

ANLA ALUMNI NEWS

SUMMER 2021
ISSUE 6



The Cultivate'21 trade show floor; Immediate Past Board Chair Tom Hughes

Summertime, and the readin' is easy ...

If you're just joining us, or if you're missing past issues, you can visit the ANLA Alumni website at www.anlareunion.org.

Lots to read and enjoy, and be sure to keep in touch! Send your news to: sallydbenson@gmail.com

Cultivate'21 marks a re-opening

If you made it to Columbus this year for Cultivate'21, lucky you! What an ideal opportunity to connect with friends and colleagues again. If you didn't have the chance to get there, never fear. We've got outstanding recaps from Ken Fisher, AmericanHort President and CEO, and Jennifer Gray, HRI Research Programs Administrator.

First up, Ken shares his outstanding report on the overall event:

Cultivate'21, held in Columbus July 9 to 15, was a resounding success by all measures. Although the pandemic prevented nearly all of our international attendees from joining us, attendance was on track with previous events and exceeded the expectations of the AmericanHort staff and Board of Directors.

But strong attendance numbers only tell part of the story. Cultivate'21 was the first large horticulture industry event to be held since the pandemic began and marked the "return" of the important in-person events for our industry. The Governor of Ohio had

lifted health restrictions just 30 days before Cultivate'21, but the AmericanHort staff was able pull off the full event.

Everyone who attended raved about the quality of the programming.

- The programming started on Friday and Saturday with the first *Hemp Grower Conference at Cultivate*, featuring some of the best academic and industry practitioners focused on helping ornamental horticultural growers have success growing hemp.

- The always-popular industry tours on Saturday were sold out, and participants were glad to be back in the field learning first hand from industry leaders.

- The Horticultural Research Institute held its annual Reception at Cultivate and announced record contribution numbers. Over \$400,000 of contributions were received, another \$200,000 announced, and the Spring Meadow Fund was the first endowment fund to *exceed \$1 million*. (See our full recap on page 2.)

- Keynote Speaker Jon Petz officially kicked off the Sunday morning event and was one the most impactful Keynote presenters at Cultivate in recent years.

- The State of the Industry presentation, which played to a full house on Monday morning, gave attendees important information about the direction of our industry.

- As you walked the tradeshow and visited with exhibitors, you could feel the energy that everyone seemed to have on the tradeshow floor.

- Most every exhibitor reporting said they had a "big" show and booked a lot of orders as the industry continues to manage through labor, supply chain, and plant material issues.

- The *Women in Hort* event was a sellout program and described by attendees as a smashing success.

- The more than 125 educational sessions, with programming covering nearly every

Don't stop here; there's more! For the rest of this story, and for an HRI report, be sure to turn the page.

aspect of horticulture plant growing and business management, got strong reviews.

- For those who couldn't attend or just wanted more education, AmericanHort offered 36 on-demand education sessions.

Cultivate'21 was an important "return" for our industry, and thanks to the hard work of the AmericanHort staff and outstanding support of the industry, it was a big success.

AmericanHort's next big event is "Impact Washington, The Summit," scheduled for September 20 to 22 in Washington, DC.



Dale Deppe, Spring Meadow Nursery, is inducted as the first-ever member of the Redwood Circle, having donated \$1 million to HRI.

Donors make it a “million-dollar night” for HRI

Thanks to Jennifer Gray, we've got an exciting report on the HRI reception and donors' outstanding contributions:

HRI's return to a face-to-face donor celebration event was truly that: a celebration. It was a "million dollar night" for HRI, but what was truly priceless was being together again to celebrate milestones, successes, families, businesses, research, scholarships, and our industry.

We kicked off the evening with a special announcement that HRI was establishing a new level of giving, the Redwood Circle, to recognize donors who have endowments funds over \$1,000,000. We announced that the Spring Meadow-Proven Winners Fund had surpassed that level and shared a video featuring previous recipients of the fund's scholarship. (Watch the video here:

<https://www.hrirsearch.org/redwood-level-million-dollar-fund>.)

We presented Dale Deppe and his team with the Redwood Circle

award.

We spent time recognizing those who established funds in the last year that were previously announced during our virtual events, including:

- Dennis Walters Scholarship Fund
- Wright Family of Alabama Scholarship Fund
- Pleasant View Gardens Scholarship Fund

We recognized the impact and legacies of our state partner funds:

- The Southern Nursery Association Legacy Fund entering the Diamond Circle (funds over \$250,000)
- The Western Nursery & Landscape Association Fund at the Silver Circle level (over \$25,000)
- The New England Nursery & Landscape Association Fund at the Platinum Circle level (over \$100,000)
- The Oregon Nursery Industry Endowment Fund at the Platinum Circle level, plus a new donation

of \$15,000

We recognized additional funds reaching new levels, including:

- The Merten E. Natorp Fund entering the Gold Circle (funds over \$50,000)
- The Paul and Tatum Saunders Fund entering the Gold Circle
- The Overdevest Nurseries Fund entering the Diamond Circle (funds over \$250,000)

We recognized a gift through HRI's Heritage Circle program from the Carol Crabbe Trust, which contributed over \$150,000 to the John J. Pinney Research Fund.

Finally, we celebrated the establishment of new funds, including:

- The Cultivate the Future Scholarship Fund, made up of contributions from over 300 Cultivate exhibitors
- The K.C. and Sandra Browne Scholarship Fund, established by K.C. Browne, Peter Orum, and Gabriel Lambert, in memory of Sandra

- The Master Nursery Garden Centers Research Fund
- The LuxFlora Scholarship Fund
- The Home Nursery / Tosovsky Family Scholarship Fund
- The Margie deWit Research Fund
- The Pierson Scholarship Fund

In addition, Bennett Saunders announced NewGen Boxwood was contributing \$15,000 to create a fund to target boxtree moth. Gerry Dockstader (Advanced

Horticultural Solutions), Tom Demaline (Willoway Nurseries), and Brick Decker (Decker's Nursery) quickly added to this fund, bringing the total to \$26,000.

In total, we celebrated \$220,000 in previous donations, raised an additional \$425,000, announced seven new funds, and celebrated Spring Meadow's \$1,000,000 milestone.

Of course, the work continues. HRI is in the midst of reviewing grant proposals for 2022 and will launch a new quarterly research publication in August. The fundraising continues as well—our text to give system allows for one-time or monthly donations (text HORT to 44321) or contact Jennifer at 614-884-1155 for help or to discuss your giving goals.

Many thanks for stepping up!

In our last issue, we learned that a few copies of Ernest Wertheim's book, "Chasing Spring," were still available through Alden Lane Nursery. An anonymous donor group pledged to match the cost of each book sold.

Based on ANLA Alumni sales of the book and the resulting match from the anonymous donors, a \$1,500 check was delivered to HRI's Wertheim, Van Der Ploeg & Kleymeyer Fund at the HRI Reception, adding to the night's grand total of more than \$400,000. Thanks to ALL who purchased the last copies!

Wayne Mezitt checks in from Hopkinton:

As disruptive and disastrous as Covid-19 has been for much of the world, our horticultural businesses have garnered unprecedented positive benefits from all the imposed restrictions. With so many people forced to stay home, their cabin-bound attention focused on fundamental quality-of-life issues, including their yards and gardens. Ever since Massachusetts deemed our industry to be "essential" early in the pandemic, keeping up with the exceptional demand for plants and landscape services has been a welcome challenge.

Our son Peter continues as president of the Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association. He's also in charge of all operational aspects of our business for the last 10+ years and has expanded Weston Nurseries significantly: We opened a new retail location in Hingham in March 2020, and in February 2021, bought Capeway, a well-known wholesale business in Middleborough, MA.

After retiring as chairman last September, I continue to be a trustee at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, working with our new president/ED James Hearsum. I also serve as chair of the Massachusetts Invasive Plant Advisory Group, representing the interests of the nursery industry.



Did you know?

Shortly after they leave the start line, runners in the Boston Marathon pass by Weston Nurseries in Hopkinton. This year's race will be held on October 11, with more than 14,000 runners expected to compete.

We've got exciting reunion news!

Plans are in the works for our next reunion, slated for next August! That's right: Another in-person, face-to-face, time-to-catch-up gathering, hosted by Peter Orum and Midwest Groundcovers in St. Charles, Illinois. Details will be coming soon — but for now, we can all look forward to getting together again soon!

IN PASSING



Carl Fletcher Flemer, Jr.

Carl Fletcher Flemer, Jr., founder of Ingleside Nurseries and father of Fletch Flemer, passed in April.

He was 99.

Ingleside Plantation has been owned and

operated as an agricultural enterprise since 1890 by the Flemer family; Carl entered the wholesale nursery business in 1949. Under his direction, the nursery grew to 1,800 acres and became known as “Virginia’s largest and finest nursery.”

Carl was a leader in the nursery industry, serving as vice president and president of the Virginia Association of Nurserymen, and was a founding member of the Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show, which now has over 10,000 attendees annually.

In 1980, he became one of the pioneers of the Virginia wine industry, starting Ingleside Winery, now operated by son Doug. The award-winning winery is one of the oldest on the eastern seaboard and one of the largest in Virginia.



Fletch Flemer and Ingleside Nurseries provided the Red Sunset maple planted at Arlington National Cemetery’s monument honoring Vietnam Helicopter Pilots, which was dedicated in 2018.

The tree was planted in May 2015. Fletch, on the left, is seen with members of the Old Dominion Chapter, Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association.

LaVerne (Verne) Kohl

LeVerne (Verne) Kohl, second-generation leader of Angelica Nurseries, passed on July 2. He was 88. In addition to establishing the nursery in Maryland (where it moved from Pennsylvania), and introducing 10 plants to the industry, Kohl logged a lifetime of accomplishments. We’ll let Craig Regelbrugge fill us in:

In terms of national industry service, Verne Kohl contributed mightily, yet humbly, for many years on the White House Grounds Committee of the American Nursery & Landscape Association. This small but prestigious Committee was at the center of a long and very special relationship between the Association and the White House. The relationship was established during Lady Bird Johnson’s tenure as First Lady, and was a natural outgrowth of the beautification and planting



movement she catalyzed. Industry icons with names like Flemer, Bigelow, and Scarff were invited to serve in this unique role.

Kohl was first appointed to the Committee in 1997, and over the years, he helped to coordinate the donation of several high-quality,

Angelica-grown landscape trees for the White House grounds, including for ceremonial plantings with Presidents and foreign dignitaries.

Upon hearing the news of Verne’s death, Bob Dolibois recounted the time he asked Verne, “If ANLA could only do one thing for the industry, what would that be?”

“Find another Lady Bird Johnson,” was his wise reply.

Bob continued by observing that Verne grasped so much of what the association and industry really needed: to fully appreciate the value of its own products (mainly, plants) and to have that value appropriately recognized by the marketplace and public ... including in the pricing of the product.

Of course, Lady Bird was the Great Promoter of landscape beautification, so Verne was spot-on with his comment.

ANLA Alumni News presents a special book review!
“On the House” by former Speaker of the House John Boehner
— Musings by “Uncle Bob” Lyons and Craig Regelbrugge —

[Bob Lyons] I like John Boehner. Number One, he was an Ohio favorite son. Number Two was that he was straight-talking, believing in conservative values that resonate with most small business owners. When he was elected to Congress in 1991, as a freshman, he took on the “House” internal bank and exposed it for allowing members to write checks with no money in their accounts and not worrying about paying it back. He won, along with other freshmen who also felt this activity was wrong. He also got the law changed that allowed Congressmen to use the USPS as their own “piggy bank” to mail flyers for their election without having to pay for the stamps.

Finally, Number Three was that he smoked cigarettes in the Capitol building and any other place else he felt like. This was at a time when smoking was being banned everywhere. I was a smoker at the time (I have since quit) and thought, “This guy is a rebel and my kind of guy.” I shouldn’t be praising someone for smoking, but it alluded to the kind of independent person he was.

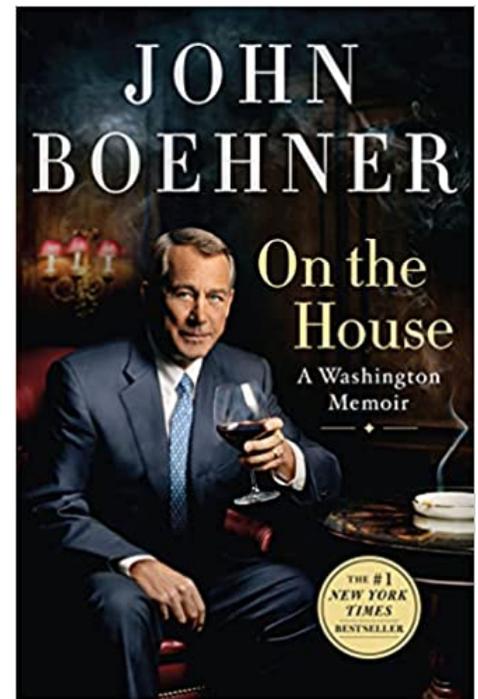
I, along with many of you, have traveled to Washington, DC, many times to visit with our Senators and Representatives in hopes of getting their support on issues important to our industry. Labor and immigration were always on the forefront. On one visit, Craig Regelbrugge was able to get several of us an appointment with John, who at that time was Speaker of the House. This was a pretty big deal. Usually, we met with staffers of the Congressmen to plead our case and

hope that our message was passed on to the Member. This was the “big leagues.”

I don’t know how many of you have been in the Speaker’s office, but when we were escorted in, I was flabbergasted. I had never seen anything so opulent in DC. I suppose it is warranted because, after all, he was second in line to be the President. His view out his large windows looked right down the reflecting pool and National Mall and ending at the Washington Monument. His office comprised several rooms, and our group was asked to sit in his library. We introduced ourselves, and the first thing he did was light up a cigarette. (I was still smoking at the time but did not have the courage to light up as he just did.) I thought to myself, this guy can do anything he wants.

Our theme at the meeting was to get his support for H-2A reform. Being from a rural part of Ohio and briefly working for Thornton’s nursery, he was aware of our problems and was sympathetic to them. After a while, he lit up another cigarette. At the time of our visit, there were competing agricultural bills being introduced in Congress, and it did not seem that our plan had any chance of passing. We spent about half an hour with him and were very appreciative of the time he spent with us. I told everybody afterwards that it was a two-cigarette meeting.

I have attended numerous fundraisers for politicians, as many of you have, but there is one that sticks out from the others. It was for Speaker Boehner and was held at a rich person’s mansion. It was a \$2,000.00 per plate cost and I got



roped into going by some other nurserymen who wanted to corner Boehner and have him listen to our concerns about agricultural labor. The house I went to for the fundraiser was exquisite and the food was delicious. I figured that if I had paid that much money, I was going to eat as much as I could.

Speaker Boehner showed up with his entourage of staffers and Secret Service personnel and arrived in a three-SUV caravan all in black. How is it that all of the Washington dignitaries show up in a three-black-vehicle convoy? It was just like what you see on TV. It was quite an experience for me to see men carrying guns and earpieces and staying close to the Speaker and always surveying the crowd.

Several of us were able to spend considerable time with the Speaker, were able to make our points and felt like he understood our concerns and would try to do something about it. All in all, it was money

well spent. As a side note, while I was walking the grounds of the home I spotted the Speaker not far away from me, smoking a cigarette. I went up to him and asked if I could have a photo with him and I smoking. He laughed and said, "Sure, why not?" We took the photo, and I still have it as one of my favorite possessions. He did say not to show the photo to too many people, as his staff would be upset.

[Craig Regelbrugge] Just like the stories Uncle Bob just shared, Mr. Boehner's book is a "plain-speak" collection of anecdotes and reflections. It's an easy and enjoyable read, made more so given the close relationship we and our "Ohio mafia" enjoyed with the 53rd Speaker of the House. (Peter Orum tells the story of the time he attended an event with Boehner in Illinois. When he introduced himself as a nurseryman, Boehner asked, "Are you part of the Ohio nursery mafia?" So it really was/is a thing!)

As ANLA, we got to know John Boehner pretty quickly. Given the reputation he already had with our Ohio folk, our ANLA-PAC supported him in his first race, and thereafter. I must confess as the years went by, I had to constantly remind myself how to properly say his name. True confessions why: my mother! In her later years, her politics veered progressive, and foreshadowing the school-playground name-calling that was

later perfected by President Trump, she always referred to him as "Boner."

In the book, Boehner tells it like it is. The passages about Ted Cruz really resonated; talk about an example of a Member who's just there to grandstand with little, ultimately, to show for it. I have yet to meet someone who says they like Ted Cruz. Most of us seem to be with Boehner on that one.

My only lament is that Boehner didn't help us get our labor bill across the finish line. I don't want to spoil the surprises (read the book!), but his "venting" about the Republican Party veering off the rails reveals that perhaps he couldn't. Paul Ryan inherited the same problem and had roughly the same policy "success." Hard to lead when too many of your own reject the concept of being led.

Anyway, a good summer of 2021 read (glass of wine optional but encouraged). Plenty of

enjoyable stories, more than a few laughs, and some consequential things to think about going forward.

That about sums it up.

PS: Uncle Bob read it on his Kindle. I (Craig) am old-school and got the hard-cover edition. Willing to loan it around!

We want to hear from you!

Do you have stories you'd like to share with your ANLA Alumni friends and colleagues? C'mon ... we know you do.

Whether it's serious business, family news, a brief update on what's keeping you busy — reflections on your time with fellow ANLA folk? — we'd like to hear from you.

Send your story to sallydbenson@gmail.com.

