

Women in Floriculture

| Dr. P. Allen Hammer

>> Published Date: 4/25/2012



Editor's note: To carry on this month's history theme, we decided to run the photo that was featured with Dr. Hammer's column when it debuted in January 1985. We have very much appreciated the insight he provides our readers and are grateful that he has been a valued GrowerTalks contributor for the last 27 years. We'll keep it going for as long as the good doctor wishes.—JZ

What a great time in this anniversary issue to honor two women lost to our industry in the last year.

Darlyne Larson, wife of the late Dr. Roy Larson, floriculture professor at North Carolina State University, passed away in September, and Margaret Ball, wife of the late Vic Ball, one of the father figures of GrowerTalks, passed away in February of this year.

I'm honored and privileged to have personally known both these women. Darlyne was born in 1932 in Cloquet, Minnesota. She learned the skills of southern living in North Carolina. Her support of Roy as wife and mother of their children was important to Roy's career in floriculture and greatly supported our industry in a subtle way. Many of us have one of those hand-made floriculture themed neckties made by Darlyne and Roy always wore.

Margaret was born in 1921 in Weaverville, North Carolina. Moving to Chicagoland as Vic's wife had absolutely no affect on her southern charm and Carolina accent that never went away. Margaret was a devoted wife and mother, completely supporting Vic in his floriculture endeavors. Margaret was Vic's partner in establishing the Vic and Margaret Ball Intern Scholarship Program administered by the American Floral Endowment. Margaret actively participated in the intern program selection process and committee meetings. What a joy to have her input at those meetings. She connected with each student applicant and read each student's internship report with concern and pride as if it were her own son or daughter.



Left photo: Dr. Hammer (left) with the late Margaret Ball, wife of Vic Ball, and Dr. Marvin Miller (right) of Ball Horticultural Company.

Right photo: Darlyne Larson, wife of Dr. Roy Larson.

Both Darlyne and Margaret were very important to our industry—not out front, but in quiet support of all that is floriculture. Our industry was blessed with both Darlyne and Margaret.

And with this anniversary issue we can also recognize the importance of women in our industry. What a change from 30 years ago. I can remember those discussions with women students about the difficulty they faced of being accepted as a grower in "the good old boys club." And a young woman in a

sales position calling on a 50-year-old greenhouse owner in the 70s certainly wasn't a nice experience. But thank goodness all that has significantly changed in our industry. We should all recognize and salute those strong women who said, "I can, and will be, a significant part of the floriculture industry in spite of all the obstacles." From head grower to salesperson, women today play a significant role in floriculture. And that is a change in which we are all most thankful.

One final note: my mother passed away in December. Her love and support was an inspiration to me and made my floriculture career possible. I encourage all the males in our industry to take the opportunity to say thanks to mother, wife, sister, daughter and all those other women that support us everyday in our floriculture careers. This isn't a one-man show! **GT**

Dr. P. Allen Hammer is a retired professor of floriculture at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, and is now in product development and support for Dümmen USA.