

Conference on commodity

handling held

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Leaders discuss post-harvesting techniques

By Kenneth M. Benjamin

CHICAGO, IL — Industry leaders flocked to Chicago, February 23, to take part in the national floricultural conference on commodity handling, sponsored by the Ohio State University.

Over 50 participants met to discuss such topics as fresh flowers, flowering and foliage plants, costs, benefits, and product loss.

The program was opened by George Staby of the department of horticulture, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, who stated the objectives of the meeting which were to inform producers, wholesalers, and retailers on proper post-harvesting handling techniques and their economic impact.

He was followed by Jerry Robertson of Ohio State who discussed product loss, its importance, cost, and consequences. He pointed out that about 20 per cent of all floral crops are unsalable because of improper handling. There is also substantial loss due to damage during harvest, handling, transportation, and storage.

Some conclusions drawn were that retailers should have control over product handling prior to receipt and that the industry itself

should take some action to reduce shrinkage before it is forced to by government, consumer groups, or loss of business.

Fresh flowers, flowering plants, and foliage plants were covered by Staby, D.C. Kiplinger of Ohio State, and Charles Conover of the Agricultural Research Center, Apopka, FL, respectively.

They all discussed harvesting, care, maintaining quality, and merchandising of the various products, covering specific varieties of plants and flowers.

Another topic on the agenda was "quality". Among the points covered were a definition of quality, its measurement and components, factors affecting it, and maintaining quality after harvest.

Quality was defined as "the attributes of floral commodities that relate to their beauty and/or usefulness". Its components are appearance, chemical, and anatomical.

Form, color, and condition were all cited as appearance factors. Chemical factors such as fragrance were said to be less important now than in the past, while anatomical factors were explained as physical characteristics such as substance or texture not apparent on the surface.

The meeting report recommended that the industry adopt grades and standards in order to measure quality.

There was some technical discussion on how flowers and plants can be cared for better during and after harvest so as to insure a high standard of quality.

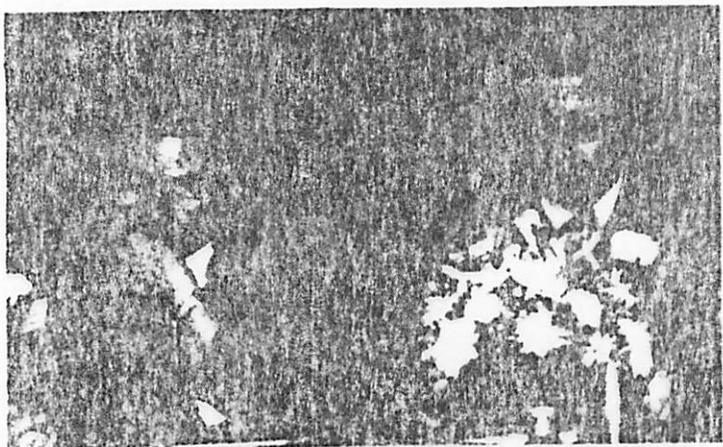
Robertson also discussed costs and benefits and suggested reinvestment of retained earnings "into improving and advertising product quality as a profitable path for market expansion." He advised adopting new technological advancements to improve the product and consequently consumer purchasing.

Later in the day after a summary by Staby and a lunch sponsored by the Ohio Florists' Association, participants broke up into small discussion groups to share their ideas about what they had heard. Afterward there was a feedback and general discussion session followed by summary of the day's activities. The day ended with a sponsored cocktail hour and dutch-treat dinner.

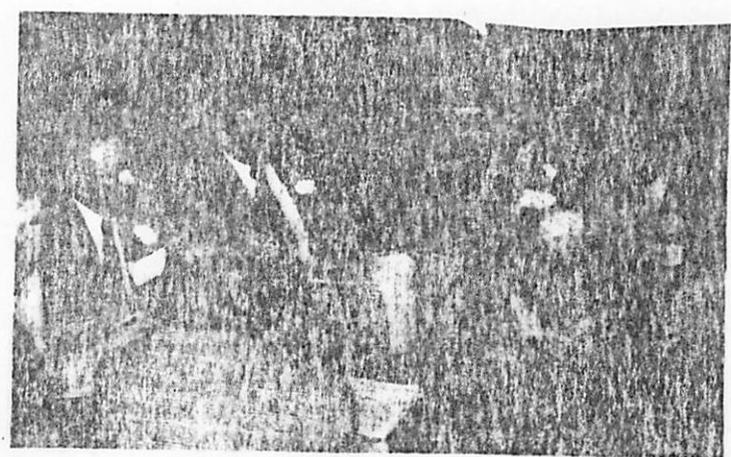
The proceedings of the national floricultural conference on commodity handling can be obtained from the Ohio Florists' Association, 2901 Fyffe Ct., Columbus, OH 43210 at a cost of \$2 per copy.

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Taking part in one of the discussion groups are, facing the camera, from left, D.C. Kiplinger of Ohio State University; Bob Johnson, Redondo Beach, CA; Jim Vosters, Miami, FL; past president of SAF, and Ed Ross, Chicago, IL.



From left, Jim Leider, Prairie View, IL; Yoshimi Saito, MI. Edea, CA, and Paul Ecke, Encinitas, CA, listen to a speaker at one of the sessions.