

President's Letter

Rick Bauer—Yorktown, Virginia



This has been a busy year so far with the opportunity to see some beautiful gardens and to meet society members in various locations. It was great seeing so many members at the society convention in Summerville, SC. Mother Nature looked kindly on us, timing the bloom so that we saw it at the peak of perfection. The beautiful blooms were complemented by interesting speakers and a great collection of plants at the plant sale. It was also a treat to visit the only tea plantation in the United States. Thanks to the Reverend Drayton chapter for their planning and hard work.

In early April, Susan and I had the pleasure of participating with the Northern Virginia Chapter in the planting of the Klimavicz Legacy Garden at Meadowlark Gardens in Vienna, VA. We planted 103 of Joe Klimavicz's hybrids near a gazebo used for wedding photos. When in bloom, the azaleas will certainly enhance these photos.

The following week I had the opportunity to give a talk at the Vineland Research and Innovation Center in Lincoln, Ontario. It was appropriate that I spoke about the Legacy Project, since right outside of the meeting room was a plot containing copies of all the Vineland azaleas, part of the Legacy Project. I was really impressed by the enthusiasm of the attendees and the hospitality shown to me. I was also pleasantly surprised to hear that the Holly Springs hybrids are doing well in their climate.

The next week we went to warmer climes where we had the opportunity to visit Lockerly Arboretum in Milledgeville, GA, and meet the executive director, Jennifer Pollard. They had just established a Legacy Garden in February based on a generous donation of azaleas made by Ernest Koone. Those of you who attended this year's convention will remember Ernest giving a talk during lunch at Magnolia Plantation and later receiving the society's Distinguished Service Award. Ernest donated many Georgia natives and Sommerville varieties. He has plans to continue making donations to the arboretum and we hope to visit again in the future when the plants are more mature. You can expect an article on the Lockerly Arboretum in an upcoming issue of *The Azalean*. We also had the opportunity to visit other member gardens in Georgia.

Our trip also took us to Chattanooga, TN, where we visited a few gardens of society members, including Frances Jones' Dolan Garden. We had visited in October when we presented Frances with an azalea named in her honor, and it was a pleasure to be back again to see it in bloom.

We finally hit the last weekend of April with a trip to Charlottesville, VA, where I gave another talk on the Legacy Project. The audience included Dr. Sandra McDonald whose hybrids are included in the project. It was great to see several society members and to visit member gardens.

While travel can be tiring, it is always a pleasure to get together with society members, either when we all come together at conventions or through travels to different areas. I'm continually learning about azaleas through my interactions with our knowledgeable members and certainly enjoy socializing with them. It is one of the benefits of society membership.

Finally, I've been very pleased with initiatives taken throughout the society to promote the Legacy Project. I will be providing an update of the project in *The Azalean* later this year.

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 which are in the subgenera *Tsutsusi* and *Pentanthera* of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (*Ericaceae*).

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At-Large Contact

Robert Thau

Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual amount of \$30; life-membership for one or two persons at the same address is \$600. Members receive *The Azalean* and are eligible for participation in all activities of the Society. For information and a membership application, write to Leslie Nanney, Secretary, 8646 Tuttle Road, Springfield, VA 22152 or visit www.azaleas.org.