a pattern of rocks and vegetation seen in the mountains and valleys of the Sierra Nevada, its construction required many tons of concrete, all mixed, worked, and finished by hand. Skeptics and critics were confounded as over the years the design proved itself, confirming his conception of garden design as fine art.

In the first issue of *Pacific Horticulture* Harland describes a visit to the Silver Lake area, where "the dark green islands of conifers against the light gray sea of granite carved by glaciers had an unforgettable power" and, years later, provided his garden's "principal color motif and unifying devices." He describes his methods using concrete not to imitate rock but to take granite's part in the garden's pattern. He was amused when, years later, the article was reprinted in a technical journal for cement manufacturers.

In a second article (Spring '78) Harland talks about color in his garden and the plants used to carry out his ideas. In the two contributions we see the evolution of thought—theories from his formal art training applied to practical problems in his own garden and those he made for others. From the early 1990s until his death Harland determinedly refined and reworked his conception of garden design as fine art in a substantial manuscript that several publishers found daunting. His persistence was rewarded when Chronicle Books accepted the manuscript, but to the sorrow of his many friends, Harland is no longer here to see his book through to publication. At a memorial gathering arranged at his home by his sister, Lou Hand-Schley, his friends saw the garden that he loved looking finer than ever. The first rain of the season had refreshed it and late afternoon sunshine bathed it in warm light; no gardener could have asked more for his creation.

Harland was President of the California Horticultural Society in 1974–75, serving also as its representative on the board of the Pacific



Harland Hand in his garden, 1990.
Author's photograph

Horticultural Foundation. This period saw the beginning of *Pacific Horticulture* and many of the planning meetings were held at his house, where we were surrounded by a fine collection of African carvings and overseen by his white standard poodle, Doucette, and its friend, a white cockatoo. Harland liked to say that the magazine was born on his dining table; the budget on which it was launched certainly originated there. After several weeks in which no plausible accounting of costs had been arrived at, Harland, with boisterous enthusiasm in place of his usual calm, arrived waving a piece of paper that he declared was the answer to our financial questions. He had worked it out the previous evening and, with gratitude and relief his figures were adopted without question by everyone at the meeting. Although compiled speculatively—more a work of art than of finance—his budget eventually proved to be remarkably close to reality.

George Waters