

mate the spread of their great horns, but a good guess would be five feet across. Our friend explained that when visitors come to Texas they want to see longhorns, so he keeps a few. There is no need to make people go another six hundred miles to see these fast-vanishing critters.

Now, dark is descending and we must meet Mrs. Stark at the entrance. We drive on more rapidly through, literally, a camellia grove. While riding, we learn a few more things about the fabulous Shangri-La. The owners are always delighted to show the gardens to interested friends. During the height of the blooming period for camellias and azaleas, the grounds are open to the public without charge. On the first open day last year more than ten thousand visitors were clocked by the mechanical counters that record the number at both entrance and exit to make sure no one is locked in the garden at closing time.

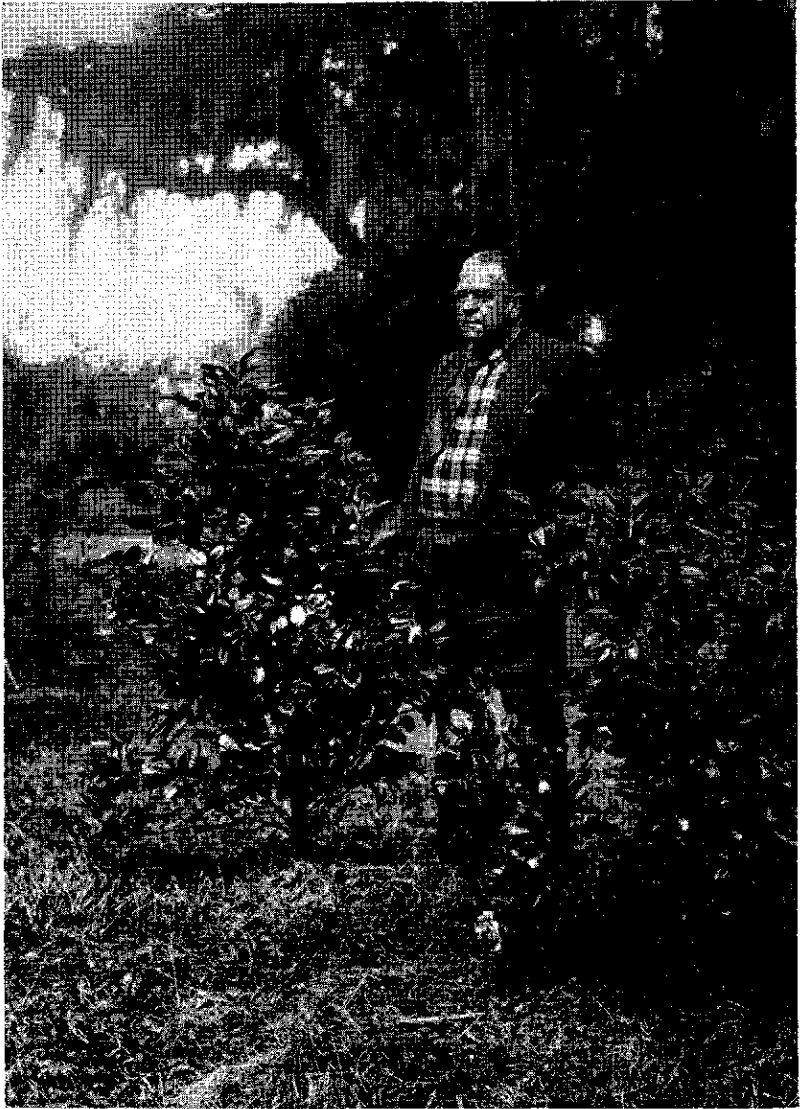
So you see a visit to Shangri-La is an experience never to be forgotten. The opportunity to meet and become friends with the Starks is a privilege to treasure through life.

## THE CAMELLIA ACTIVITIES OF E. A. McILHENNY

MRS. EDWARD McILHENNY SIMMONS, Avery Island, Louisiana

**Z**OOLOGIST, explorer, conservationist, manufacturer, musician, author, sportsman, cattleman, and horticulturist—Edward Avery McIlhenny was all of these during his remarkable lifetime. A man of incredible vitality and intelligence, Mr. McIlhenny will always be remembered as an outstanding Southerner. He was born in 1872 on Avery Island, a high spot of some three thousand acres in the Louisiana marshlands. During his boyhood on this favored spot he acquired the love for nature and outdoor life which was to color many of his later achievements. He attended Lehigh University in Pennsylvania and went from Lehigh on two exciting expeditions to the Arctic in 1894 and 1897.

However, in 1898, Mr. McIlhenny returned to Avery Island, around which most of his later activities centered. On Avery Island are manifestations of these tremendous activities—the Tobasco fac-



EDWARD AVERY McILHENNY—in Jungle Gardens.

tory, a business which developed into a thriving one under his guidance, and Jungle Gardens, two hundred acres boasting a fabulously exotic plant collection, including between 500 and 750 varieties of camellias, assembled entirely by him. In the gardens is also a thirty-five-acre sanctuary in which the egret was saved from extinction due to his efforts at the turn of the century. When he died in 1949 at seventy-seven years of age, this distinguished gentleman left on Avery Island a living monument to his unbounded vision and energy.

Mr. McIlhenny became interested in camellias during his youth as he visited many of the old gardens in Louisiana. During the height of its European popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, camellias had been imported from France by many of the local Gallic plantation owners and became one of the most popular ornamental shrubs in the area. In spite of the Civil War which halted almost all elaborate gardening, many of these camellias survived, and it was these shrubs which caught the eye of young McIlhenny. In about 1900, he began to collect these massive old plants from neighboring towns and plantations and these formed the nucleus of his collection. From one Bayou Teche plantation he moved 121 trees sent to America by the Comte de Vidrine. One of the famous old camellias in Jungle Gardens is Governor Mouton, an extremely popular variety. This plant was developed in the garden of one of Louisiana's early governors, Alexander Mouton.

With steady persistency, Mr. McIlhenny systematically scoured not only the local countryside but also the remotest corners of the world in order to make his camellia collection as complete as possible. During the years from 1929 through 1938, he imported many thousands of camellia plants from nurseries in England, Germany, Holland, France, and Japan.<sup>1</sup> Under the existing quarantine laws these plants had to be brought in without the protecting ball of soil which facilitates transplanting of camellias. By the time the plants reached this country all of the young roots were dead, and mortality was high. However, displaying ingenuity and knowledge of plant lore typical of him, Mr. McIlhenny devised a method of planting which enabled him to save almost all of his exotic imports. Among these was the beautiful *Camellia reticulata*. Particularly noteworthy were his importations of *C. sasanqua*. Mr. McIl-

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<sup>1</sup> A list of McIlhenny importations is to be found in the 1950 Yearbook.—EDS.

henny was responsible for the introduction of many of our current Japanese sasanqua varieties.

Mr. McIlhenny's collection was not only increased by purchases of new plants. Throughout the forty years he worked with camellias, he developed many new varieties. Each year he grew thousands of seedlings. The plants that produced insignificant flowers were discarded and the meritorious ones were allowed to bloom for several years. Only when the latter proved to be worthy of propagation were they given place as a new variety in the collection and put on the market. Many Jungle Garden introductions have become famous; one of the most popular is the exquisite variety Virgin's Blush which bloomed for the first time on November 24, 1944.

Naturally, the more Mr. McIlhenny studied and worked with his camellia collection, the more he learned of the care and propagation of the shrub. This knowledge he shared with all camellia lovers—he wrote articles and gave many valuable interviews to magazine and newspaper writers.

In his long experience in growing and comparing camellias, Mr. McIlhenny found (as any camellia fancier will admit) that the nomenclature of camellias is an amazing muddle. He often found as many as fifteen names attached to one common variety of camellia in his collection, and estimated that up to 50 percent of the camellias in his collection were incorrectly named. However, he was not content to leave camellia nomenclature in this confused state. During the last ten years of his life, he translated from the original French and had published at his own expense the *Nouvelle Iconographie des Camellias* by Verschaffelt. The original work consisted of thirteen volumes published between 1848 and 1860. This translation provided a means whereby camellia lovers could identify many varieties by their original names. The translation also verified the origin and introduction of many varieties popular today. In addition, he reprinted the 1838 English translation, *Monography of the Genus Camellia*, of Berlese's original French publication. This is a valuable aid to the classification of camellias by color. After publication in book form in 1945, these two translations were sold at a price which merely covered the cost of printing. His sole aim in having these books published was to render a valuable contribution to all camellia lovers.

Mr. McIlhenny was a talented amateur photographer and he has left a collection of exquisite kodachromes of camellias as extensive as the actual collection of camellia plants. These photographs are kept today in a film library and are frequently lent to garden clubs all over the country. Not only are they singularly beautiful, but they are also of tremendous aid in the proper identification of the many varieties pictured.

Lastly, Mr. McIlhenny realized the value of an organization devoted to the study of camellias. He gave generously of his time, efforts, and financial assistance, and was vitally interested in the establishment of the American Camellia Society.

Unquestionably, Mr. McIlhenny was one of the first and foremost participants in the rebirth of sustained interest in camellias. Moreover, his Avery Island camellia collection is really a living museum of the introduction and development of the camellia in this country.

## SASANQUAS IN NORTHERN LOUISIANA

DR. and MRS. R. K. WOMACK, Shreveport, Louisiana

**I**T may be a surprise to some members of the American Camellia Society to learn that, while there is a great difference in climatic conditions between the northern and southern parts of Louisiana, any portion of the state would be considered as being close to the northern limits of the area in which camellias may be grown out of doors.

Shreveport is located in the northwest corner of the state, about thirty miles from the Arkansas line and about twenty miles from the boundary line that separates the state from Texas. The winters here are unpredictable. Some are very mild and the temperatures never drop below 25 degrees. It is admitted that such winters are unusual. We can usually expect several freezes during the course of any one winter, with at least one where the temperature drops to ten or fifteen degrees. About once during each decade the temperature will fall to zero. Ice and snow are frequent visitors. When the "Texas Blue Northers" blow in, temperatures may fall from 80 degrees to 10 degrees within a day or two.