



Southern Section American Society of Plant Physiologists Newsletter

A Letter from the Chair

by *Cindy Putnam-Evans*

Greetings to all members of the Southern Section of the American Society of Plant Physiologists! It is a pleasure and an honor to serve you as this year's Chair. As we approach the true beginning of the new millennium in 2001, we should take this opportunity to pause and reflect on the status of the Southern Section, where we have been and how we want to proceed in the new century. I will begin this address by reflecting on my own involvement in SS-ASPP. Twelve and a half years ago, as a graduate student, I attended my first SS-ASPP meeting in Blacksburg, Virginia. I have two vivid memories of that meeting. One is that it snowed! And the other is that I was one of the winners in the graduate student "Best Oral Presentation" competition. As a graduate student just learning to speak publicly about my work and experiencing profound "stage fright", I was put at ease by the senior scientists and post-docs who showed a genuine interest in my work and treated me like a fellow scientist. This was certainly a confidence boosting experience, and one that I have never forgotten. I never dreamed that over the years I would become involved in so many activities of the Southern Section, including serving several times on the student awards committee, chairing this same committee, serving on the site-selection committee, moving through the officer ranks and taking on all the accompanying duties of being an officer. Today, my involvement with the Southern Section affords me the opportunity to network with numerous colleagues (many of whom I have known since graduate school days), including former mentors, and new groups of talented students (both undergraduate and graduate). My involvement with the Southern Section of ASPP has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career. I am proud to be associated with the wonderful group of individuals who, through their commitment and tireless efforts, have made the Southern Section the envy of all the other sections of ASPP. Some of these individuals include long-time SS-ASPP devotees Marc Cohn, David Longstreth, Dave Orcutt, Joyce Foster, Cyndy Galloway, Randy Cameron, and immediate past-Chair Mel Oliver, our current Vice-Chair Jay Mellon, and Secretary/Treasurer Tim Sherman. I thank you all for your mentoring, collegiality and patience!

As we think about moving forward in the new century, I would like my message to focus on participation. We have had a recent influx of new members. This is great! New blood and fresh ideas are invaluable. However, only approximately one-third or less of our membership attends our major function, the annual

meeting, (to be held this year in Raleigh, North Carolina.) Why should you attend? Why should you get involved in the Southern Section? My own experiences, in part, answer these questions. We in the Southern Section have always taken pride in the fact that we focus heavily on student participation. The annual meeting is the perfect venue for both undergraduate and graduate students to present their work in a highly professional atmosphere, yet one that is convivial and non-intimidating. The intimate setting of the annual meeting is the perfect place for students to get acquainted with senior scientists, and to learn about the most topical research going on in plant biology. And we support these students financially, with participants in the paper competitions having their registration and banquet fees waived. Additionally, winners in these competitions are given a cash award, so the annual meeting is very affordable for these students and their mentors, a real consideration in these times when money is tight. And we continue to do more to support students. This year, for the first time, National ASPP is providing funds to minority undergraduates and graduate students for travel to the sectional meetings. More about this from Tim Sherman (see below). I urge you to encourage your students to attend the SS-ASPP annual meeting, may they find it as rewarding an experience as I did. For senior members of the SS-ASPP, the obvious benefits, aside from exchanging ideas and results, revolve around networking and mentoring. I look forward each year to renewing old friendships, meeting new people, and identifying potential collaborators. It's exciting to take your students to their first scientific meeting and show them this aspect of science. For those of us at smaller institutions and/or with smaller budgets, who may not be able to attend the national meeting every year, attending the Southern Section meeting is a great way to keep abreast of current developments in our profession and to still feel a part of our national organization. Even though the Southern Section meetings are a bargain by anyone's standards, we are committed to doing more to support not only students but also faculty, particularly those from smaller institutions. The officers of the Southern Section have a running dialogue on this issue. We welcome your ideas and suggestions.

Before signing off there is one more issue I would like to touch on. In last year's "Letter from the Chair", Mel Oliver wrote eloquently about the developing backlash against genetically modified foods and urged us all to support plant biotechnology. This issue has escalated in the ensuing year to

the point where Europe has banned GMO's, terrorist attacks are occurring in labs (here in the U.S.), the big food companies are succumbing to protests and limiting the use of GMO's in their products, and this list goes on and on, as you are aware. Again, my message is one of involvement. It is our duty to educate the public about what genetic engineering is, why it is safe, and why it is important for our future. What can we do? Give a talk to a middle or high school class, write your congressmen, talk to the local media, think of creative ways to educate the public on this issue. For those of you who want to follow this issue closely, sign on to Southern Section member C.S. Prakash's agricultural biotechnology listserver www.agbioworld.org. On behalf of all members of the Southern Section of ASPP, let me extend to Dr. Prakash our sincere thanks for his continuing efforts in this arena, and pledge him our support.

In closing, I would like to wish all of the membership of the Southern Section a happy, healthy and productive year. I look forward to seeing you in Raleigh in 2001!



National ASPP News

By Joyce G. Foster, Southern Section Representative

The ASPP Executive Committee met Friday, July 14, 2000 and Wednesday, July 19, 2000 in San Diego. Business items of particular interest to Southern Section members are summarized below.

Constitutional Issues Balloting on the name of society will occur this fall. For the name to be changed to American Society of Plant Biologists, two-thirds of the votes cast must be in favor of the change. Section members who are members of the parent society should exercise their privilege to vote on this important issue. Note that a change in the name of the parent society will necessitate a change in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Southern Section.

Electronic Voting Beginning with the ballot on ASPP constitutional changes this fall, society members will be given the opportunity to vote electronically. Procedures will be implemented to ensure that members may only vote once, either electronically or by mail-in ballot.

2000 Annual Meeting An experiment in web casting annual meeting symposia was undertaken at Plant Biology 2000. The President's Symposium is now available for viewing (hot news) on the ASPP web site (www.aspp.org). This is a new opportunity for those who were unable to attend the meeting, and the content of the presentations makes viewing the session a worthwhile experience for anyone interested in plant biology. Your comments on this experiment are important. Please submit your response via the on line survey.

2001 Annual Meeting Good Works funds were approved to support a special symposium at the 2001 annual meeting to celebrate the 75th anniversary of *Plant Physiology*. Allocated funds will cover speaker costs (\$5,000) and a post-symposium reception for the society (\$15,000).

2003 Annual Meeting Honolulu, Hawaii will be the site of the 2003 annual meeting. Headquarters staff are negotiating zone fares that should lower travel costs for Southern Section members. Room rates are quite reasonable.

Emeritus Members Registration fees for ASPP annual meetings will be waived for emeritus members.

Reserve Fund Allocations The Executive Committee approved spending guidelines proposed by the Board of Trustees. Two funding categories were defined: (1) Recurring Special Projects and (2) Good Works and Exploratory Programs (endorsed by an ASPP standing committee; 3-year maximum limit, no renewal). Sections need to provide reports to the ASPP Executive Committee, through the appropriate standing committee, concerning how ASPP funds were used and the benefits that accrued. This information is critical for the assessment of Good Works Projects and determination of projects for recurring funding. Funding for Travel Grants for Plant Biology 2001 was moved to funding category 1 (Recurring Projects).

Education Foundation The Executive Committee voted unanimously to make funds available to the Education Foundation to sign a contract and produce a documentary film on the history of agriculture. The project is viewed as a public education endeavor, and the film will be available to ASPP members for use in their classrooms.

The Education Foundation will provide funds to update and modify Maarten Chrispeels' book, *Plants, Genes and Agriculture* with four color design. There is potential to recover the cost through a royalty agreement with Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Education Committee Funds were approved for completion of the set of bookmarks illustrating the "Principles of Plant Physiology."

Research Fellowships Funding was approved for eight Undergraduate Research Fellowships. Each fellowship provides \$3,000 for a student stipend, \$600 for supplies, a one-year membership in ASPP, and an application for a travel allowance to attend the ASPP national meeting. The goal of this program is to provide opportunities for students to pursue meaningful research in plant biology at their home institutions early in their college years.

Publications

Books Demand for the new biochemistry textbook, *Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of Plants*,

at the annual meeting exceeded expectations. Marketing of the book will be done by ASPP.

The Publications Committee is considering a proposal for *The Arabidopsis Book*, an electronic book by Chris Somerville and Elliott Meyerowitz. The plan is for a dynamic information source on all aspects of the biology of Arabidopsis that will evolve with the state of knowledge, be available via the Internet, and be free of charge. ASPP funds would be used for mounting and maintaining the book on the Internet.

Journals Although ASPP will release society journals to High Wire Press and PubMedCentral after 12 months, ASPP members must continue to retain their personal copies of journals for three years before placing them in a library. This decision by the ASPP Publications Committee was made to ensure retention of institution subscriptions.

Details for a Young Scientist's Best Paper Award for *Plant Physiology* have been posted (hot news) on the ASPP web site (www.aspp.org).

Committee Membership Contact ASPP President Elect, Vicki Chandler, if you are interested in serving on a standing committee.

Award Nominations Sections are encouraged to submit nominations for society awards. Nominees will be considered for three years for annual awards and for one additional award cycle for other awards, provide eligibility requirements are met. Updates to nominations are encouraged, but the new protocol will take advantage of previous investments in the nomination process.



Other news...

By Tim Sherman

The 2001 Annual Meeting News

This coming year's meeting will be held in Raleigh-Durham, NC during the weekend of March 24 - 26, 2001 at the Velvet Cloak Inn. The inn's location in the historic area of Raleigh and proximity to North Carolina State University's campus should make for a wonderful site. Pictures and more information about the hotel are available at it's website (www.velvetcloakinn.com). This should be an ideal time to be in Raleigh-Durham as it will be nearing the peak of the spring bloom. (*Local coordinators – Hans Booker, Kent Burkey, and Ed Fiscus*)

This year, in addition to providing financial help to students making oral presentations, additional money will be available to minority students to offset costs of attendance. Application for these awards will be available later in the Fall on our new web site.

The New SS-ASPP Web Site

We are in the final stages of getting a web site for the Southern Section up and running. It should be up by the end of October at www.ss-aspp.org. It also will be linked to the national ASPP site, so it will be easy to find. The site will contain information about meetings (past, present, and future), current officers (contact info, brief bio, and picture), current and past newsletters (it's too easy to loose these paper versions!), news of interest to society members and students, and links to relevant sites (i.e. ASPP, regional university's departments with plant biology programs, etc.). We also plan to have provisions for online voting, submission of titles and abstract for meeting presentations, feedback from the members. The starter version of the site will be up by the end of October. Check it out. and please send feedback and suggestions to Tim Sherman (tsherman@jaguar1.usouthal.edu)

Meeting Site Selection for 2002

The time has come again to make a decision about where to hold next year's meeting. The two sites are...

Auburn University (*Local coordinator - Bob Locy*)

Auburn University Hotel and Conference Center is a medium size convention center complex immediately adjacent to Auburn University in downtown Auburn, AL. Centrally located three miles from Interstate 85 between Atlanta and Montgomery, the Auburn University Hotel & Conference Center is situated in a charming university campus environment, within safe walking distance to many shops and restaurants in the quaint, historical downtown Auburn area, "The Loveliest Village On The Plains." We are a convenient destination from Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport (95 Columbus, GA (35 miles), and Montgomery (65 miles). Chewacla State Park is just a few minutes away as are great walking and hiking trails. Three major golf courses are located within 8 miles of the Auburn University Hotel & Conference Center, which was the host hotel for the 1997 Nike Tour Championship and the 1998 LPGA Tournament of Champions.

University of Georgia (*Local coordinator – Scott Holiday*)

The University of Georgia is located in Athens, GA, which is about 75 miles from Atlanta. The University has about 31,000 students. The meeting facility on campus is the Georgia Center for Continuing Education, which is a full-service, residential, adult-learning facility, with a 200-bedroom hotel, dining services, conference rooms, auditoriums, and computer labs. It is a smoke-free facility. All flights to Athens connect through Charlotte, NC. Regular ground transportation is available from Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport to the Georgia Center. Athens has a thriving downtown, with several restaurants and a variety of bars, many of which offer live music most nights of the week. Other local attractions include the State Botanical Garden of Georgia, UGA Campus Arboretum and Georgia Museum of Art.

Candidates for Secretary-Treasurer

Dr. Ruth Alscher

Dr. Alscher was educated at Trinity College, Dublin (Biochem major), Washington University (Botany), and The University of California at Davis, where she did her degree in Plant Physiology. She was on the Cornell campus for 13 years before joining the Virginia Tech faculty in 1988, where she is now a professor of Plant Physiology. Her interests center on genetic, physiological/biochemical, and molecular mechanisms of stress resistance in crop plants and trees. Most recently, she has formed an interdisciplinary group at Virginia Tech (Computer Science, Plant Biology, Statistics and Virginia Bioinformatics Institute) working on the use (Plant Biology) and analysis (Bioinformatics) of microarray data obtained from drought-stressed trees.

Dr. Caryl Chlan

Dr. Chlan is currently an Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (formerly known as USL). Studies in her laboratory focus on the expression, regulation and evolution of seed storage proteins and pathogen response genes in cotton, Arabidopsis and tobacco. She received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University of Georgia in 1985, a MS in Microbiology from UGA in 1979 and a BS in Microbiology from Clemson University in 1976. She has been active in the ASPP Southern Section for the last 10 years during which she served on the constitution committee and numerous student competition judging teams.

Please cast our votes for officer and the meeting site for 2002 on the ballot at the end of this newsletter. Fold on the dotted lines, tape shut, and mail to Dr. Mel Oliver by **December 8, 2000**. (If folded properly, his address will appear on the outside of the page.) **Please remember to affix postage to the self-addressed ballot.**

You can also cast your vote when the web site is up and running. Stay tuned.

2000-2001 SS-ASPP Officers

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