

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Orchid Endurance

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Two generations of Hausermanns stand still just long enough for *GrowerTalks* to snap a family portrait before they scatter to tend to customers at Orchids by Hausermann's 58th Annual Orchid Show & Sale. The occasion for the portrait? The 100th anniversary of the four-generation Chicagoland business, which was founded by Carl Hausermann in 1920.

Hausermann's was originally a cut sweet pea, rose and gardenia grower, but around 1940, Carl's son Edwin added orchids for cut flowers and corsages, and in the '50s they expanded to include a wide range of orchid plants for hobbyists. They started their own breeding program, too, eventually becoming world-famous for varieties such as *Cattleya Irene Finney*, named for Carl's only daughter.

"Switching to orchids was the best move we ever made," said Gene Hausermann, a member of the third generation of Hausermanns.

Because their customer base for orchids was so small, they decided to hold an open house to bring in more people. That was in 1962, when they started with just a few hundred visitors; now, 58 years later, Gene estimates they get about 6,000 people over the two weekends.

So what's the secret to their success? Gene said being flexible and making smooth transitions from generation to generation.

"That's where most businesses fail," explained Gene. "When you're switching the business to the next generation, compromise has to happen."

Gene's son Adam and his wife Sydney are the fourth generation to come into the business, and Gene considers himself lucky that Adam wants to carry on growing orchids. A lot of family businesses struggle with succession planning.

"It all works great until you stop having kids," laughs Gene. "Or they don't want to be part of the business."

But he gets serious and says, "I've seen a lot of orchid growers go through that. But as long as everyone involved is still active, the transition runs smoothly." **GT**

Pictured: Four generations of Hausermanns: (From left to right) Lynn Hausermann, James Hausermann, Amy Hausermann, Carol Hausermann, Andy Hausermann, Gene Hausermann, Barbara Hausermann, Melinda Funke, Patrick Funke, Sydney Hausermann and Adam Hausermann.