

REEL #2

Interview with Ed Markham

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Mark Freeman

Tell me who you are and what you do in the flower business?

Ed Markham

My name is Ed Markham and I am basically now retired, I guess if you're in the horticulture business, you never retire from it, at least that's my case, cause I grew up in a little one horse farm in New York state and I went to Cornell and from there I went to various seed companies and now this past week I've been working with a taki company up in Serenas, California, there's a freelance advisor and so many people from all over the world around there, and I enjoy people and nature is my religion.

Mark Freeman

What are you doing down here today?

Ed Markham

I came down with a taki bunch to look and see what their competitors and their associates are doing in the plant business and it's a very exciting thing because so much has happened in the last few years. There was one time when we were practically all seed generated and now the vegetative cuttings and propagation has really taken over. There's one time when the breeders would try to grow everything just like peas out of a pod and sometimes they would take twenty years to come with a new variety, now it's a new variety, there's new types, new colors, whatever, snip off a cutting, run it through a disease prevention program and check it out and all of its aspects and that's what these trials are all about. The horticulture industry has all the people from all over the world to look and buy and see and look and see what's new and different.

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Well, I've been in the business quite a long while. I am 82 years old and that tells you something, I grew up on a one horse farm luckily, in western New York because at least we had something to eat, when I saw big shots selling pencils and apples if they could, then I went on to Cornell....(cut off)

...because energy shortage, population pressures, it isn't going to be forever until we run these SUVs all over the place and one on top of the other and hog all the rest of the world's natural resources I think we have to all look at - I'm a green, whether you like it or not, I'm a green and I grew up as one and today we better start thinking green instead of how much oil we can burn and how many more holes we can poke in the ground, that's kind of my preaching side, but basically the fact that we are living with nature and hopefully enhancing nature rather than detracting nature in our industry.

Mark Freeman

How does the biotech revolution fit into your vision of....

Ed Markham

Well mother nature has had biotech for the last millions of years, we've learned from....now this is my philosophy, my belief and a little bit of my scientific background. Mother nature has been doing biotech for the last millions of years, we've learned from short cuts recently and for the most part, I am not worried about genetic engineering which is not a good term necessarily but I am very excited about the possibilities of doing something with nature that enhances it which we've been doing right here with these plants and where I'm sitting at this moment and coming up with new and different things that sooner or later with evolution and things like that, you want to come up with the long and short way, the long way, and this way we can sometimes make some short cuts that enhance things and don't let the word biological engineering or genetic engineering scare you, read about it and learn about it and then you'll find out that it's not necessary to think about a sinister dragon going to gobble you up with a plant that's going to poison you, and anyway, that's my philosophy and I've yapped on that long enough

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...California who was a fine plant breeder and started some of the new breeding technology and is world know and has hired over 2,000 employees over the world....(cut off)

...Subject in operation, all of us have, we have to be, the world is becoming....plants from Australia, plants from New Guinea, just in here looking, plants from England, you name it, you see plants from all over the world, and that's the fun of it.

Mark Freeman

.....competition with global imports?

Ed Markham

Well, you know they have different economies and sometimes global imports do compete, and often times their efficiency of production in those countries are greater than ours not only personal costs and also from the climate and producing and I think that maybe in some ways we have to, not lower our standards of living, but we have to, it has to equalize a little bit more than it has, we've lived pretty high on the hog using 50% of the natural resources and at the same time we only represent only a 1/5th of the world's population.

Something that people do not know, first of all people say I wish I had a green thumb and I could grow a garden like you. Green thumb is like learning music, you start out with simple toe tappers after a while you're listening to some of the more intricate ones and the same thing happens with gardening, as you gradually learn, no one has a green thumb and you just have a little more experience and a little more time and you've been interested and you pay attention and you develop the technique.