

THE INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROPAGATORS' SOCIETY: A DYNAMIC ORGANIZATION THAT SERVES YOU

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The International Plant Propagators' Society is as good as its members *want it to be*. Our Society is *US*—you and me, not *THEM*—some shadowy group of strangers! It has been my very great privilege to attend meetings of several of the Regions that comprise IPPS, Inc., and I come away from each meeting feeling a unique sense of pride that I belong to such an organization!

During the past five annual meetings of the International Board, I have heard increasing concerns expressed by the Directors over various aspects of the policies and rules under which we operate, such as the relationships of the Regions to each other, and the relationship of the Regions to the International body. Finances, publications, forming new Regions, voting rights, Region's rights, are frequently on the agenda for discussion. This is GOOD! An organization worth supporting is an organization that serves the needs of its members and, truly, an organization must change as the needs of its members change.

Most of us know more about our own Region than we do about the Society, Inc. This is as it should be, since one of the unique aspects of our Society is the degree of autonomy each Region has in running its own meetings and affairs. However, the Society is under the direction of the International Board of Directors, and it is here that the international aspects of our organization take shape and meaning. As you know, the Board is composed of one Director elected by each Region, plus the International Officers, elected by the Board. The Board is charged with the management and control of the affairs and of the property of the Society, and the expenditures of all funds.

How did it all start, and where are we going?

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

As you read through the proceedings of the various inaugural meetings of the IPPS, several names keep appearing. One of the founding members of our Society is with us at the 1986 Western Region meeting—Dr. William Snyder. As the International Historian, Ralph Shugert, said so well in the June 1986, *Plant Propagator*, "No single member of our Society has had more input in the guidance of this unique International Board, as the Society's only

¹ IPPS International President, 1986

member who has sat on every International Board meeting since we became an International Society.”

But what about before we became international? Historian Ralph, at the 1980 Western Region meeting in Anaheim, told us that our Society had its roots in an earlier organization known as, “The National Association of Propagating Nurserymen”. Formed in 1919, the name was changed in 1927 to the “American Plant Propagators’ Association”. The constitution specified that membership was strictly limited to nursery firms engaged in the propagation of nursery stock for lining out in nursery rows for distribution within the United States, ONLY! No export—no scientists, extension agents, or florists allowed! The 12th and final meeting was in Detroit in 1931. It did not reconvene again, due to the severe downturn of the economy. Some say it failed because it did not promote free exchange of ideas.

At the inaugural meeting of the Southern Region, Jim Wells reminisced about the founding of our Society: “Way back in the summer of 1951 I received a letter from Ed Scanlon, Commissioner of Shade Trees, Cleveland, inquiring whether or not it would be a good idea to start a plant propagators’ society. I said, YES! He apparently received affirmative replies from a number of people and so he called the first inaugural meeting held in the Senator Hotel in Cleveland early in December, 1951. There were between 75 and 80 people there. A number of interesting papers were given and, as far as I know, the first written paper on the propagation of rhododendrons from cuttings was given at that time. The thing that stands out most in my mind about the meeting, was that we spent the whole time arguing. There was a committee formed, and it argued all night about how the Society should be organized. I wanted the organization to be called the Plant Propagator’s Guild, but nobody wanted a guild—this was un-American. The arguments were really about what the membership requirements should be—I wanted it to be a Society in which the voting members had some knowledge. You would have to be a practicing propagator for at least 10 years. This was too long—5 years was finally agreed upon. We also wanted to unlock the “locked greenhouse door” to guarantee a free exchange of information from one member to another.”

Jim Wells continued, “We therefore required that a person should have experience, but we didn’t eliminate the person without it—that was built in later with the introduction of the Junior Member, so that he or she could come along and learn, but the main structure of the Society was built around people who had knowledge and who would regularly share it. Being Doubting Thomases, we wanted proof people had, and would, share with each other; this has been developed over the years until now we have a system whereby you are required to produce, in writing, three sponsors. These sponsors have to take the trouble to state on a form provided

by the Society that the candidate is known to them personally and that the candidate does meet the membership requirements of the Society. This is not just a casual requirement. Where you work or where you come from has no bearing; it is you—the propagator—who is the important consideration; it is what you do, what your knowledge is, and how much you are willing to share your knowledge with other people that counts.”

Everyone went home from that meeting without much having been decided. A portion of that first group met the following summer in Detroit and elected Jim Wells president, commissioning him to carry out the establishment of the Society.

In his tribute to Dr. Snyder in *The Plant Propagator*, Ralph reminds us that of the 9 original members of the organizing committee, 3 are still with us carrying honorary membership in the Eastern Region. These founders include Dr. William Snyder, Dr. L. C. Chadwick, and Mr. James S. Wells.

After initial action in the summer of 1958, instigated by Phil Barker and Hudson Hartmann, followed by a meeting in Davis, California in 1959 of about 50 West Coast plant propagators, a committee appointed from the Plant Propagators' Society met at Asilomar, California, on October 14–16, 1960. About 150 people attended that organizational meeting of what would become the Western Region of the IPPS. Mr. Jim Wells delivered the keynote address, and Dick Fillmore, in his opening remarks said, “The Plant Propagators' Society has meant a great lessening of professional loneliness.” Donald J. Hartman of Leonard Coates Nursery was elected first president, serving in 1960–61.

In 1961, at the 11th annual meeting of the Plant Propagators' Society in Washington, D.C., the membership approved the formation of an International Society, and Harvey Templeton, Jr., was elected the first President, with representatives from both Eastern and Western Regions serving on his Board.

How did Regions outside of the North American continent develop? This was touched upon by Ralph Shugert in a paper given at the 1982 Western Region meetings in Hawaii. He reported that in the minutes of the International Board meeting in Anaheim, California in 1966, a letter from Jim Wells asked for the Board's attitude regarding forming chapters in other parts of the world. After due discussion, President Bill Curtis, with the Board's approval, directed Secretary Snyder to draft a reply indicating that the responsibility of forming such a Region would rest entirely upon the Society members residing in such areas and the interest they might be able to generate in developing sufficient potential qualified members.

The first meeting of the Region of Great Britain and Ireland was on September 18, 1968 with Brian Humphrey elected as President. Once again, Jim Wells gave a keynote address. International Presi-

dent, Pete Vermeulen, attended the 2nd meeting in 1969. In 1973, in addition to the International Board, over 140 overseas members and family enjoyed the pre- and post-conference tours and hospitality of the GB&I Region, further enhancing the international aspects of the society.

Next came the New Zealand group. The move to start a chapter there was initiated by Jim Wells in correspondence with Mr. Ellaby Martin, of Hamilton, New Zealand. The first meeting was held in September, 1972, at the University of Waikato, in Hamilton, and Mr. Martin was elected their first President. A good account of the inaugural session is given in Volume 23 of the IPPS Combined Proceedings.

The first meeting of the Australian chapter was held in October, 1973, in New South Wales. Jim Wells was once again the keynote speaker, and Edward Bunker was elected the first president.

The newest Region to form is the Southern Region. The first meeting was in December, 1976, in Mobile, Alabama, where two speakers addressed the question, "What is the IPPS?" These speakers were Bill Curtis and Jim Wells. The first president was Charlie Parkerson.

I would like to close with a quote from a talk given by Jim Wells at the first meeting of the Society, 35 years ago. "The plant propagator, the person who originates plants of all kinds, is the cornerstone upon which all other parts of this vast industry depend. Without him, without his work and his products, there would be no horticulture industry." In the IPPS, we have a unique, dynamic international society.

Get involved with your Region. Support it in the years ahead, and together we can make it one of the best known and most effective horticulture organizations in the world!