

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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In Memorium: Pete Pike

Jennifer Zurko

Founder of Pike Nurseries, William “Pete” Pike, passed away on February 28 at age 90, surrounded by his family and close friends. He is remembered by many as a dedicated friend and entrepreneur.

Pete became interested in the nursery business in the mid-1950s. While serving at the Naval Air Station in Chamblee, Georgia, he worked part-time for Lymburner’s Nursery to supplement his income and support a growing family. In 1958, Pete decided to try his luck with his own nursery business.

A native of Hogansville, Georgia, Pete was a pioneer in Atlanta’s lawn and garden industry. The secret to Pike Nurseries’ success is his uncomplicated approach to business, small-town values and big-city ideas. He started his business with three employees and a 200-sq. ft. location on Highway 41 in Marietta, Georgia. Since then, Pike Nurseries has become a Southern institution, comprised of 500 employees in peak seasons and 18 retail stores in the metro-Atlanta and Charlotte, North Carolina, areas.

As Pete and his family led Pike Nurseries into the 21st century, their plans for the future included the expansion of Pike Nurseries outside the boundaries of metro Atlanta and into North Carolina. After Pete retired as president and CEO, a position he held for 46 years, Armstrong Garden Centers, a California chain of garden centers, purchased Pike Nurseries. The new leadership continues to uphold Pete’s values and expand his vision.

Through the years, Pete garnered several well-deserved honors for his contributions to the green industry and to the metro-Atlanta area, including the Atlanta 100 Entrepreneur of the Year in 1991. He also received the Metro-Atlanta Landscape and Turf Association’s Pioneer Award, the Georgia Green Industry Association’s Outstanding Nurseryman Award, the Greater Atlanta Nurserymen’s Association’s Distinguished Service Award and the University of Georgia’s University Friend Arch Award.

In 2005, Pete was presented the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the Georgia Green Industry Association. Pete and his wife, Jerri, also contributed generously to many charitable organizations, including the DeKalb Medical Centers in Decatur and Lithonia, Georgia, the Ford African Rain Forest at Zoo Atlanta, Atlanta’s Ronald McDonald House and the Greater Atlanta Christian School in Norcross, Georgia.

Though retired, Pete remained active in the business, serving as a consultant and friend to CEO Monte Enright. He could be seen at the corporate office and at the stores on a regular basis. **GT**