



# HORT ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

## Agronomy and Horticulture Department

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*"Patience is power; with time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes silk."*  
 .....Chinese Proverb

*"You are only young once, but you can be immature forever."*  
 .....anon.

*"An individual has a healthy personality to the exact degree to which they have the propensity to look for the good in every situation."*  
 .....Ralph Waldo Emerson

### Randy and Cindy Farmer Honored



Randy (BS '76) and Cindy (BS '76) Farmer were honored at the Fall 2002 Sam Steele Ceremony for their contributions to NMSU, the College of Agriculture and Home Economics and the community. Randy received an Honorary Masters of Agriculture degree and Cindy was

inducted as an honorary member of the Sam Steel Society. This was the first honorary master's degree offered by NMSU, and recognized Randy's contribution to the Las Cruces community, the horticulture industry and the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture. Among the activities listed in the nomination were: assisting in the endowment of four scholarships (Cotter, Corley, Shannon, and Sullivan), landscaping Las Cruces High School, and assisting in the development of both the St. Genevieve and La Entrada memorials. Congratulations and thanks for all you've done to both Randy and Cindy.

### The NMSU Floral Evaluation and Design Team



The NMSU Floral Evaluation and Design Team really showed off their talent this year at the National PAX Intercollegiate Floral Evaluation and Design Competition. This is the third time that we have hosted the competition . Bryna Wilson placed first in the

Professional Hand-tied European wedding bouquets competition.

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## Toastmasters

by Paul LaVine (B.S. 1950)

I had been in Toastmasters at Espanola when I was attached to the Alcalde Horticulture Experiment Station. I had a lot of exposure to speaking as a teacher but when I joined Toastmasters I really learned about writing an effective speech and then delivering it. I also learned how many times I said “Uhh” when I paused, it was embarrassing.

Later, I left NMSU to take a position as Farm Advisor for the University of California. A Farm Advisor is a County Agent in the rest of the country.

About the time of “Silent Spring” and the Ceaser Chaves movement, I realized that most farmers did not know how to effectively answer the constant barrage about how evil they were. Killing all the birds, poisoning the earth, cheating their workers, and worse, poisoning themselves. Furthermore, farmers were overcharging for everything and, of course, all farmers were rich.

I asked one of the Toastmaster Clubs in Modesto, California to hold one of their regular meetings but invited farmers to attend. I advertised the upcoming meeting in the local newspapers and discussed why I thought it was important for farmers to form their own Toastmaster Clubs so they could learn to better answer their critics.

The response was overwhelming. With the help of the local clubs and Toastmasters International, we actually formed four Farmers’ Toastmaster clubs. The most rewarding thing to me was having a farmer tell me that previous to his Toastmaster training he had stage fright so bad he positively could not get up before a group and talk and now he felt confident in expressing himself.

Even more rewarding was the number of farmers that went into politics, many of them became directors of co-ops and Marketing Orders. At demonstration research plots I would let the farmer tell the audience what we were trying to demonstrate.

The San Francisco and Los Angeles newspapers reported on the success of our efforts to make farmers more responsive. It was not unusual for a newspaper to call me asking the name of one of the Toastmasters knowing that individual would be able to give a coherent explanation of why and how farmers reacted to the bad publicity they had been receiving.

It was, I think, part of the reason I received “The Stanislaus County Good Egg Award”. This is the most prestigious award in the county for public service.

I would encourage any person who deals with the public to join a Toastmasters Club. Like me, you will get rid of the “Uhhs, learn more about presenting to an audience and even learn more about writing a letter”.

Upon joining a Toastmasters club, each new member receives a variety of manuals and resources on speaking. Members also have access to other books as well as audio

and video cassettes on speaking and leading. They also receive the award-winning The Toastmaster, a monthly magazine that offers the latest insights on speaking and leadership techniques.

Leadership cannot be learned in a day. It takes practice. In Toastmasters members build leadership skills by organizing and conducting meetings and motivating others to help them. Club leadership roles and a leadership development program also offer opportunities to learn and practice. Just as Toastmasters members learn to speak simply by speaking, they learn leadership by leading.

## ALUMNI UPDATES

**Joe DeAguero** ( B.S. ‘88, M.S. ‘90) is the Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau in Bishop, California, responsible for everything from marketing, web content, public relations, fund raising and overall program management. It is a challenging and exciting position that utilizes his diverse background in promoting the Bishop area. Working for a volunteer board has its challenges but the opportunity to build relationships with the entire community is wonderful. The area offers visitors many recreational and sight seeing options and the rural community is a great place to raise children as he has one little girl. Joe DeAguero, Bishop Area Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau, 690 N. Main, St. Bishop, CA 93514 Phone (888) 395-3952. E-mail address is [joe@bishopvisitor.com](mailto:joe@bishopvisitor.com)

**Shanna Armenta** (B.S. ‘02) is now a practicing landscape designer for Camden Gardens Horticultural Design Specialists, who specialize in residential and commercial maintenance and restoration. Located in Seattle, WA. Shanna can be reached at the work address of Camden Gardens, 6535 5th Place South, Suite B, Seattle, WA 98108

**David Kraenzel** (B.S. ‘69, M.S. ‘85) recently completed his Ph.D. in Adult Education at the University of Wisconsin. Prior to completing his Ph.D., David was an Extension Specialist in Fargo, ND for 5 years. He also received his MS in Ag Business Management at the Univ. of Illinois in ‘96. Recently, he married Teresa, an ordained minister, and they have moved back to Las Cruces, where David is consulting.

**College Agriculture and Home Economics Week--**  
Sept. 23-26, 2002.

The Agronomy and Horticulture had a strong showing and placed high in competition:

**Cathy Feser**, M.S. candidate in Horticulture placed third in the Prepared Speech Contest,

**HortForum/ESSO** placed second in the Debate Night Contest,

**HortForum/ESSO** placed third in the Quiz Bowl,

**HortForum/ESSO** placed first in the Canned Food Drive (overall the drive collected over 830 lbs.)

Participants included: Erin McSherry, Steve Hogenmiller, Josh Holguin, and Vanessa Sanchez.



## We Did It!

Thanks to your generosity and commitment, we did it! We raised over \$10,000 in less than 12 months for the **Darrell Sullivan Scholarship**. On behalf of the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture and the students that will receive this scholarship in the years to come: Thank you.

Darrell made tremendous contributions to New Mexico State University in educating students; working with the pecan, apple and grape growers; and developing ornamental cultivars that are evident throughout the valley.

Darrell's name will forever be linked to *Chaparral*, the fruitless weeping mulberry, and *Goldmint* lantana. Now his name is also linked to the **Darrell Sullivan Scholarship**, so that future students will also know of his contributions. This would not have been possible without your wonderful support. Again, thank you.

### Contributing Team:

Darrell and Sarah Sullivan  
 Randy & Cindy Farmer and the Greenhouse, Inc.  
 Don, Fran and Susan Cotter and Intel  
 Kathy and Jeryl English  
 Salopek 6U Farms, Inc. (Mark, James, & Benny)  
 John and Barbara Mexal  
 Salopek Farms Ltd. Co. (Paulina & David)  
 Silver Farms & Karin Gustafson Davidson  
 Kevin and Janice Fowler  
 Western Pecan Growers Assoc.  
 Rose Nakayama  
 Joe and Daisy Corgan  
 Esteban Herrera  
 Frank Matta  
 John White  
 Connie Maxwell  
 James and Kathy Fisher  
 Tim Jones  
 Rebecca Sellars  
 Larry Erhard  
 C. Quentin Ford  
 Mary O'Connell  
 John William Watson  
 J. Henry Gustafson

## Sustainability of Irrigated Farming in the EBID

by Don Cotter  
 Emeritus Professor

Recently I gave a departmental seminar where I set forth the factors that impinged on the sustainability of the 90,000± acres supported by the waters of the Rio Grande impounded in the Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs. The idea developed because our new agriculture building, Skeen Hall, is dedicated to promoting sustainable agriculture of arid lands. Did that include irrigated arid lands? The following is a synopsis of that analysis; the crops currently grown in the Elephant Butte Irrigation District (EBID), their sustainability and their relationship one with another.

It might seem that producing the more attractive high value crops on most of the district land would be the answer, but markets and productivity certainly limit that option. Soon it became clear that the crops logically divided themselves into four groups; livestock feed crops (alfalfa, silage corn), cotton, pecans and high value specialty/niche crops. The crops and the acres grown as reported in the New Mexico Agricultural Statistics - 2000 are listed below.

Alfalfa	20,000 acres
Corn	13,500 acres
Cotton	13,000 acres
Chile	5,000 acres
Onions	4,500 acres
Misc. veg. nursery and crops	5,000 acres (est.)
Pecans	21,000 acres

Excluding pecans for the moment, the remaining groups seemed to fit into the model of a shopping mall; that is, large anchors stores with small independent shops scattered between them. Each of the groups interacts and is interdependent. The role of the large anchor stores is to provide the mainstream merchandise that would draw the shopping public. Of course the reverse was also possible, but probably to a lesser degree. With the proper mix of large and small stores, a profitable mix supporting the entire structure is achieved.

So it seems to be with the cropping mix of the EBID. In the analogy, livestock feed crops and cotton play the part of the anchor stores, really **anchor crops**, the multiplicity of smaller acreage of vegetables, nursery and specialty market crops would be the independent shops scattered throughout the system (mall).

In a normal, "good" year, the greater cash flow and profit would come from the smaller high value crop acreages. While the larger anchor crops may produce less income, they help maintain the productivity of the land, utilize and sequester resources and maintain the character, ambiance and culture of the valley/district in a responsible way. On balance, the land remains sustainable, productive and

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## 2003 Donors & Scholars Banquet



### Banquet Attendees

*(First row left to right)*

Bryna Wilson (Lowenstein), Dayna Drollinger (Kringle the Cat), Erin McSherry (Chapman), Vanessa Sanchez (Watson-Williams), Ashley Hagen (Lowenstein), Julie Emery (Enzie), Heather Adragna (Corgan),

*(Second row left to right)*

Hem Singh Bhendari (Wilson), Cathy Feser (Lowenstein), Claudia Galvan (Melton), "President Hiram Hadley" (Richard Rundell), Robin Foldager (Overpeck), Ryan Work (Cotter, Shannon), Laura Haverstraw (Cotter, Sullivan), Steve Hogenmiller (Parker), Genieve Sanchez (Lowenstein, SW Turfgrass).



*James and Kathy Fisher*



*Julie Emery and Richard Rundell*



*Richard Rundell "Hiram Hadley" and John and Barbara Mexal*



*Laura Haverstraw, Nora Williams and Darrell Sullivan*



*Paul and Judy Bosland, Rose Nakayama and Richard Rundell*



*Erin McSherry and Richard Rundell*



*Joe and Daisy Corgan*



*Claudia Galvan and Ashley Hagen*



*Vanessa Sanchez*

*(continued from page 3)*

profitable. In a way, it is like the musketeers, “one for all and all for one”. That is, neither the anchor crops nor the specialty crops could survive without the other.

Therefore, the health of the EBID depends on the health (economic and biotic) of the interacting and symbiotic crops in the system. Alfalfa is profitable as it has a reliable market at the nearby dairies. Silage corn fits into a double crop system with onions, lettuce, spinach, or cole crops, but its profitability is marginal, especially by itself. Cotton is certainly on the cusp of profitability. Without the recently enacted farm support program, it would almost certainly be unprofitable. Thus, in this analogy, at least one crop important to anchor the system is in jeopardy.

Sustainability of the entire system depends on profitability; without it nothing works and the land succumbs. Profitability is at the interface of economic and ecology factors. In ecology, the interface between two plant communities where species of both communities coexist with new species is called an ecotone. In this analogy, the interface of the economic and ecological factor, the ecotone of profit. When a system is profitable, it is sustainable. So, in a way, it is the battle of the “ecos” that decides sustainability.

So far pecans have not entered this analysis. In the shopping mall analogy, the large block of perennial pecans would be like a freestanding store such as the omnipresent Wal-Mart. Resources are utilized, but the interdependence of it from the other “shopping mall” crops is tenuous or perhaps absent.

A number of solutions to achieving sustainability in the EBID, or portions of it, include: returning to the times of the early years of this century when 40% of our people were farmers, continuing as the EBID is presently operating or purchase the development rights from landowners which would permanently limit the land use to farming. The model of earlier centuries is suspect in this ongoing battle of the “ecos” because it fails the profitability test. A labor intensive, low cash, marginal subsistence activity departed from American agriculture because more attractive (profitable) options became available. The present system, far from static, has the ability (and the freedom) to adjust to the nuances of the times; with good fortune, it will continue profitable. This option appears attractive.

The proposal where government or philanthropic entities agree to purchase the land development rights from farmers seems to have appeal these days. After all, it protects the farming ambiance! However, the concept is predicated on the idea that farming is and will remain sustainable, i.e., profitable in its static state. The pattern of the district suggests that it is a dynamic system, adjusting to market, climatic resources and pest changes. At times, producers give up and sell out. This model removes the ultimate tool the farmer has; sale of the land. It fails because the basic premise upon which it stands is flawed.

The conclusion drawn was that the contemporary system

evolved in a battle of “ecos”. It is incumbent on us to help the farming community win the ongoing struggle. It comes down to the system, including the information support industries, remaining active and relevant. Research from the support industries and this department needs to be well planned, executed and disseminated. Pest control usually constitutes a key block in this support system. Responsible research on integrated pest management, resistant cultivars (including GMO’s), and mechanical and chemical control of pests (weeds, insects, and diseases) need to receive significant emphasis and understanding.

In one way, it is not surprising that the conclusion is that this battle is being waged successfully. However, the district is not without its threats. We have evolved into the most profitable sustainable system for our day. It needs all the understanding and respect we can give it, helping protect it from the autocracy of shortsightedness.

I would welcome your comments. Please contact me at: [jmexal@nmsu.edu](mailto:jmexal@nmsu.edu) or Don Cotter, 4014 Cholla Rd., Las Cruces, NM 88011.

## **What makes a great Lowenstein Lecturer? Dr. Kathy Banks does!**

*by April Ulery*

Dr. Banks, an internationally recognized expert in phytoremediation and biological treatment systems, presented the most recent Lowenstein Lectures in April. She is a professor of Civil Engineering at Purdue University and is the Director of EPA’s Midwest Hazardous Substance Research Center. Her first presentation: “Phytoremediation: Moving from the lab to the field” covered some of the challenges of using plants to clean up contaminated soil, sediments, and water. She also presented a research seminar on the “Degradation of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in the rhizosphere”.

Dr. Banks is an engaging, enthusiastic whirlwind of energy and creative ideas. One of the most exciting events was a roundtable discussion where 10 graduate students presented synopses of their research. Constructive dialog ensued and ideas, support, and advice flowed from Dr. Banks and the other participants. The student hostess for Dr. Banks’ visit was Ramona Parra, a Ph.D. candidate in Interdisciplinary Studies. Ramona did a terrific job arranging the schedule, coordinating everyone and I am proud to say, made the whole affair a “hit”.

The Lowenstein Lecture Series and the NIH RISE Programs provided funding for the visit.

(photo on p. 7)

## NEW FACES

### Bottoms to Lead NMSU's Leyendecker and Fabian Garcia Research Centers



Rick Bottoms will serve as new superintendent of New Mexico State University's Leyendecker Plant Science Research Center and Fabian Garcia Research Center.

He brings to his new post almost a decade of weed science, irrigation and agronomy experience at the University of Missouri and five years working as a weed scientist and range restoration expert at the University of Wyoming.

His plans include research on invasive weeds, reflective light and irrigation efficiency modeling.

"I hope to improve the focus of our research programs and adjust the logistical dynamics between the two research centers," said Bottoms, who will also serve as an associate professor in NMSU's agronomy and horticulture department and an adjunct appointment with the entomology, plant pathology and weed science department. Bottoms said he looks forward to spending time getting acquainted with NMSU's diverse mix of agricultural programs.

Before joining NMSU earlier this month, Bottoms worked for more than nine years with the University of Missouri, where he served as agronomy specialist and director of operations at the school's Graves Farm Research Center.

Bottoms earned a bachelor's degree in animal science and a master's degree in agricultural education and mechanized agriculture from California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo. He received his doctorate in agronomy, physiology and crop ecology from the University of Missouri. Bottoms also is certified as a professional agronomist, weed scientist and crop adviser. **WELCOME TO OUR DEPARTMENT!!**

*(continued from p. 6)*

*Left to right: John Mexal, April Ulery, Kathy Banks, Mary O'Connell and James Fisher*



### Zhang Joins Stellar NMSU Cotton Breeding Program



New Mexico State University's internationally respected cotton breeding program has a new leader. Jinfa Zhang, who came to the university from Monsanto's molecular cotton breeding program in Greenville, Miss., will work to integrate traditional

breeding with cutting-edge biotechnology and molecular genetic research.

"Our focus will still be on improving Acala cotton fiber quality and yield, but we will be adding herbicide and insect resistance," Zhang said. Acala, one of the most popular varieties grown in New Mexico, has the longest staple among upland cottons. It is used in specialty clothing that requires soft, billowy textures.

Zhang will devote most of his time to managing the university's cotton breeding and genetics laboratory, in addition to teaching several courses in genetics and breeding. Meanwhile, his team of cotton breeding researchers will continue their work to identify molecular markers for disease resistant and heat-tolerant genes.

Within the next two years, Zhang expects to have transferred the Bt gene to Acala 1517-99, which should significantly boost pink bollworm resistance. Bt is shorthand for the *Bacillus thuringiensis*, an insecticidal bacterium marketed worldwide for control of many important plant pests.

A native of China's Hubei Province, Zhang grew up on a small rice farm. He earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from Central China Agricultural University in agronomy and a second doctorate in cotton genetics and molecular biology from the University of Arkansas. Zhang is an assistant professor in NMSU's agronomy and horticulture department. **WELCOME TO OUR DEPARTMENT!!**

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Eva Winans placed second in the Professional Tablescaping competition.

Kathy Burcham placed first in the Amateur Asymmetrical, one-sided design.

Amy Newton placed first in the Amateur Water Vase division.

The Evaluation Team consisted of Sandy Potvin, Roger Hagman, Jessica Lucero, and alternate Erika Aguilar. While the team did not place this year, they made a commendable effort against big name schools, such as Texas A&M and California Polytechnic School!

**Alumni Info. Form**

Year Graduated: \_\_\_\_\_

Alumni Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I want to support the \_\_\_\_\_ Esteban Herrera Endowment

I have enclosed: \_\_\_\$20, \_\_\_\$40, \_\_\_\$75 \_\_\_other.

Please make checks payable to: **NMSU Foundation** & specify scholarship name on check

Brief paragraph on recent events in your life: professional or personal (feel free to include a recent photo):


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