

President's Letter

William F. Bode — Covington, Louisiana

Most of us, particularly this writer, are sick to death of the Y2K bit, so let us mention it no more. With the conclusion of an outstanding convention, excuse my prideful phrase please, was that the end of the Society's year 1999-2000 or the beginning of 2000-2001? I prefer to take the premise that it marked the end of 1999-2000. At this point I must point out to all of you that the convention was **not an act of nature that just appeared** and was ready to feed, transport, educate, and even entertain the members present. So, to Robert (Buddy) and Dixie Lee, to Maarten van der Giessen, to Jerry Ladner, to James Campbell and to all those who worked so hard on putting the convention on, the Society extends its gratitude for tasks so well done. In addition, we sincerely thank Middleton Place and Carolina Nurseries for their warm hospitality, luncheons, and financial support.

That being said about the event that ended our year, there were other outstanding accomplishments during the year:

1. The development and continued growth of our Internet outreach programs, including the Society's website.

2. The new editor of THE AZALEAN, Barbara Stump, who is firmly in control after only one year, and who continues to move forward.
3. More contacts are being made with large growers, propagators, and universities regarding both proprietary and scientific matters.

We are growing—maybe not in numbers—but certainly in influence.

All of the above is good and forward-looking, and the convention was a lot of fun and educational. The business meeting left a lot to be desired, for which I take responsibility. In an attempt to remedy this, I will present a plan that I hope will facilitate "doing the Society's business" to the board of directors at the August teleconference meeting.

In the coming year, WE must do all we can as individuals to stop the downward slide of membership. I emphasize again that YOU have the greatest selling tool—a smile and a handshake. When coupled with the enthusiasm and knowledge I saw at the convention in Charleston, I know we will succeed.

On the Cover:

New species azalea, *Rhododendron eastmanii*, classified and documented by Dr. Kathleen Kron and Mike Creel. Creel says of the natives: "I think you folks ought to think more about our natives. There is greater potential in color, fragrance, duration of show, heat and cold tolerance, drought resistance, no need for spraying, little need for fertilization and better foliage, since most pests are dropped in the fall with the leaves and don't overwinter. I pick off a few cutworms and walking sticks on the first balmy spring nights, and that's about it."

Photo and text by: Mike Creel, News Section Chief, SC Department of Natural Resources, Columbia, South Carolina.

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 Subgenera *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 dues amount of \$25.00; life membership for an individual is \$500.00. 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 a membership application, write to the Membership Committee, Azalean Society of America, P.O. Box 34536, West Bethesda, MD 20827-0536.