

President's Letter

Robert (Buddy) Lee — Independence, Louisiana

The spring azalea bloom season always passes faster than I would like. There is just something exciting after a long winter of waiting to enjoy the spring rebirth of my azalea garden. This time of the year just seems to energize me, and I get more of my projects completed and still have plenty of time to enjoy the spectacular show of blooms. I love working in my nursery and garden from daylight to dark in this wonderful time of the year.

I feel that our Society is at a turning point. Our goals have remained the same as they were from the onset of this Society; however, our means of achieving these goals have changed. In the late 70s when our by-laws were formed, the use of words such as Internet, Web page, and interactive on-line discussion were not part of the everyday language. Our journal has grown into a state-of-the-art publication that is not only colorful to look at but is also very educational and enjoyable to read. The Archives Project, the Azalea City Project, and our many other pursuits are all cutting edge attempts at perpetuating our Society and its goals into the future. The ASA is a strong and stable Society with a hard-working and devoted board of directors and officers.

So you may ask, "What is the problem?" Well to start with, I like the quote, "Your chances of getting what you need drastically improve if you just ask for it." So, if that is true, then here is what our Society needs. First, we need additional volunteers to help move this Society forward. Many of our officers have multiple duties and my fear is that they will get "burned out" over time. Second, we need to increase our operating finances. Our Board is extremely conservative and frugal with the Society's funds. Every member is very important to the Board, and every attempt has been made not to raise the annu-

al dues. Most members would probably be surprised to know that their dues do not even cover the cost of compiling, printing, and distributing our journal. Members of our Board work hard to solicit and maintain advertisers in our journal to help balance our operating costs. We have a significant endowment/general fund; however, our by-laws restrict the use of this fund as operating funds. Our dues, which have not been increased for a long time, may have to be increased to help cover the ever-increasing cost of doing business.

You can help by getting new members to join our Society; or better yet, give gift memberships to plant enthusiasts. Another way to help would be to make a gift contribution to the operating fund or to one of the projects such as the Azalea City Project. Our Archives Project is funded by a generous anonymous donor for which our Society is very grateful. Last but not least, I ask for your comments and ideas on how to improve our organization. The strength of the Azalea Society of America depends on an active membership. The Board and officers will be more than glad to hear from you.

Well, I guess that I am starting to sound like "Chicken Little." However, I can assure you that the sky is not falling on the ASA. Every progressive organization needs to periodically evaluate its operational status and to correct items that may hinder its potential and growth. I feel confident that the ASA is a very stable and progressive society. So "come on down" and get active with our Society; you will have a great time.

Hope you had a great spring and have a wonderful and productive summer.

Robert (Buddy) Lee

Azalea Society of America

The Azalea Society of America, organized December 9, 1977 and incorporated in the District of Columbia, is an educational and scientific non-profit association devoted to the culture, propagation and appreciation of azaleas Subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

Officers for 2005-2006

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Brookside Gardens

(chartered Aug. 1979)
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Northern Virginia

(chartered May 1980)
Dan Krabill, *Pres.*

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(chartered Oct. 1981)
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Allison Fuqua, *Pres.*

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(chartered May 2003)
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Ben Morrison

(chartered May 1980)
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Vaseyi Chapter

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(chartered May 2005)
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Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of \$25.00; life-membership for an individual is \$500.00. Members receive *The Azalean* and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society including those of the chapter with which the member affiliates. For information and a membership application, write to the Membership Committee, Azalea Society of America, 1000 Moody Bridge Road, Cleveland, SC 29635.