

Starting Out and Still Going®

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My career in horticulture started at age 8 pulling weeds for 9¢ an hour at Evergreen Nursery Co. Inc., Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. Evergreen Nursery was a family-owned business and I was about to be the fourth generation nurseryman.

Between the ages of 8 and 18, I started forming a list of horticultural problems that I wanted answers to when I went to college. The list was over 100 items long when I stepped foot on the Wisconsin Madison campus to begin my horticultural studies. The first thing on the list was that there HAD to be a better way to weed than by hand! My daughter suspects that this was on my mental list by the end of the day at age 8!

The solutions to all of these came clear during my college years and they came from professors, fellow students, and professional nurserymen. This was my initial list of questions and problems that I wanted to solve. And of course, this led to a new and more complex list of questions that continues to this day.

Associations and Societies provided a wonderful venue for answers to these ever-evolving questions. International Plant Propagators' Society (IPPS) played an extremely important part in this quest and my thirst for knowledge and answers.

The first meeting that I attended was in 1955 in Cleveland, Ohio, under the direct orders of Dr. L.C. Chadwick, who required all the students in his propagation course to attend. This was not negotiable.

At that first meeting I attended, the model of seeking and sharing was very impressive to me. I was hooked on it immediately because I saw both the world of academia and the professional nurserymen discussing and even arguing about plant propagation topics. What better place to learn and grow? This led to relationships throughout the world in the field of horticulture.

With a business to run, a young family, and many other activities to pursue, you may ask why I chose to continue to be so involved in IPPS right at the beginning of my career and for all the continuing years. I found that I was drawn to IPPS for a very sound reason. I have a strong faith and it enhanced my ability to become a better steward of God's creation through relationships with people who care about plants.

I learned early in life, that whenever possible, I should surround myself with people that are more knowledgeable, or smarter, or wiser than me. This is not a threatening thing. This is logical. It's how we learn and grow. These men were my mentors not just because they were propagators but because they were fine people. Here are a few that held, and still hold, a special place in my heart: Dr. L.C. Chadwick, who was my Professor at Ohio State during my Masters; Dr. Whytie Holmes, Professor of Horticulture, University of Wisconsin-Madison who was my mentor in herbicides; Richard Martyr, noted horticultural teacher at Pershore College who organized the very first IPPS trip to England; and Vincent K. Bailey, Bailey Nurseries, who asked me to go on the Board of IPPS Eastern Region. There were literally hundreds more that I considered mentors but time and space do not allow me to name them all.

"Lively" discussions are a mild word for some of the interactions that were held at our meetings throughout the years. Who would guess that plants could create

so much excitement? I thoroughly enjoyed putting together the multi-media presentations for the 40th and 50th anniversaries of IPPS. It was a bit of a trip down memory lane for me. I reviewed old books of proceedings and chuckled over some things I recalled. But I also was touched by the memories of the people and events. Until I retired, I had never missed an IPPS Eastern Region Annual meeting. This group is important and I have made them a priority in my life. We have a colorful and interesting history that should be re-visited by us all from time to time.

And what can I say about all the friendships that my wife (Myra) and I have formed throughout the IPPS world? Our son attended his senior year in high school in England because of our friendship with the Martyr's. Our daughter and her husband traveled with us for a wonderful Ireland trip due to our IPPS friend, Philip Moreau, and in fact, we met a couple from Tasmania and New Zealand in 2001 who we continued corresponding with and as I write this, are on their way to visit America and stay with us this month. The world of plants and IPPS has connected us all.

There are a couple of things that make IPPS unique. One is the people that are involved. Another is the motto: To seek and to share. In our society, many people seek but few share. The power of IPPS lies in the melding of the academic and professional world seeking AND sharing TOGETHER.

ALONG THE WAY

My parents were blessed with my arrival in 1932, or at least I thought so. Later in life in 1955 I was blessed to marry Myra Kruse, and it has stayed that way. But the blessing did not stop there and Myra and I had three wonderful children, Majel, Cheryl, and Geoffrey. In addition to that I have been especially fortunate in having excellent health, with the exception that I am now bald.

One of the great features of the IPPS is that the members hold such tremendous diversity of lives, experience, and knowledge. And I would I like to hope, that in some small way, I have added to that diversity. My life has been a good combination of family history, education, and faith. I have been a member of the Sturgeon Bay Moravian Church all of my life and have held many positions within the congregation. I also felt it was important to be involved in the community and have been involved in the Chamber of Commerce, The local Blood Bank, the Rotary Club, and the Sturgeon Bay Utility Commission.

While I attended the University of Wisconsin and Ohio State University, I probably have learned as much from what I call continuing education. I attended the Syracuse University Nursery Management Conference in 59, 60, and 76. I was lucky enough to be an IPPS member for more than 51 years. Along the way I participated in conferences and seminars of the American Nursery and Landscape Association, Wholesale Nursery Growers of America, the Horticultural Research Institute and Ohio State University. I have been lucky to visit nurseries in the U.S.A., Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Australia, and New Zealand.

My professional career goals have been easy to identify. I wanted: To guide Evergreen Nursery Co., Inc., a four-generation firm, profitably into the future with a strong financial base, where it can serve new and exciting markets with quality horticultural plants and services; to share this success with our employees; and to pass a viable business on to future owners.

Along the way we developed several niche markets and I hold four plant patents and five registered trademarks on birch. I continue to breed birch and I am working

on a red-leaf, white-barked form that is resistant to the bronze birch borer, which still remains a significant pest to birches throughout the U.S.A.

While I have a strong faith in my religion and church I also made service a commitment and have been a loyal member of the Henry S. Baird Lodge #174 for many years as well as the Door County Habitat for Humanity, the North East Wisconsin Masonic Library and Museum Green Bay, the Moravian Mt. Morris Camp and Conference Center. But not to be too far removed from horticulture I have also served on the Education Committee of the American Nursery and Landscape Association, the Board of Governors of the ANLA, the Horticultural Research Institute, and the Wholesale Growers of America.

I believe in the worth and creativity of people. Above all, truth, honesty, and integrity must prevail. Listening before acting is imperative. Once a problem is identified and options for its solution are sifted and winnowed, then assertive action needs to follow.

To consider all of this I have truly been blessed.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Honorary Fraternities 1954 and 1955
 - Alpha Zeta
 - Phi Kappa Phi
 - Gamma Sigma Delta
 - Phi Alpha Xi
 - Sigma Xi
- Junior Chamber of Commerce
 - Distinguished Service Award 1960
- International Plant Propagators Society
 - Award of Merit 1976
 - Fellow 1991
- Wisconsin Public Power Association
 - Hall of Fame 1992
- American Nursery and Landscape Association
 - Award of Service 1983
 - Hall of Fame 2005
- Wholesale Nursery Growers of America
 - Leadership Award 1990
- Horticultural Research Institute
 - Leadership Award 1988
- Masonic- Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite
 - Meritorious Service Award 1983
 - 33 degree 1985 Detroit
- Door County Wisconsin
 - Lifetime Volunteer Award 2005