

Printed for Mark Freeman

Paul Ecke, Jr 1:32

As I look back now that I have been in the military, the navy. I think probably outside the business the work with the intern type programs for young people, for our industry has really been the most rewarding. Recently I've been involved with federal funding for research for the floral industry and that's moving along quite well. I think here in the business moving from the field operations in the early 60's to greenhouse operations and breeding new varieties that of course has always been and still is exciting. So I think creating new varieties these days, even though I am personally not doing it, I get a great joy out of seeing the people that are working with it now followed me forty years ago.

Freeman 1:46

What was your role forty years ago in creating new varieties?

Older Gentleman 1:50

Well in 1963 a colleague in the flower business took two of our varieties, barbrecky supreme and ecky white, and crossed them and created a new very long lasting variety. And that variety Paul Mickison was the beginning of an era of long-lasting poinsettias for the consumer. And so we developed a breeding program in the early 60's and 1968, came out with a beautiful red one that was the basis for our getting back into the market. Because we had lost the business that we had by not being able to sell the plants that we had out in the field. They were field growing plants, alike a nursery but the new varieties pual nickleson variety, the new concept of growing them in green houses as vegetative cuttings was just a wole new concept. And so , the most exciting years were in the 60's , 70's and the 80's when business was being expanded during those years. Today there is lots of competition for breeding and the distribution and the market is mature, so it's not making tremendous improvements.

Freeman 3:33

What would you say in that period you're talking about, 20 years, how much would it enlarge the market?

Older Gentleman

I suppose when you take the period from 1968 when we got really involved and moved from then to the market that exists now, it's at least four times the size that it was at that time. This is really because the varieties that we have in the market hold up so much better for the consumer.

Freeman 4:14

How would you describe the evolution of the community?

Older Gentleman

Well I was born in Los Angeles, but went to school in Encinitas. The school is still there it's called central school. And in those days there was four rooms and eight grades and in this case my teacher a woman named Mildred Mc Pherson was my teacher each of those first eight years, and of course it was pretty rural society. There wasn't much industry, there was a certain number of small farms, some orchids, but it was quite rural. It all changed when World War II came, the whole society change, and certainly here on the coast in Encinitas, but prior to WWII very little happened here it just chugged along.

Freeman 5:26

Do you have?

Older Gentleman

Well certainly has San Diego County has grown, and this is all because of water that came 35 years ago to this part of the county. Encinitas has changed considerably primarily because of the water that meant more subdivisions, it meant a certain amount of industrial activity. So we were here before this all started and participated you might say during the depression years, things were really tough. I remember my mother taking vegetables to school for distribution. People in those days did a lot of sharing with their food stuff.

Because some had more than others, but then again when WWII started it was at a time when I was in high school. I ended up joining the Navy when I was 17 in 1943, and went away for 3 years, ended up on a destroyer in China Sea. At Ohio State where I graduated in '49 I got called for the Korean War for two years 1951-53, again on a destroyer and again in that China Sea

Well when I was a teenager, of course WWII was going on. It's very difficult to compare that time when a world war was going on without television and those things, but we knew we were going to the military there was no question about it, everything we did as teenagers was geared to what part of the military we were going to. I did at one time have an idea that I'd like to be a radio announcer, then a Navy pilot, but my eyes weren't good enough, and so I had to take a deck officers course and graduated from the Chipman school at age 19 as an insin right at the end of the war, but I really wanted to be a pilot.

Freeman 8:30

So how'd you'd get from wanting to be a pilot coming back to the family business?

Older Gentleman

Well I think as I finished the Navy and went to Ohio State University to study horticulture, I had committed myself to that career. My father I wouldn't say that he pushed me, but I think he was pleased that I chose to study horticulture and come back to the family business. Which I did in 1949 and was here for 2 years until I got called back to Korea.

Freeman 9:21

How did his ideas mesh with yours?

Older Gentleman

Well at a certain time in the early 50's I was on the chamber of commerce board in Encinitas and a fellow named Sid Shaw who had the cleaning establishment decided Encinitas should be called the flower capital of the world. At that time I had discussion with him because there was a lot of flower production here, we had maybe 600 acres of flowers a lot of carnations, outdoor gladios, lots of crops like that. But in comparison to other places in the world particularly Holland, it would be hard to say this is the capital. It was certainly a center of production that's a true statement, but I couldn't ever say that it was the capitol of the world.

Freeman

Inaudible question

Older Gentleman

At the time that we were recognizing that within time there would real estate pressure on all the growers, whether they're indoor or outdoor growers. My father and I decide that what we wanted to do was bring growers to the community so we would have some support for the agricultural issues that we were interested in because that was the big thing because the county understood agriculture, they had an agriculture department. So my father was able to convince the Tyamafy family to come to Los Angeles, and Tammy and Joe Kimora are still operating the greenhouses and growing orchids. I had become acquainted with Bob Weiner and his wife Evelyn., and sort of convinced them to come to Encinitas because I had a realtor who could find property for them. They did and they're still here.

Freeman

Inaudible question

Older Gentleman

Well or more. My father came originally in 1923 and so 1923-2002 we're getting to be about 79 years.

Freeman

Inaudible question

Older Gentleman

And that's absolutely total false the property that my father had and that I had after I got back from Korea. We decided that what we wanted to do was acquire land, and if we could farm it pay the taxes at least we'd have something. If the communist did succeed in coming to our shores, and during that time in the 50's when we were fighting in, people may not believe it today, but the Russians were absolutely dedicated to controlling this and they were going to come and take us over one way or the other. And so what happened was that my father had bought the property in Carlsbad in the Carlsbad ranch and I got involved with him in the Encinitas ranch and that's the two properties that we had. We had about 600 acres in Carlsbad and about 600 acres here in Encinitas.

Freeman 13:20

This didn't happen over night or by accident?

Older Gentleman

No, the idea of the poinsettia being the traditional living symbol of the , which I think most people would agree is the case here in North America, as well as in Western Europe. The process started in the 1920's. In those days the few growers who had greenhouses on the Eastern part of the United States were growing cyclamine and that was the Christmas flower. When my father came along he had this idea that he could provide them with mother plants at a reduced rate, they could grow a poinsettia, and maybe 6 or 8 months, and that would make the crop more profitable for the grower. Of course it was the right color, it had green leaves and red bracts. So he developed this business of producing the mother plants out in the field.

Freeman 14:36

So making it the Christmas plant?

Older Gentleman

Yea, what my father did was to develop a plan where he could produce these mother plants outdoor in the mild Southern California climate. And his interest was not to make as much money as he could, but just to hang on to the business. So he developed a system of standing orders, growers would get plants one year destroy them, get new plants the next year. So we had a regular harvest going on in a three year cycle, because it took us about three years to grow the biggest of the plants. And that worked quite well because the growers, even though the varieties were not as good by today's standards, they were better at what they had. And with the cyclamine costing so much money to produce the poinsettia just fit right in there very well and was continuing to gain a popularity until about 1963 when this new long lasting variety came to the market. It went from being a field operation, a nursery, an outdoor nursery operation to an indoor greenhouse controlled environment.

Freeman 16:08

Inaudible question

Older Gentleman

During the early 70's when we did have these newer long lasting varieties available the consumer didn't really know that these were better than varieties from the previous years, so what we did was to develop a local as well as a national PR program putting the poinsettia in the face of the consumer. We did that by having articles in the shelter magazines, we had newspaper articles about growers across the country that were growing these new varieties. We then went to Hollywood with Johnny Carson and others have them use poinsettias on their sets, and often times they had a lot of conversations about these new varieties, and we think that helped a great deal to push the varieties onto the public. I was particularly interested that in Christmas 2001 every major station on the east coast and the West Coast had poinsettias as their background and the foreground with the nightly news. And so in an earlier time 25 years ago we had arranged for those plants to be on the programs and now they're doing it on their own.

Freeman 17:56

How have you lasted more than 3 quarters of the century down to the 3<sup>RD</sup> generation?

Older Gentleman

I think when I came back from Korea, of course I was not married, and I was just learning the business and we went from this outdoor production to the greenhouse production. And in those days it was a little unclear as to what would be the future because another crop could come in, a competitor could come in with better varieties than we had. There was a kind of threats that existed then and still do today because in our kind of flower production there's always new insects and new diseases and when they do come it's a very tough situation because we don't have any background on how to control them. And what the federal government reducing the number of authorized chemicals for the control of pests its really just a challenge, but getting back in the beginning. When I was 30 and thinking that the poinsettia would still be expanding in demand and being a part of our community, I think we all worker very hard trying to make sure that it happened. But there wasn't any guarantee that it would be the case.

Freeman 19:37

How did you save the crops?

Older Gentleman

Well during the 1930's I think it was probably in 1932 all of a there was these great big tomato worms that had gotten on the poinsettia plants that were out on the field and my father had never experienced that sort of thing before so what we did was to go and take the plants, take these worms and just pull them off the plants. Then we'd drop them into the buckets and then we lighted and burnt them up. We just didn't understand anything about entomology in those days so. I stayed home from school for a couple days to pick the worms off the plants, we'd thought if we cut the worms in half that would do the trick, but it didn't. One half grew and the other half didn't, it was a real problem. And it has been the case in flower growing that as time goes by there are new pests and new diseases that no one has been involved with.

Freeman 21:09

How did being involved with such a demanding business affect your life?

Older Gentleman

Well the business we're in is very typical of the flower production business that existed in the last century. And that was that the family that were producing the flowers were very much like the farmers that lived in the Midwest, that was their life. That was their life it was the farm. The flower growers had the same outlook and they built there homes on the property were the green houses were, because they had to take care of the plants on Saturday and Sunday. It was just one of those things The whole business of production mostly in the US was totally different now with fresh cut flowers from South America, but it was natural to live on the property. Of course the women in the family didn't always understand that and weren't too sure that they liked that notion because the plants had to be watered Saturday, Sunday, and holidays. And often time it was the owner that had to do that, as was the case in our family. So I think that the women who were a part of our effort have to be commended because they put up with a lot at times because the demands of the business.

Freeman 23:05

Can you say more about those demands besides being there watering, any particular story that reminds you of it?

Older Gentleman

Probably one of the most difficult things that happens is that we'll get a new pest or disease and it scares you to death, because you don't know really how you're going to control it when you first find it. We have wonderful support from the University of California and their extension service to help with problems, but you don't know whether they'll be able to solve them or not. Often times in this particular climate in the fall when we're growing our flowering plants for Christmas time we have Santa Ana conditions, the air becomes very dry and hot wind comes off the desert and it just fries the plants if there's not enough humidity or moisture in the environment. So when that happens, it usually happens on the weekend, you have to be prepared to deal with that because that can ruin a crop real quick. I think that my relationship with my father suggest that he would be very pleased if I would come back to the family business and be

involved. Times were much slower then, the world was much slower, and it was always difficult to know what the next year was going to bring. At that time my Mother's brother was the general manager and he wasn't sure if he wanted me to take over the business at a later time. I know at the time when my son went away to college we made it real clear to him that he was not expected to come back and be part of the business, but if he wanted to and compete and delighted to have him do that. But we made it real clear for him, much more clear than my father made it with me.

Freeman 25:57

Do you have a sense of what made him come back?

Older Gentleman

Well my son worked after he finished college, he worked at several firms and got his Master's degree at Duke and then went to work with Hewlett Packard. As he was away there we had sort of a three year plan that he would spend three years with Hewlett Packard and then if he chose he wanted to come back we would work things out, and that's exactly what did happen. Unfortunately I had hired a man that was thirty years, I have to say this right, goddamnit, he was fifteen, I have to get this right, he was thirty years older than my son and thirty years younger than I. I brought him in to operate at the time when Paul was going to be learning the business, but I didn't want him to have to report to me so he reported to this other fellow. Unfortunately the man that we hired had died. SO the real question 12 years ago was whether Paul should take over, which he did in 1991, or whether he shouldn't. I think was a good decision for him to accept the challenge and me back off, which is exactly what I did.

Freeman 28:12

What are the challenges?

Older Gentleman

Well as I mentioned to you, I think the challenge with a family business, especially during my time was when you lived on the premises. That's where you had your family, office, and production facility. And having the balance that the women in the family would accept it, that was a very difficult time. And I don't know that my father did it to well, or that I did it to well, I think that my son is doing better in that having a balance between the business and the personal life. But originally, and the way the system works, the flower growers are farmers and they have to leave the business they cannot say that they can walk away from it, even though today is different than it was fifty years ago there's still some similarities. There are times when the demand for the harvest period, particularly during the Christmas season, it keeps the key people pretty busy.

Freeman 29:46

Maybe you can talk a little about the intergenerational dynamic particularly at the point where decision making is shifting from one generation to the next.

Older Gentleman

The business of intergenerational activity, I think varies with each family. I think my situation my father was not keen on giving up his control of minor decisions. Certainly major decisions was one thing, but he wanted to be involved in all the decisions so we had to work through that. I had then determined if my son were to come back I wouldn't be in his way too much. My guess is that he had for a few years, but I worked real hard to avoid that situation, but yes it is quite a challenge especially if the older is nphysically around. If they're right there then it does create a challenge, and it happens in every family, every family we know in the second or third generation has had to struggle with the leadership position with those who were there and those who are there now.

During the last century the poinsettia activity at the time as we knew it was a very slow moving process. We didn't have the communication, transportation, any of the things we have in this particular century. And so as we went from being a field operation to a greenhouse operation, at the time the world was getting smaller, we had to make relationships with certain people in Europe, northern Europe and Southern Europe. And when we developed the relationships with them one things leads to another. We're now spending time with China in particularly. Japan is in pretty good control, Korea is in pretty good shape. But the Chinese

market is what looks good for us. As I mentioned earlier before we were particularly interested in having growers like the Tyyomas and the Weiemans here physically so we would have some support for the agriculture activities that were their all the time. The pressure from real estate development is what has killed many growers in the US. So what we wanted to do was build a bow-work around our operation here so we could have a production facility right here in Encinitas which we do. Because the weather is so good, it's the weather that allows us to do a good job in breeding and producing cuttings. So the Los Angeles flower market was something that my father got into during the 1920's and I have since had that responsibility as being president of the market in Los Angeles. But then again that's totally changed, when my father started there was a group of growers whop were the investors and they needed a place to sell their product. Today, one or two generations later, many of the people who are stockholders have no interest in the floral industry and their just looking at it has an investment. So we've had to make changes to acomadate that particular situation.

As I mentioned when I came back from the Korean war I was absolutely convinced that the Communist were out to get us and so my father and I decided to acquire land so we'd have something to barter with them if they came. And in those days, in the 50's, they were absolutely dedicated to come into the US. And so what we did was to acquire land in Carlsbad and in Encinitas, a little parcel at a time. With the idea that if we could have this land we could do something with it to pay the taxes we'd be satisfied. SO that's what we did, this property that I'm on here now, was one of those pieces that I bought in my 20's. The notion being that if we had the property we could bargain with the Communists, and it would also give us a place to do whatever kind of farming we were going to do in the future. This was before the greenhouse development, but it fit right into that pattern that if we had the property available we could expand right into that type pf production.

As we all know the federal government is dedicated to trying to take away the assets of any family from one generation to the next. A few years ago we'd decided to make the plans so we'd could to continue to farm and part of that was developing the land that we had in Carlsbad as well as Encinitas. So during that period of the last 15 years we've spent a lot of time working with the city of Carlsbad, the city of Encinitas in developing these projects. But the main thing was that we'd then have satisfied a certain amount of the estate planning and in particular reserve some land that my son could continue to farm on right in the middle of the golf course subdivisions that exist right in the middle of Encinitas.

Freeman

37:29

And were you actively involved in creating the golf course and shopping areas?

Older Gentleman

Like any good organization we've had some wonderful people who have helped us do the planning and the ultimate development of the properties one of those people is Chris Kawkings and he is just a marvelous person, and worked very closely with the city and the developers so that we created something that is an asset to the community. It's attractive, serving a purpose, and we're all proud to be here living in the community were these developments occurred. Would we have like to see it open fields forever? Yea of course. But that's not possible. Unless you make the plans early enough to accommodate whats going to happen when someone dies you can lose the whole thing. And that has happened to ay number of framers in Carlsbad particularly. They just didn't get around to and they loss everything. Here in Encinitas we did want to be included in the city limits when the community wanted to incorporate. It really centered around what is Leucadia boulevard today and was around 680 in those days. We knew 60 years ago that the county of San Diego wanted to have this East-West road threw our ranch so all of our plans were made to accommodate this road that the city chose to take off the books when they incorporated. So I think that what we've been able to do because we had enough time is to develop the properties in a way that is an asset to the community. I have a daughter who lives right adjacent to the golf course so she's going to stay here for as long as she can. My son has a place just down the road, and the city of Encinitas actually came to us and said they'd like us to develop a shopping center so they'd get the tax revenue. So we've done that and I think the people who opposed that at the beginning are feeling much better because they do have several hundreds of thousands dollars of taxes per year from this shopping center. Which I think we're all proud of. Its attractive, its serving a purpose, and we're all living right here in the neighborhood. I think that's one of the things that's a little different about our family is that we have developed the property we

weren't outside people that came and left. We were here we developed and we're staying here, and our grandchildren are here. So at least that's the way it is right now.

Freeman                      41:37  
Do you wish that for the next generation?

Older Gentleman

As far as the next generation is concerned whether or not any of those would have an interest in flower production I don't know. I think that it'd be nice if they were qualified and wanted to participate. Frankly the only grandchild is eight, it's a few years down the road before a decision has to be made, I don't know about that at this time. Today there's four girls and two boys as grandchildren, there will be another girl in the near term, because my son and daughter in-law are in the process of adopting a Chinese baby girl and will be going to China in the end of January to pick her up and bring her home, we're all