

President's Letter

Joseph E. Schild, Jr. — Hixson, Tennessee

Friends,

With the memory of holidays behind us, but still warm in our hearts and minds, we look to the New Year for a new future without the company of numerous friends and fellow gardeners. Not only because of the events of September, but in spite of those sad and traumatic losses, we honor our friendships by keeping on, keeping on.

What better way to remember those passed than by holding dear those interpersonal relationships between family members, close friends, and soon-to-be new friends. What I found through all of the debris of recent loss was my family growing closer and determined to take each day as a blessing, a gift from the Creator.

With the above said from the heart, I view things quite differently in today's world. Not even the late, out-of-season blooming of an azalea or rhododendron perturbed me as it once did. I found laughter as I was fussed at by a pair of wrens for chasing them from my potting building before I closed the door for the evening. A gaudy red cardinal's ratcheting over me pruning a Burford holly, his winter hide-away, seemed in full context and somehow sweet to the ear.

In mid-October, as a newly found azalea friend and I strolled the paths of lofty Wayah Bald, N.C., the very air seemed sweeter and yet, not quite.

"What is that odor?" he asked, and I had to chuckle as I recalled the same aroma from years ago.

"Wet hound dog," I replied, and then saw the look of recognition in his eyes. "It's the acid in the decomposing leaves

making humus," I added. I took a small branch from a yellow birch, and skinned the thin, tender bark back, and held it out for him to smell.

Later, a huge smile washed across his face as he recognized the sweet fragrance of wintergreen. These were just a few moments in a delightful day of exploring the wonders of Nature and collecting a few seed pods from the azaleas that had been on fire with bright blooms back in June.

Just 15 minutes before, as we stood looking out over the valley far below us from the picnic area, two B-1 bombers flew over us so close I felt the urge to duck. They were transitioning from straight to swept wing configuration, and the awesome sight almost, almost, put a wet blanket on my day.

The point I make is simple. We chose to enjoy the day in friendship and adventure, taking the gifts from nature carefully and with a certain reverence. I honored the friends lost by making a new one.

Through the book loan from my new friend, I just read the first four chapters from Michael Frome's book, *Strangers in High Places, The Story of the Great Smoky Mountains*, and on page 23, a quote trapped me. From an inscription, placed on the stone above the seed house of John Bartram in Schuylkill, Pennsylvania, taken from the lines of Alexander Pope:

Slave to no sect, who takes no private road,
But looks through Nature up to Nature's God.

Thank you, Fuzzy Perritt, and thank you all for making this Society a bright spot in what might have been a very dim world.

ous support of the Azalea Society of America.

Also, last issue (Fall 2001, 23 (3) 62-63), the name of Buddy Lee's Encore azalea *Rhododendron* 'August Through Frost' should have read *R. 'August To Frost'*.

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, 1000 Moody Bridge Road, Cleveland, SC 29635.

Corrections

The list of Endowment Members was incomplete in the 2001 ASA Roster and should have shown L. Malcolm Clark, Harold M. Dodd, and Donald H. Voss in 2001. We appreciate their continued and very gener-