

MILES OF SMILES

I flew west, finding flowers and new enthusiasm for my work.

As the new managing editor of Greenhouse Product News, I was blessed recently with the chance to attend California Spring Trials, aka CAST. I have a lot to learn about the industry, so the trip was a welcome opportunity to connect with the people and see the plants that are going to shape my work going ahead.

GPN's Tim Hodson and Kim Sammartino led the way both figuratively and literally speaking (Kim drove the car). Not only did I get a huge download on the latest plant varieties from breeders and companies participating in CAST, Tim and Kim educated me on specific companies and on the industry in general. "It's a tight-knit community," they said. "It's all about relationships," they added.

And lastly, they said "This is a hugging industry. Everybody hugs."

I may not be a great hugger, but I do like to talk. And part of meeting people is answering questions about yourself.

Where am I from? Grand Rapids, Michigan. Do I have experience in the industry? The short answer is, no, not in horticultural greenhouse growing. Mostly, I've been a writer and editor. During five years working for GPN's sister magazines, I sometimes wrote about controlled environment agriculture. Do I grow plants? I have some inside, and a bunch more outdoors, just for fun. Some people at CAST were from the Netherlands, and one noticed my Dutch last name. Am I Dutch, he asked? Yes, I am, or at least my ancestors were.

Small talk aside, I learned a lot about greenhouse processes and flower varieties. I certainly enjoyed meeting everyone and I've been sending out LinkedIn requests to better stay in touch. Let me hear your story ideas and comments on the industry.

I can think of few better ways to emerge from one's COVID isolation than road tripping around California while meeting nice people and seeing beautiful plants. And it is also a great way to start a new job.

I feel like the first man in that scriptural story — being placed in a garden paradise and asked simply to work the garden and take care of it. Well, that comparison is a stretch, but what I really mean to say is that I view this job as a great responsibility and a great blessing. I hope to do it the best I can.

P.S. Be sure to turn to page 12 to meet the Class of 2022 of GPN's Forty Under 40. The program is now in its 11th year and just continues to grow. I think you will be impressed with this year's honorees.



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