

Editor: Henny van Dijk

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Mexico's Gift to the World...



variety of the Poinsettia found in Guadalajara, México

The poinsettia is the symbol of Christmas in many countries throughout the world. This beautiful plant is native to central México. The most common name is *La Flor de Nochebuena* (Holy night flower or Flower of Christmas Eve). The first historical registry on the use of Poinsettias during Christmas is related to Franciscan monks living in southern México during the 17th Century. These monks began using these flowers as a decoration during the *Fiesta del Santo Pesebre*, or Feast of the Holy Manger. They fell in love with their beautiful red color, as they timely bloomed during the Christmas holidays. Then their use during Christmas began to spread all over México. One of the best known legends about the Poinsettia being associated with Christmas says that a little Mexican girl named Pepita from the town of Taxco, was sad for not being able to bring a gift to baby Jesus for the Christmas eve mass. Her cousin Pedro told her that even the simplest of the gifts will be acceptable if it was given with love. Pepita took a bouquet of weeds from the field and placed them by the manger. To everyone's surprise, the next morning the simple weeds had transformed into beautiful red flowers. Everyone who witnessed this miracle, said the plant should be known as the Christmas Eve flower.

The person credited with taking a Poinsettia into the United States was Dr. Joel Roberts Poinsett, the first U.S. Ambassador to México. He was a trained physician but was also very interested in botany. In 1825, while visiting Taxco, he became enchanted with the red color of the poinsettia's "blooms." Upon his return to the U.S. he took some plants to his home in Greenville, South Carolina,

where he began to study and propagate them. Poinsettias were considered weeds by many botanists. However, the plant had gained acceptance as a holiday plant, despite its short blooming time. The upper leaves turn bright red in October looking like the petals of a beautiful flower, but the real flowers are the tiny yellow glands found in the center of the plant tips. Once in the U.S. the plant eventually arrived into a nursery owned by Robert Buist. He is believed to have been the first person who sold poinsettias commercially. In 1833 the plant was given the common name Poinsettia, in honor of Dr. Poinsett. In the 1920s, Albert and Paul Ecke began field growing poinsettias in its original form, as bushes, and the flowers were sold freshly cut. A few years later, they introduced an improved Poinsettia that produced a higher number of perfect branches. The next big step in their cultivation occurred in 1960 when its propagation was moved from the fields into greenhouses. In 1963, the first potted plants were sold and the Ecke brothers began to promote the poinsettias as the Christmas flower. To this day, the Ecke Ranch, located in Encinitas, California, is the largest producer of Poinsettias used by commercial growers.

The poinsettias we see today are the result of many years of research and hybridization, and they hardly resemble the tall, leggy plant that grows in México. The plants have also been manipulated to produce blooms that will last much longer, and some very attractive miniature varieties are now also available.

Recognizing the poinsettia's importance, the U.S. congress declared December 12th as National Poinsettia Day.

Story and image by Liliana Cracraft



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Build your own bubble

This week, we seem to be stranded in COVID-19 purgatory. In the Houston region, new cases are inching up, as are new hospitalizations; the shorter days are driving people indoors and many are experiencing mask fatigue. I know this is demoralizing for many, especially as we approach the holiday season. Should we sacrifice time with family and close friends over the holidays as well?

For a little ray of hope, I look to the recent NHL and NBA seasons. Both leagues created a "bubble", in which they played all their games, and completed their post-season. How many infections since they resumed regular season play in August? [Zero](#). I believe it is possible to create our own "holiday bubble" and have a relatively safe and responsible time with family.

First, assess your own risk tolerance. If you are elderly, immunosuppressed or have a serious underlying medical condition, weigh the risks of holiday celebrations against the potential benefits. Second, creating a holiday bubble demands real commitment of all participants. One weak link will breach your bubble security. If everyone is not committed, you are probably better off celebrating exclusively with members of your usual household.

Get your flu shot. This will decrease the likelihood of developing a flu-related illness around holiday time, which could disrupt your plans. Everyone planning to enter the holiday bubble must make extra effort to limit contact with other individuals to reduce risk of exposure. If your job duties permit, work from home. Self-quarantine. It means staying home and avoiding all contact with anyone outside your regular household, even if masked. Decide who will be cooking during the holiday. Stock up on non-perishable food items in advance. Stock up on hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes for travel. Complete your food shopping. If you plan to drive, buy travel food in advance. If you are traveling to the "bubble" **drive if possible**. Make the trip in a single day if you can do so safely. Bring your own travel snacks. Limit time in -- or avoid altogether -- crowded roadside fast food restaurants, truck stops, etc. Mask and distance when out of the car.

If you must fly:

Wear a cloth mask (or N95 for maximal protection) and a face shield or goggles. While on the plane, leave your mask and face shield/goggles on as much as possible. Ideally, they should stay in place for the entire flight. Skip the snacks and drinks. Use the restroom prior to boarding. Limit fluid intake prior to departure, avoid use of the airplane lavatory. If you must use the lavatory, keep your mask on, and wash your hands thoroughly.

During the holiday

If everyone has followed the above guidance, you are relatively safe in your bubble. Continue to use common sense. Play games, eat, sing songs, throw the football. Enjoy fellowship with friends and family. After all your hard work, planning and preparation, you can relax and enjoy the holiday. I wish you all a safe holiday season, and one filled with companionship and love.

Edited from a longer article by James T McDeavitt, M.D.

Remembering Allen Leon



Allen a UTHRO member for the past 6 years with his wife Inga Lill passed away in early October. As I wrote in his memory book I got to know them when they joined the UT Houston Retiree Organization and met them at many of the events.

Allen was easy to talk to and a very upbeat person who seems to enjoy the camaraderie of fellow retirees and he certainly did not look his 90 years. The picture was taken during one of our events and that's how I remember Allen, an expectant smile and accompanied by his Inga. He was a kind, gentle, and charming man who was always interested in learning about others and from their experiences. I would like to offer my condolences to Inga Lill and her daughter Anna with the loss of her husband Allen and Dad. Rest in Peace Allen and may Inga get strength knowing that our members will mourn his loss. *Henny van Dijk*



Interesting Facts about TMC (cont)



Continuing our tour of Texas Medical Center streets, I am sure that you have driven down Moursund Street. It runs from Bertner Ave. eastward between Baylor College of Medicine and the old Dental Branch building and past TIRR to McGregor Street. The street was named

for Walter Henrik Moursund, a physician and medical educator and the longest serving dean of Baylor Medical School. Young Dr. Moursund received his medical training at The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, graduated in 1906, and practiced medicine in several small Texas towns for about four years. He was not happy in general practice, and in 1911 he joined the faculty of Baylor College of Medicine, located in Dallas at the time, as a radiology assistant. Over the years at Baylor, he served as a professor, secretary and registrar, acting dean, and dean. In 1943, there was a move to merge Baylor College of Medicine with the Southwestern Medical Foundation (later becoming The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center) for a Dallas medical center with a jointly operated medical school. Moursund feared that the foundation would assert full control over the medical school, and in his view, a move to Houston would preserve Baylor's independence. There was talk even then of a major medical center in Houston, and Moursund saw great opportunities. In 1947, Hugh Roy Cullen and his wife announced their decision to finance the construction of a building for Baylor in the current location of the school in the Texas Medical Center. Moursund served Baylor as acting dean from 1920 to 1923, then becoming permanent dean and serving until his retirement as Dean Emeritus in 1953.

Peggy O'Neill



UTHRO
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HOUSTON RETIREE ORGANIZATION
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM
JANUARY 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2021

As stated in the Bylaws, annual dues are payable on or before the first day in January. Please use this form to pay your dues and include information that will be used for UTHRO's records. Check appropriate member status.

\$15.00 Retiree (includes spouse) and also includes any employees 55 years of age or older not yet retired but anticipate membership upon retirement.

Name _____

Spouse's Name _____

Address: Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ Cell/Fax _____

E-mail Address _____

Emergency contact (for bus trips and outings):

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Dues are payable by check only (do not send cash).

Return this form with check payable to: UTHRO

Mail to the Treasurer:

Margaret Zambrano, 20903 Imperial Ridge Lane, Spring, TX 77379

(The Dues period is from January 1 through December 31 each year)

Approval of 2021-2022 Executive Committee for 1/1/2021-12/31/2022 (Y/N)

_____ President, Kathryn Bradley	_____
_____ Vice President, Barbara Kelly	_____
_____ Secretary, Daun Gray	_____
_____ Treasurer, Margaret Zambrano	_____

Election of Executive Committee for 2021-2022

The term for our current Executive Committee ends on 12/31/2020. Per our UTHRO Bylaws, the election of officers will be held at the general meeting to be held in November of each year. However, due to COVID19, we are unable to conduct our general meeting this year. The term of office is for two years beginning January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022. To facilitate the election, the Annual Membership Renewal Form has been modified to include the approval of the officers. Please indicate your preference via Y/N. In addition, space has been provided for you to write in an alternate candidate if you prefer.

Executive Committee Candidates:

Kathryn (Kathy) Bradley– President
 Barbara Kelly– Vice President
 Daun Gray– Secretary
 Margaret Zambrano – Treasurer

UTHRO

The University of Texas Houston Retiree Organization
1851 Crosspoint, Suite 1.204
Houston, TX 77054

*To update your address or phone number
please contact us at 281-655-1983*

And Now For Something Completely Different...

Reflecting on a life lesson - value...

A father said to his daughter "You have graduated with honors, here is a car I bought many years ago. It is pretty old now. But before I give it to you, take it to the used car lot downtown and tell them I want to sell it and see how much they offer you for it.

The daughter went to the used car lot, returned to her father and said, "They offered me \$1,000 because they said it looks pretty worn out."

The father said, now "Take it to the pawn shop." The daughter went to the pawn shop, returned to her father and said, "The pawn shop offered only \$100 because it is an old car."

The father asked his daughter to go to a car club now and show them the car. The daughter then took the car to the club, returned and told her father, "Some people in the club offered \$100,000 for it because it's a Nissan Skyline R34, it's an iconic car and sought by many collectors"

Now the father said this to his daughter, "The right place values you the right way," If you are not valued, do not be angry, it means you are in the wrong place. Those who know your value are those who appreciate you.....Never stay in a place where no one sees your value.... Never!



UTHRO OFFICERS 2020

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