

SEPTEMBER AWARD BANQUET RECAP & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The annual SCHS Horticulturist of the Year banquet was held at the Los Angeles County Arboretum in September, and this year's honoree was well-known and respected plantsman Randy Baldwin, President and General Manager of San Marcos Growers. In addition to running a wholesale nursery recognized in the landscape industry for its diversity of plants and ongoing introductions of plants suitable for cultivation in California, Randy's career has led to achievements extending far beyond the nursery. The breadth of his life's work and the many relationships he has forged in service to the greater horticultural community were the subjects of this evening's celebrations.

During social hour, guests bid on the array of donated Silent Auction items, after which everyone enjoyed a catered dinner outside the Peacock Cafe. Following dinner, SCHS president Steve Gerischer acknowledged past Horticulturist of the Year recipients in the audience, and gave Randy a brief introduction before commencing with the award ceremony. A slate of notable friends and colleagues then began speaking about their relationships with Randy, both personal and professional.

First was Jill Vig, curator of the Water Conservation Garden at the L.A. Arboretum, Master Gardener and SCHS board member. She called Randy the modern day version of the mythical "Green Man" for representing the gifts that nature, and plants in particular, bring to our lives. She also cited his donations to botanical gardens, prolific plant introductions, and continuing outreach to the horticultural community and beyond via the smgrowers.com website which has become such a valuable landscaping resource.

Next to share memories was renowned landscape designer and author John Greenlee, who sent his well wishes via video. Their relationship dates to the late 1980s, well before John became an expert in grass ecology and while Randy was still coming up at San Marcos. They became so close that eventually John served as best man at Randy's wedding. In commenting on the evening's award presentation, he congratulated his friend and stated that "Randy, anybody who knows anything about plants will tell you, is the smartest guy in the room."

Another brief video by Simple the Roving Plant Artist followed, leaving the audience laughing and providing a lead in to remarks by Kathy Musial, Curator of Living Collections at the Huntington, and SCHS board member. She recalled memories of Randy dating to 1981, when she was a student of Bob Fletcher at UCLA, who raved about San Marcos Growers. Soon after, Kathy became acquainted with Randy, with whom she has enjoyed exchanging plants and knowledge

ever since, especially Australian plants. She also spoke about both of them belonging to a group called the "Tree Club," whose members have on-going discussions about the identification of selected trees, with Kathy asserting that invariably, Randy's answers are always the most thoroughly researched.

Next to speak was another SCHS board member: well-known horticulturist and author Carol Bornstein, former Director of Horticulture at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden and current Director of the Nature Gardens at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. She summarized Randy's contributions to the world of horticulture as embodying the definition of "generous." She spoke of his generosity to the plant world



by way of introductions, donations and dissemination of knowledge (through the San Marcos website and one-on-one); his giving of time by serving his community and the industry through volunteering, sitting on boards, being an educator, and more; as well as his willingness and enthusiasm to share his interests with anyone and everyone.

Santa Barbara nurseryman and founder of specialty nursery Aloes-in-Wonderland, Jeff Chemnick, was the final speaker to share memories. Since becoming acquainted with Randy in 1981, the two have traveled together on plant expeditions, "hunted" for the largest specimens of specific trees, and worked jointly on various plant introductions. As well as praising Randy's boundless energy and bottomless enthusiasm, Jeff remarked that he always has his camera with him to record details for the San Marcos website, and that his passion for plants "drives the market."

After listening to the tributes of his peers, Randy took the floor, and rather than speak about his own history and achievements, he spoke about "Plants and People I Have Known," citing their inspirations as the reason for his life's passions and successes. He talked briefly about his childhood influences such as backpacking, hiking and Boy Scout activities, and about his education.

A graduate of the University of California at Santa Barbara, Randy reflected on the

mentorship of Botany professor Bob Haller, and on completing his thesis on the effects of fire upon vegetation in Joshua Tree. He also recalled how receiving *Xanthorrhoea* seeds from Dara Emory in a class at San Barbara Botanic Garden led to some of his first propagation work at San Marcos, as well as his long-term relationship with SBBG.

From there, Randy's talk became a who's-who of horticultural and landscape industry personalities he has known throughout his career (several of whom were in the audience) including: his wife Heide Stolpestad, Morgan "Bill" Evans, Paul Comstock, Phil Chandler, Marcia Constance, Bob Perry, Owen Dell, Bill Paylen, Rudy Ziesenhenn, Mark Bartholomew, Bruce Van Dyke, Virginia Hayes, Paul Mills, Jeff Chemnick, Dylan Hannon, Kelly Griffin, Brian Kemble, Tom Cole, John Bleck, Fred and Helen Woodley, John Schoustra, Dave Verity, Jeff Bohn, Mike Evans, Carol Bornstein, Dave Fross, Bart O'Brien, Lili Singer, Fred Meyer, Matt Ritter, Ken Greby, Jim Henrich, Don Hodel, John Trager, Luen Miller, Nevin Smith, Dave Lannom, Gary Hammer, Morten Damsted, Marshall Olbrich, Ed Carman, Robin Parer, David McCrory, Marcia Donahue, Dan Heims, Sean Hogan, Lynn Woodbury, Don and Dave Harris, Alice Waidhofer, Greg Star, Robin Stockwell, Jeff Moore,

Ruth Bancroft, Virginia Gardner, and many others. Besides reminiscing about people he has known, Randy punctuated his talk with photos of plants he has been involved with introducing into the nursery trade.

After Randy's remarkable slide show was over, he was presented with the Horticulturist of the Year plaque by Steve Gerischer, closing the award ceremony. Guests then collected their auction winnings, concluding the evening's festivities for another year.

Sabine Steinmetz

We would like to thank Village Nurseries, Wild Wings, Rincon-Vitova Insectaries, Minifarmbox, and all the individuals who donated the fantastic plants and objects for our Silent Auction. We are also grateful for the efforts of the SCHS board in planning the evening, setting up and cleaning up, and to the SCHS members and guests for their support by attending and also bidding on auction items - your participation equals our success!

Ultimately, we wish to express our gratitude to the Arboretum and their staff for the assistance they provided during the evening, and Nicole's crew at the Peacock Cafe, who not only served a delicious dinner, but were also the last to clean up before leaving...

Many thanks to everyone!