



**Page One: News:**

- **Jeffrey Ware** is the new Executive Director of the American Rose Society. His term starts as of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July. He comes from a solid background in non-profit organizations with a wealth of operational experience.
- **Local Society Officers Update form:** This form is available on the ARS website ([www.ars.org](http://www.ars.org)) where it can either be downloaded in a pdf. format and mailed to ARS Headquarters or filled in online as a digital form. This is the time of year when many societies change officers and updating the form enables the information to be sent to various places (including e-mail addresses for this monthly email).
- **Roses In Review:** For the 82<sup>nd</sup> year the ARS is collecting data on roses in commerce from those who actually grow them. The form is available online at the ARS website as well as being available in the June issue of the *American Rose*. The Consulting Rosarian duties include an obligation to report on the roses grown in their gardens; additionally, non-members of the ARS are encouraged to fill out the forms in order to broaden participation in this activity to ensure as wide a representation of growing experiences possible. Last year over 10% of the members of the ARS filed reports; as of this writing the NCNH district has the most members participating in the RIR. The deadline for participation is September 26<sup>th</sup>.
- **Presidential Citation: Mel Hulse:** At the St. Paul Spring Convention, ARS President Steve Jones issued a special citation lauding the work of Col Mel Hulse, USAF (ret.) for his work as the Keeper of the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden, as well as for his efforts in the preservation and care of rare and unusual roses. NCNH District Director Jolene Adams presented the citation to the Colonel at his home on July 16<sup>th</sup>; the attendees included his wife, Loan, and two of his granddaughters.
- **Presidential Citation: Bill De Vor:** A presidential citation went to Bill De Vor, fourth generation rosarian and general manager of rose production at Nor-East Miniatures, for his support of the ARS by donating a free miniature rose to all new members.
- **Presidential Citation: Frank Hess:** President Steve Jones honored Frank Hess for fifteen years of assiduous volunteer work at the American Rose Center gardens by doing whatever needed to be done.
- **Awardees at St. Paul: Luis Desamero** received the Klima Medal for his exemplary work in rose education over the course of many years. **Bob Martin, Jr.,** one of the giants in the exhibitor ranks, was honored with the Guy Blake Hedrick award.

**Page Two: Views: The following is a letter by ARS president Steve Jones regarding the changes in dues and the publishing schedule of the *American Rose* adopted by the Board of Directors at the St. Paul Spring ARS Convention.**

For months I have written in the President's Message (in the *American Rose*) about declining memberships and how it has been affecting our cash flow and member services. At the St. Paul Convention the Board took action to try and stabilize our finances.

The ARS Finance Committee chaired by Diane Sommers, District Director of the North Central District, did an excellent job presenting a matrix of expenses and income generating options, including dues increases. The matrix modeled our expenses, income and projected membership decline over the next five years. What the matrix showed is no one option is the silver bullet we need and the Board needed to take action now to avoid any loss of member services in the future.

At the St. Paul Board meeting, the Finance Committee recommended three items that would immediately help ease our cash flow crunch: increasing membership dues, condensing the magazine to 6 issues a year, and deleting the Annual. When the Board discussed possible dues increases, we considered the fact we have not had a dues increase for 6 years, plus the cost of living has increased 16% and postage has increased 21% since the last dues increase.

The Board discussed all of these options and voted to increase dues \$12 a year effective August 1, 2007. The regular membership dues will increase from \$37 to \$49 a year, senior to \$46, etc. ...There will be no change to the Associate, Corporate, Life, or Youth memberships at this time. The increase will also bring us in line with many other horticultural organizations.

The Board also approved reducing the number of magazines to 5 issues a year, every two months, and to continue the Annual in its current form and format. The combined two-month magazine will be double the size. Currently a one-month magazine contains 44 pages. We will increase each combined magazine to 84 pages. The combination will be approximately the same number of pages and articles as our current monthly publications. Condensing the magazine into 5 issues and the Annual will save us \$52,000 a year in printing and postage costs with no negative benefit to the membership and the magazine should be arriving in a timelier fashion.

The July magazine is now in the mail. The next magazine will be the combined August/September issue, followed by the October/November issue, then the Annual. Starting in 2008, the magazine issues will be January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October and the Annual.

I realize this is a substantial increase in dues, and hope it will not deter you from continuing membership in our worthwhile organization. We will be working hard to improve member services including having a real voice answering the phone at Headquarters and streamlining other services to help reduce overhead. We are looking at having electronic publications available at a reduced price, and will start with the specialty bulletins, and then foreign memberships with the magazine. In addition, we realize we need to go to outside sources for other monies, so we will be concentrating on fundraising, grants, better marketing, and corporate sponsorships. With these changes and concerted efforts, I believe we can stabilize our expenses for many years to come, even with a declining membership that I hope that will level out sometime in the near future.

(A complete schedule of changes in dues will appear on the ARS website ([www.ars.org](http://www.ars.org)) on August 1<sup>st</sup>.)

**Page Three: Re-views: Membership: Old problems appear in new forms in the electronic age. Tom Cooney examines a recurrent problem ... with attitude.**

Electronic Newsletter and Membership Retention  
By Tom Cooney, Orange County Rose Society president

More and more local societies are converting their society newsletters to an electronic format. This is quite understandable; the prices of paper, printing, and mailing are constantly rising and the cost of printing in color is prohibitive. So logic dictates that we try to reduce costs as much as we can. For the Orange County Rose Society in Southern California that meant creating the newsletter in PDF format and sending it via email.

By doing this **our society was able to reduce newsletter costs by 75%.**

We were also able to include extra pages and produce the newsletter in color, a far better product at a fraction of the cost. Some members still prefer to receive the newsletter in the old format, delivered via snail-mail. That number is dropping.

However, taking this approach has brought on a new set of challenges. The primary challenge for us was what to do with the members who don't renew their membership, and don't regularly attend meetings. We have many members who just want the newsletter each month, and don't have the time or inclination to attend monthly meetings.

Since our dues are renewable at the beginning of each calendar year, a reminder notice is included in the newsletter in January, February, and March. This is usually sufficient to get a majority of our members to renew, either at the next meeting or by sending a check to the membership chairperson. As with most societies there are those that need a little extra push.

Our approach has been two-fold:

1. We put an announcement in the March newsletter stating that if you haven't renewed your membership, this will be your last newsletter.
2. Before the April newsletter, we send out an email stating that the March newsletter was the last they will receive unless we receive dues payment by a stated cutoff date. (We also send a postcard reminder to the small percentage of membership still receiving the paper format.)

By taking this approach we have been able to get approximately 80% of the delinquent members to renew by the April newsletter deadline.

The key to making this approach work is obvious. **You must be ruthless!** If members do not renew by the cutoff date, take their email address out of the distribution list and remove their name from the membership roster. You'll be surprised by how many calls you'll get saying: "I haven't received by newsletter this month" to which you can reply "Pay your dues and we'll be happy to send it to you."

Remember the key word: RUTHLESS. Don't say "Oh, I know Jane is busy and she probably just overlooked sending it in." If you want your members to renew, you have to get their attention. Remember the old joke about how to get a donkey to move when he was being stubborn? First, you must get his attention; a 2 x 4 between the eyes is an attention getter. So is being ruthless.

Taking this approach has allowed our Society to keep our renewals at 90% of the previous year's membership. And we have replaced all of the members who dropped with new members plus some. In fact, we are now at 105% of last year's membership. It can be done. Just remember ... **Be Ruthless.**

**A list of Local Society Relations Committee members appears on the ARS website in the Members Only section. If you wish to make a comment or to contribute an article to this monthly email, any committee member would be glad to receive your input.**

**Factoid: In October, 1951, the American Rose went from being a bi-monthly to a monthly publication. But the number of pages was 34, including the black and white cover photo of Helen Traubel, the opera star for whom the rose was named.**