

In Memoriam: Raymond Goza

By Ken Gohring—Marietta, Georgia



Ray Goza and customer at an Azalea Chapter of ARS plant sale.
Photo by Ken Gohring.

Word has been received that Ray Goza, a former lifetime member of the Azalea Society of America and a longtime member of the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) Azalea Chapter member has passed away. In their latter years, Ray and his late wife Ann had moved from Atlanta, Georgia, to Calhoun to be near their daughter. At Calhoun, the Gozas bought a small farm where Ray continued to grow azaleas and rhododendrons. Over the years, Ray has been a past speaker at ASA annual meetings and served the ARS Azalea Chapter well in several leadership positions and as a tireless worker at flower shows, plant sales and field trips.

I first met Ray some time ago at Northlake Mall in east Atlanta. I was shopping at the center when I noticed some people and a lot of attractive plants. I was greeted by Ray and Bill Johnson. The two were working at an ARS Azalea Chapter plant sale at the mall. They gave me information about the American Rhododendron Society and the Azalea Chapter and later I joined the society. I learned that Ray and I both worked for the same company, Southern Railway. He worked at Inman Yard, a large rail humpyard in northwest Atlanta. In addition to other tasks, he worked with the radio equipment that the railroad used in its over the road rail movements. Ray worked 42 years for the railroad.

I became an active chapter member after Avis Aronovitz, former chapter president and gardening author, got me involved in the 2002 national convention. At that convention, one of my responsibilities was work-

ing with Ray, who was responsible for arranging the convention's northside garden trips as well as a trip to Auburn. He was a faithful member. The Gozas attended many ARS and ASA regional and national conventions.

Ray had a plant nursery in which he specialized in azaleas and rhododendrons. He was an authority on plant culture and provided his customers with excellent plants and planting advice. He was also a member of the International Plant Propagators Society.

He was a frequent speaker at gardening-related events throughout the Atlanta area. When Avis wrote her book, *Gardening Around Atlanta*, she involved Ray and another ARS Azalea Chapter member, Louis Short, in writing the section on hybrid rhododendrons. Both Ray and Louis were recognized azalea and rhododendron authorities who did a lot of field work, frequently working together, studying native azaleas in wild areas around Atlanta.

Ray took up aviation after retirement from the railroad and purchased his own plane, which he flew to Alaska with his son on one occasion. He was a ham radio operator and did volunteer work with the Civil Air Patrol. Beekeeping was another hobby he pursued.

His field work with native azaleas led to the discovery of an attractive nativar which he named 'My Choice'. He felt that the plant was worthy of registration but never pursued doing so.



Ray Goza's R. 'My Choice' photo by Joe Coleman.