

2002 NATIONAL CONVENTION
TUCSON, ARIZONA
April 10-13 2002

WOW, what an exciting, educational trip this has been! Rivers and washes with no sign of water in them, plants growing out of rocky, sandy terrain with no sign of water, deserts with brush, cacti and huge boulders! It was like stepping into another world. The frosting on the cake though was the friendly fellowship that permeated the conference.

The National Gardeners of America Convention was held in Tucson, Arizona, this year hosted by the Gardeners of Tucson with help from the Green Valley Club, the Payson Club and the two Phoenix Clubs, April 10-13. There were about 200 in attendance and it is always fun to see the members greet members they haven't seen for a year or more. We think the fellowship among members from various parts of the country is one of the best parts of belonging to the Gardeners of America.

The Hilton Tucson East was a beautiful hotel and the air conditioning was most appreciated. Temperatures were in the 90 to 100 degree range. On Thursday, the day began with breakfast and Youth Gardening Awards followed by the first members meeting. Among the matters covered were Scholarships, Web Site Changes and Disaffiliated Clubs and club retention to mention just a few. It was stated that the directors make the rules and regulations for the national organization, which the officers try to follow. This caught my attention after hearing many times over "What does national do for us? Or how can they tell us what to do?" This tells me that if there is a problem we had better take our regional directors in hand and let them know how we feel.

Then the fun began with the first garden tour of the Struthers Home, a beautiful two-acre property surrounded by a tall hedge of Italian Cypress, Citrus and Palm trees. The large lawn surrounded by bougainvilleas, roses, hibiscus, bird of paradise, water lilies and annual flowers with Mexican food and entertainment by a mariachi group was a great starting point.

For you container gardeners, you really missed something. The Ron Mac Bain home was a scene hard to describe. There were annuals, spring bulbs and perennials that filled his small back yard in every direction. He had several shrines and statuary and favored the color blue with blue fences, and garden tools, etc. It had been featured in several national gardening magazines.

You would need to see the Harrison Yocum's Garden to believe it. This third garden on the tour was developed over 42 years with mountains of rocks, minerals, cacti and succulents. It also included a miniature arboretum of trees, shrubs and palms. Could this be why they call him the 'rock hound'?

After breakfast on Friday we learned more about gardening from the seminars. There were nine but we could only attend three. There was Flower Arranging followed by a Mini Flower Show hosted by member Bob Ellis who looks just great and is as ornery as ever.

The business meeting reported 4460 members on 2/28/02. Every member needs to bring in a new member this year. The ballots will be mailed in the newsletter this year with return postage for the National election.

Thank goodness for air-conditioned busses as we headed for the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum and Saguaro National Monument. For a northern gardener this was quite an eye opener. The highlight of the conference for some was dinner at the Triple C Chuck wagon. Oh yes, the food was good but, THE SONS OF THE PIONEERS, was the entertainment. WOW, we couldn't have asked for anything better!

Next, came the awards for publishing noteworthy newsletters for the club and members. This was followed by the second members meeting, which included presentation of the Service & Honor Club Certificates and the Spade Club and Trowel Club Awards.

This is the 70th year of our National organization.

These Clubs received Service Awards:

- The Garden Clubs of Des Moines, Iowa - 70 years.
- Fort Wayne GOA - 70 years
- Akron Men's Garden Club - 65 years
- Rockford Area GOA - 55 years
- Maple City - 45 years
- Men's Garden Club, Erie County - 40 years
- Gardeners of Western PA - 15 years.

There were five \$1000.00 scholarships given this year, two in Dallas, one in Akron, one in Austin, and one in Coon Rapids, Mn.

AWARDS:

- The Silver medal award for outstanding service to the national organization went to James Tracey of Rockford, Illinois area.
- The Honor clubs with the highest percentage went to Mission Springs GOA with 35.7% increase in membership.
- There were 9 other clubs who had a high increase in membership.
- The Lake Lotawana Garden Club received the George Spader Award for the greatest percent increase in membership over the previous year of 120%.
- The Photography Best of Show Winner was Donald P. Delmez of St Charles, 1st runner up to Paul Hartman of Green Bay, Wis.
- Rodney Toth from Youngstown had 14 entries in the Photography Contest. He received the Sweepstake Award for Most Blue Ribbons. You can see two of his entries on the back of the 2003 calendar.

- The Meritorious Achievement Award, a special award for long, dedicated and capable service to the organization as National treasurer, president and past president was Ronald Heggen of Des Moines, Ia.
- The Newsletter Awards went to their respective editors
 - Class A
 - 1st place to Bob Ploger of Dallas
 - 2nd place to Brad Lucht, "The Manure Spreader" of Greater Kansas City
 - Class B
 - 1st place to Karen Williams of Spokane, Wa
 - 2nd place to Geraldine Herman of Stow Community Garden Club
 - 3rd place to Harry Ofverstedt of Overland Park, Kansas
 - Class C
 - 1st place to Teresa Edgar, "Horticultural Highlights" of Olathe, Kansas
 - 2nd place to Betty Stokes of Cherokee Village, Ark
 - 3rd place to Kathy Lasanta, Rhonda Yabrow of Marietta, Ga.
- There were many other awards that space doesn't permit.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!

The 2003 elected National Officers:

President - Louis C. Jones of Jackson, Mississippi;
 1st VP - Honey Barnekoff of Overland Park, Kansas
 2nd VP William J. Carney of Youngstown, Ohio
 3rd VP - Dale G. Davies of Van Wert, Ohio
 Treasurer - Steve Bush of Des Moines, Iowa
 Immediate Past President - Paul Bessey.

A Memorial Service was held at Friday lunch for our departed members, a total of 76.

Second Vice President, Honey Barnekoff mentioned that very few applications for awards were received due to an earlier than usual due date and not knowing where to send the applications.

President, Paul Bessey, addressed the subject of disaffiliated clubs. He stressed our need to be positive and seek new ways to bring in new clubs as well as members.

At the close of the convention, the President's Reception was held at poolside followed by the President's Banquet. During the President's Banquet the Folklorico Dance Group Academia de Bai Tradicionallle entertained us. The dancers are little girls from the age of 6 years old to young ladies of 20 years. The costumes were beautiful and the dancers so very graceful.

An invitation to the 2003 Convention in Albany, NY was extended to members. Plan now to attend the National Convention in Albany, New York, June 25 - 28, 2003. We look forward to next year and another wonderful experience of gardening and culture in New York

We thank the members of Arizona for a great time. The weather was nice with no rain. Several attendees made a vacation out of this trip and visited the Pima Air and Space Museum and the Mission San Xavier del Bac.

Thanks to Gerry Herman and Bob Smoker for this report!