

The IPPS Southern Region 25 Years Ago: How We Got Started!®

Charles H. Parkerson

Lancaster Farms, Inc., 5800 Knotts Neck Road, Suffolk, Virginia 23435-1899

The following is my recollection of how the I.P.P.S. Southern Region of North America came into being. In preparing this piece, I found a few notes, but mostly it comes from memory.

IN THE BEGINNING

A name you want to remember is John Roller. John was the propagator at Cartwright Nursery Co., Collierville, Tennessee, and was a Past I.P.P.S.-Eastern Region, North America and International President. Mr. Roller attended the 1975 Southern Nurserymen's Association (SNA) Research Conference, on behalf of the I.P.P.S. Eastern Region, North America (E.R.N.A.) Board. The E.R.N.A Board felt that their annual meeting was getting too large and they wanted to explore the possibility of a Southern I.P.P.S. Chapter. A Chapter under the existing constitution and by-laws did not have a vote on international affairs. Instead, the Chapter was under the guidance of the sponsor region, i.e. the Eastern Region, North America. The idea was circulated among several E.R.N.A. members and many liked the idea. To name a few — Don Shadow, Dick Ammon, Sidney Meadows, Bryson James, John Machen, Jake Tinga, and Ray Self ... said: "not a bad idea".

The 1975 E.R.N.A. meeting was held in Tallahassee, Florida in December. Under some very unusual circumstances the E.R.N.A. Vice-President was unable to put together a program. The E.R.N.A. President, Larry Carville, called upon several of the Southern members to help out at the last minute with speakers and moderators. The International Board met prior to the E.R.N.A. meeting.

During the meeting about 25 folks got together and after some long conversation decided to try for a meeting of southern plant propagators.

Now, the 1976 E.R.N.A. meeting was held during the last week of August at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This left the traditional E.R.N.A. December annual meeting date open, and the decision was made to have the first Southern meeting in Mobile, Alabama. A group served as the program committee. The responsibility to put the program together fell to me, and the program was finalized around Easter of 1976 for the December meeting.

MOBILE, ALABAMA, DECEMBER 7-9, 1976

We held a *great* 1st meeting in Mobile. Mr. Sidney Meadows planned the tours. The important thing was a few new folks caught the *SPIRIT* of I.P.P.S. and we were off and running. Drs. Richard Stadtherr and Vivian Munday were elected, respectively, Secretary-Treasurer and Editor. The I.P.P.S.-New Zealand region then had 83 members after 5 years and going into the 1st meeting I was hoping for the following new potential members: Alabama-5, Arkansas-2, Florida-10, Georgia-3, Lousinana-1, Maryland-4, Mississippi-3, North Carolina-7, Tennessee-3, Texas-1, and Virginia-11, for a total of 52 members.

The potential new membership numbers were actually a little greater — and I think the final tally was around 89. We could not vote on membership applications, and had to defer to the approval of the E.R.N.A. which would not meet until after our 2nd meeting. A petition was prepared to seek membership in the International I.P.P.S. as a *FULL REGION* not as a Chapter-at-Large, based on our potential membership.

THE BIG HURDLE

Two steps remained. Affirmative votes were needed by the International Board of Directors and the majority of all active members attending their respective Regional annual meetings.

MANCHESTER, TENNESSEE, 29 NOV.-1 DEC. 1977

Dr. Bryson James was the site chairman. The meeting was held under a plastic lean-to shelter constructed on the side of our motel. The folks that ran the place were great. They had two daughters that entertained us nightly with some superb singing. Tour buses, contracted from a local church, didn't work out so Johnny Wight of Wights Nursery took nursery tape and marked a caravan of about 30 cars for the tour. Overall we had a super meeting. More applications for membership were accepted, and we had about 120 members, pending and active, at the conclusion of the meeting.

One significant participant was Mr. George Oki, the International President, who attended the entire meeting. Johnny Wight worked on George about the potential of the Southern Region and helped add a degree of credibility to our merry little group.

COLUMBUS, OHIO: EASTERN REGION 5-8 DEC. 1977, INTERNATIONAL BOARD MEETING 4 DEC. 1977

George Oki, Hunter Boulo, Bill Curtis (Western Region), and I traveled by auto to Columbus. The Western, Australian, Great Britain and Ireland Regions had voted to accept the Southern Region — but we awaited the Eastern vote.

We did not know, until we arrived in Columbus, that the E.R.N.A. Board had voted to deny acceptance of the Southern "Upstarts" full regional status. They thought our program content was weak, screening of applicants was slip-shod, and felt that we needed more time to mature. They instructed the E.R.N.A. International Delegate, Mr. Richard Bosley, to vote "no" on regional status, but to admit us under the Chapter-at-Large membership, thus we would remain under the wing of the E.R.N.A.

At this point George Oki, fresh from his experience in Tennessee, went into action. He made sure I had a chance to meet and discuss the Southern Region with all of the International Delegates and Officers, except for Mr. Bosley.

Going into the International Board meeting it appeared we were tied on the International vote for Regional membership. In favor were delegates: Dillon (Western), Peterson (Australia), Hartmann (International Editor), and Oki (International President); opposed were delegates: Bosley (E.R.N.A.), Evison (GB&I), Snyder (International Secretary-Treasurer), and Carville (International Vice-President).

IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF 4 DEC. 1977, IT STARTED TO SNOW...SNOW...SNOW

The meeting was about to begin and frantic phone calls were made to Mr. Bosley in Mentor, Ohio. He was snowed in 100 miles away, and would be late for the meeting. All of the international business was concluded around lunch time, but the *BIG* vote was delayed pending Mr. Bosley's arrival. After lunch the stall became obvious and Mr. Dillon along with Mr. Peterson pushed for a vote on the Southern Region. The vote was taken and I believe everyone voted "Yes".

The only hurdle was the E.R.N.A. Annual Business meeting whose members would have to vote approval of the Southern Region. At the meeting there was an eloquent speech by George Oki, extolling our outstanding meeting in Manchester. Mr. Bruce Briggs discussed some of the difficult, formative meetings of the Western Region there were others who spoke on our behalf. Finally the membership voted. The tally was 302 for, and 2 opposed. The rest is history!

Editor's Note: Charles H. Parkerson was the first President of the Southern Region, now the I.P.P.S.-Southern Region of North America. He later became President of the International Board, was a recipient of the Meadows Award and the International Award of Merit.