

Remember the Muggets?

A History of the Mugget Growers Association

By Bill Doerler, one of the founders

When I attended the reunion at the Dwight Hughes Farm in Cedar Rapids, I realized how much I missed the camaraderie and good times that we all enjoyed at the various ANLA, NLA, and GCA seminars and conventions. No small part of this was due to the MGA, which evolved into a social group that held parties and raised a lot of money for HRI. So, I decided to write down my version of how it all occurred and will pass it on to several people for their input as well.

In the late 1970s, I believe, AAN held a management seminar at Syracuse University in the summer. Leo Donahue of AAN was there, among others. This needs to be researched to get a better date, because the timing was near his retirement.

One night, quite late, Joe Locke of Village Nurseries in Hightstown, NJ, myself, and Leo Donahue of AAN were enjoying a nightcap and BS-ing. We were discussing other organizations that could be brought

under the AAN management umbrella, real or imagined. We were brainstorming, throwing out various silly, some not so silly, ideas.

I remembered a story from my college days at Cornell Ag School. I was in Alpha Gamma Rho, Ag fraternity, and one of the courses that many took was Ag Economics. In one of the classes the brothers had to design a farm layout and assign acreage to various crops. Many times the brothers were partying and never left enough time to finish their farm project homework. Sometimes the acreage numbers didn't work out. So, the quick solution was to put the remaining acres in Muggets! This was an inside joke between the Ag Econ Department prof and the brothers because he was an AGR as well.

So, remembering the Mugget as a crop, I suggested that we start the National Mugget Growers Association and place it under the AAN management umbrella. We all laughed heartily over this silliness, fueled, as I mentioned earlier, by the late hour and the libations enjoyed.

That next winter Joe and I

Greetings, ANLA Alumni! Hoping to see so many of you at the reunion in August, but if you can't make it, know that you'll be in our thoughts. When you get a chance, let us know what you're up to! Send information — photos always welcome — to sallydbenson@gmail.com.

attended the NLA seminar in Louisville, as we had for many years, starting first at the old Holiday Inn, memorable for having peanuts on the bar floor. As I remember, GCA was not even created at the first meeting we went to.

We were not meeting at the Galt House; first NLA and then GCA joined us, as I remember. These Management Seminars were very informative and helped many of us manage our businesses. After the evening meetings were over, we began to meet in the Galt House bars, and then later started meeting in various rooms and finally suites rented for that purpose.

One night, Joe and I were regaling several people (Dick Campbell and Wilbur Mull, among others), with the Mugget story from Syracuse, and Wilbur got quite excited, being a marketing guru,

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A whole grab bag!

If you're planning to attend the Reunion next month — and we hope you are! — you'll be delighted to hear that several boxes of ANLA memorabilia, once stored at the AmericanHort offices, came into Dwight Hughes' possession, and he's bringing them to St. Charles. Their contents include pins, binders, photos — who knows what else? — and all of these treasures will be up for grabs. Be sure to check out what these storage boxes hold: there are sure to be some real treasures!

Passings

Fletch Flemer

Fletch Flemer (Carl Fletcher Flemer III), former president of Ingleside Nurseries in Virginia, passed on June 30. He was 76.

Fletch grew up at Ingleside in Oak Grove, later attended William & Mary, and graduated from North Carolina State University with a degree in horticulture. He joined the U.S. Army in 1969 and spent three years as a commissioned rotary wing aviator, flying more than 1,000 hours of helicopter missions in Vietnam. For his service, Fletch was awarded the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, the Army Commendation Medal, and 22 air medals.

Following his military service, Fletch went to work at Ingleside in 1972 and became president of the company when his father retired in 1985. Under Fletch's leadership, Ingleside developed into one of the

largest nurseries on the Eastern Seaboard. He recently retired, although he remained active as board chair after turning over nursery operations to his nephew, Jordan Fletcher.

Industry associations were well represented by Fletch, who served as president of ANLA's predecessor AAN (American Association of Nurserymen), the Virginia Nurserymen's Association, and the Southern Nurserymen's Association, as well as the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show. He also was committed to his church and community, tirelessly representing such organizations as the Virginia Farm Bureau and the Westmoreland County Wetlands Board.

In his "spare" time, he was an accomplished horseman and fox hunter, and spent countless hours



Among other honors, Fletch Flemer received the Slater Wright Memorial Award from the Southern Nursery Association in 1995.

on the Rappahannock River on his pontoon boat.

James Farley

Jim Farley (James Allison Farley), owner of Fairdale Nursery (now Countryside & Fairdale Nurseries) in Oregon, passed on June 14. He was 75.

He grew up in Beaverton, but spent much of his time on the coast, where as a teenager he learned to surf. A job as budget director for Oregon Bulb Farms encouraged him to rise through the ranks, and he and his wife, Bev, used hard-earned savings to start their own mail-order lily business out their garage and bought their first farm in Troutdale. They purchased Fairdale Nursery in 1979.

With a reputation for emphasizing quality over quantity, the business grew rhododendron, grafted pines and Japanese maples, and grew into a business known across the country. Today Countryside Nursery is lead by his son Adam.

Jim was passionate about the ocean, rivers and water, and boats of all kinds — and he was particularly dedicated to fishing. Shortly before his passing, he had just caught his limit of razor clams.



Muggets, continued

and the Mugget Growers were born as a social group. Wilbur even coined a new plant name, the “*Mugensis prostrata*.”

As I remember, Ray Brush was in the room, among others, because we used to meet in people’s rooms and then when the rooms got too small for the crowd we adjourned to the Board suites of NLA and/or GCA.

After Wilbur concocted the *Mugensis prostrata*, we set up a plot to pull a practical joke on Duane Jelinek, who was the GCA exec at that time. He had the idea that AAN could be a source of information for its members when they were looking for an unusual plant. Later that year, Wilbur Mull of Classic Groundcovers let AAN know that he was growing a new ground cover, *Mugensis prostrata*. Several weeks later Larry Studer, an NLA member from Illinois, decided to contact AAN looking for *Mugensis prostrata* for a landscape job he was bidding on. Duane Jelinek delightedly told him that he could fill his request for a plant source.

He was very happy that his plants source idea was working! That winter at the NLA/GCA

seminar in Louisville we broke the news to him that he had been the victim of our practical joke. He was not too pleased to be the victim, to say the least.

NLA and GCA decided to have a New Ideas seminar one night of the Louisville Clinic. New products, equipment, supplies and otherwise were introduced to the trade. The MGA social group was growing, getting stronger and raising more money for HRI. Wilbur Mull, being an auctioneer, asked for donations from some of the New Ideas participants and he began to have an auction, auctioning off items for the benefit of HRI. We also sold tickets to a raffle, as I remember, for the benefit of HRI, but I cannot be sure of the raffle aspect.

I do know that the MGA social group raised money to pay for the party booze and any excess money was again donated to HRI.

During the 80s and the 90s, many of us were working very hard all year long growing our businesses, and the MGA shenanigans at Louisville were a great place for us to let off steam, be a little silly, and then return to our homes after the winter seminar, refreshed, ready to attack our spring business season with renewed vigor.

Bill Doerler, Past President, NLA

Mugget Contributions to HRI

Since its inception in 1981, the Mugget Growers of America (MGA) has contributed thousands of dollars to Horticultural Research Institute scholarship funds, with the goal of assisting aspiring students to pursue degrees in horticulture. A scholarship of up to \$1,500 is available for the 2022-2023 school year.

For more information, visit www.hriresearch.org/scholarship-application-and-resources.



Reunion Reminder!

The second ANLA Alumni Reunion is scheduled for August 12 and 13 at Midwest Groundcovers in St. Charles, Illinois — but you already knew that! Reservations are still coming in, and there’s still time to let us know that you plan to attend — but act fast! We need to hear from you by July 28 so that we can plan accordingly.

There’s so much to see and do, with tours and talks and plenty of opportunities to catch up with friends and colleagues we haven’t seen for ages.

And believe it or not, gas prices are decreasing across the country, so if you’ve been waiting, now’s the time to make that trip!

Send your RSVP to Sheila Miller at smiller@midwestgroundcovers.com today!

Ben Bolusky retires

After 24 years as the chief executive officer at the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association (FNGLA), Ben Bolusky retired on June 30. This marked the culmination of a 36-year career with the nursery and landscape industry, which began when Ben joined the then-AAN as its director of government affairs in 1986.

A note from Barbara Meyer

It is with disappointment that I have decided we will not attend the reunion. The 12- and 14-hour work days Carl did most of his life have caught up, and he tires easily and requires more sleep. The long trip and busy schedule would be challenging.

As most of you know Carl started doing hyperbaric oxygen therapy, HBOT, in December of 2019 at the recommendation of KU med. We went to Hyperbaric Healing Institute in Kansas City run by David Deister about every three to four months. In August of 2021, David suggested we get an in-home unit from OXY Health.

I have been having Carl do that

every other day since then, and it has really made a difference. A few weeks ago he started getting more confused, so I started doing them daily. Fortunately it has really made a difference. He is more alert, more engaged, and more normal acting. I am so grateful for this treatment as I think without it he would probably be in a home.

I try to have us both get exercise everyday and Carl does physical therapy once a week to keep his strength and balance. I have a master's degree in exercise physiology, so that helps. It didn't help at the Garden Center, but Carl said that was my best asset as I used plain language when I talked to

people and not confusing them with horticultural words.

I still work part time at the Garden Center and take Carl there often. He loves helping people carry things out and loading. He returns carts, sweeps and pulls weeds! That engagement is wonderful medicine for him.

ANLA friends have meant so much to us over the years. We will celebrate 32 years of marriage June 30 and ANLA has been an important part of those years.

Very best to all of you, and we hope you have great weather and a wonderful time.

Carl and Barbara Meyer

Catching up with the McAdams

I am still working on my retirement and am hoping to be stepping away from the company in 2½ years. This will bring my total time since our beginning to 46 years, so I will be abdicating my throne to our son Scott, Jr. He has much more tech knowledge than I (like I had to tell anyone that) and is already developing his own team to replace those of us looking at retirement. He just finished his term as the President of the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association (ILCA) and is working hard on the transition of our company and is preparing to lead the company for another 43 years. He and his wife Brittany have two children, Harper almost 3½ and Hudson, 9 months.

Our daughter Amanda and her husband Andy Huntington live in New Hampshire. Their son Beckham will be 3 at Thanksgiving. Beckham's brother and sister are

Wells and Blair. Where did that time go?

Veronika and I are looking forward to spending more time at our place in Sarasota, Florida, and traveling with trips planned for Geneva, Switzerland, this fall and Melbourne, Australia, next May. These locations also happen to be where there are also meetings are being held for Rotary International. So for me, these serve a dual purpose. One, to help make the world a better place and become inspired and the other, to see places we have only thought about. We also will hope to be able to spend more time in New Hampshire and Florida. Slowing down is a good thing. I also hope to be able to go on a barge tour. That is where we drive around the country and BARGE in on our friends for a couple of days while exploring

the area. So if you ever want a guest, let us know. We will be happy to oblige, and remember as I heard at the Rotary International Convention earlier in June, "No distance is too great to visit a friend."

Have a great end of summer and fall.

Scott McAdam

