

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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In Memoriam: Juan St. Amant

Chris Beytes

Juan St. Amant, the retired “Face of Plug Connection,” passed away Sunday, June 13, at his home in Vista, California. He was just 63. Thankfully, his final days were peaceful, with his family nearby.

“Juan had a kind soul, a fun spirit and a mentoring personality,” recalls Michele St. Amant, his youngest sibling, who's a branch manager at Armstrong Growers. “He was inclusive of all and always invited us to any personal gathering or event at work. He was a terrific big brother and it was so special to have him as an industry colleague.”

Juan was the oldest of five children. He's remembered as a thoughtful and kind-hearted person who loved his family, friends, music, animals and his work. He was dedicated to sharing his knowledge of plants and more with all. He graduated from UCLA and had a degree in teaching.

Interestingly, despite his long career in horticulture at Plug Connection, Juan had no experience or training when he arrived in 1987.

“Juan was the third employee we ever had,” recalls Tim Wada, owner of Plug Connection for its first 30 years. “His first duty was to learn how to drag a hose around and water the plug trays by hand. But he never complained about it; he just worked through it.”

As the company grew, Juan progressed from head grower to production manager to key accounts manager. But Juan really shined in his last role in new product development.

Tim says, “I'm pretty sure his last position was his favorite because he loved being out in the industry and being the contact person for anything new or interesting ... I, of all people, owe Juan a debt of gratitude for helping us achieve the success we enjoyed and I'm sure he took a lot of pride in that, too. You always hear about how our industry was filled with good people—well, Juan was definitely one of them.”

Says Nicole Jackson, a colleague of Juan's at Plug Connection, “He led with his heart. He was immensely kind and had such a great sense of humor.” **GT**