

Past & Present

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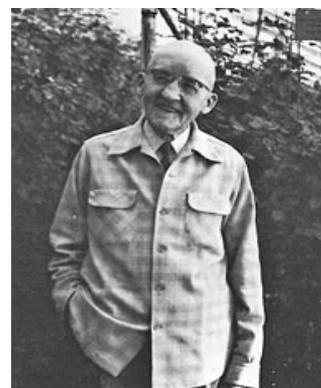
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GrowerTalks' current managing editor (left) and its first (below). Frank D. Balzhiser was George J. Ball's brother and helped him from the very beginning in 1937—laying out the issues, working with the printers and engravers, and supporting the editors—until he retired in the early 1960s. He died at the age of 89 in October 1965.

In case you've been on a five-month cruise around the world or skipped over our cover, our fine publication is celebrating its 75th birthday this year. And May is the month when it becomes official.

In order to provide our readers with a true commemoration of the last 75 years, I've spent three full weeks looking through ALL of the past issues of *GrowerTalks* since May 1937. Seriously. If you walk past my desk, you can barely see the top of my head over stacks of *GrowerTalks*, bound in large volumes and chock full of dust.

But my brief history lesson provided some interesting stories about the challenges our industry was facing, and how much



products and technology have changed. Some observations:

- Growers used to get their growing media literally from the ground behind their greenhouses. These days, if it doesn't come in a bag, you don't use it.
- Our founder George J. Ball's patriotism was unparalleled. That man loved his country.
- Chemicals that are banned today were used freely—and without any protective clothing. Even when the EPA was trying to protect the growers and the environment with these bans, there were many that were upset about the restrictions and viewed them as a major inconvenience. (Example: Temik)
- How much the retail market has changed from florists to garden centers to big boxes. And how many have come and gone.
- When computers came on the scene, they were big and clunky, but really helped the "old guys" streamline their businesses. (We'll be saying the same thing about smartphones in 15 to 20 years.)
- Finally, the clothes, cars and culture. I'm glad that current social norms allowed me to get an education. And to wear pants instead of a dress. And work. I appreciated that George and Vic were proponents of treating women as equals even when society didn't.

George J. Ball wasn't one of my original inspirations when I fell in love with the written word, but I put him on the list when I stumbled upon this in the June 1948 issue: "It's important not only when we talk to one another," he wrote, "but above all, when we write." As Anna Ball says, her grandfather didn't just create *GrowerTalks* to share information with his fellow growers, but because he loved to write. And thankfully, he passed that down to his sons.

For those who have been faithful readers for years and for those who are new or infrequent perusers, I hope you've enjoyed and learned from our beloved magazine. Because all of us who support *GrowerTalks* (and for the last 15 years, *Green Profit*), past and present, truly do invest a lot of time and emotional energy into creating our publication every month. And we hope our industry continues to meet the changes and challenges so that *GrowerTalks* will be around for another 75 years and beyond.