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# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

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**Steve Brainerd**

*Dallas, Texas*

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## AZALEA SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP - WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU?

I have been pondering society membership from my own personal experience and have done some reading on national trends. I would like to share some thoughts with you and hopefully stimulate your introspection.

Organizational membership in general is down nationally. Passive membership (mailing a check with very little further involvement) has increased in proportion to active membership. The increased pace of life, continuous change in many of our lives, and lack of available personal time are cited as reasons. The explosive growth of electronic technology has driven us into isolation, away from human dependence and interaction, with reliance upon voice mail, computers, and passive entertainment such as television.

As human organizational strength weakens so does the fabric of our lives. The less we depend on each other, the less we care about each other. As larger percentages of us disappear into faceless human masses, individual responsibility deteriorates, complacency increases, and the ability to mobilize to accomplish common beneficial goals becomes more elusive. As the passive individual becomes more detached, the more he lives vicariously, content to view rather than do, by substituting the achievements of celebrities and his heroes for his own personal accomplishment.

Membership dues are very important to the Azalea Society whether it be from a member-at-large, a passive chapter member, or an active chapter member. Without the total contribution from all three sources, the Society could not perform at current levels.

Active membership, however, has advantages over passive membership. Azalea Society functions bring out the best in us, such as kindness, commitment, giving, caring, and sharing. Gardening in general reduces stress and promotes health. The different perspectives generated by various people looking at the same endeavor have always been appealing to me. One member's experiences are easily condensed for another's benefit, promoting learning and enjoyment. Life-long bonds are established through common interests and the sharing of plants, food, conversation and time spent together. Involvement often means accomplishment, getting into life rather than viewing it.

Active participation in the Azalea Society of America is about sharing your time with someone else. If you are a member-at-large separated geographically from everyone else, think about finding a person who would enjoy sharing your experiences in the garden and enjoy reading **THE AZALEAN**. If you are a passive chapter member, think about attending the next chapter meeting with a friend to enhance your personal experience. If you are an active member, how can you change your involvement to heighten your enjoyment?

## 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 Subseries Tsutsusi and Pentanthera of the genus *Rhododendron* in the Heath family (Ericaceae).

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Regular membership is open to all interested parties for an annual contribution of \$20.00. Life membership for an individual is \$300.00. 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 membership application, write to the Membership Committee, Azalea Society of America, P. O. Box 34536, West Bethesda, MD 20827-0536.