

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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In Memoriam: Elisabeth “Jinx” Ecke

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One can't visit the California flower industry without recalling the Ecke family, the pioneer of poinsettias as a successful Christmas crop (and once an exhibitor at Spring Trials). That's why it was especially poignant to get the news on day two of Spring Trials from Paul Ecke III that his mom had just passed away.

Paul wrote that he had been visiting his mom at his sister, Liz's, house. He left, and was halfway home, when Liz called to tell him that she had just passed. She'd been suffering from Alzheimer's and was 87, so it wasn't completely unexpected.

What I was most curious about was how she got the nickname “Jinx.” I never knew her, but with a nickname like that, she had to be full of life and spirit. It turns out she gave it to herself.

Elisabeth grew up in Indiana during the Great Depression and work was scarce. Her family decided to move to California in search of both a better life and better weather. On the drive out, 14-year-old Elisabeth spotted a movie marquee featuring a film starring Jinx Falkenberg. She reasoned that she needed a more exciting name than Elisabeth (or “Susie” as many in her family called her) in order to make an impression on her new classmates at La Jolla High School. She was apparently a hit from day one.

Jinx met Paul Ecke Jr. via a blind date set up by a sorority sister. Paul was a lieutenant in the Navy at the time. They hit it off, stayed in contact during her college years and his tour of duty, and were married in 1953.

The rest of the Ecke family story is well known, with Jinx raising her three children, Paul III, Lizbeth and Sara, in the Ranch house on the family nursery property in Encinitas. Jinx was tremendously active in the San Diego area, serving countless organizations and earning numerous honors, including Distinguished Alumna of the Year at San Diego State. **GT**