



NEWS

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SAF Honors Rocky Pollitz, AAF, AIFD, PFCI With Floriculture Hall of Fame Award

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Sept. 27, 2007 -- “During my floral career I have strived in everything I do to advance the professionalism of the floral industry,” stated Rocky Pollitz, AAF, AIFD, PFCI in 1979. She has spent almost three decades since then living true to her word – listening to, educating and speaking out on behalf of florists everywhere. SAF honored her dedication by inducting her into the Society of American Florists’ Floriculture Hall of Fame on Sept. 27 during the Industry Awards Dinner at SAF Palm Springs 2007, SAF’s 123rd Annual Convention in Palm Springs, Calif. The industry’s highest honor, the Floriculture Hall of Fame is bestowed upon people of high integrity who have made outstanding and lasting contributions to the advancement of floriculture as an integral part of the American way of life.

A Model Teacher

“She saw a real need for education that needed to be taken to florists on a local level,” says Tim Farrell, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of Farrell’s Florist in Drexel Hill, Pa., and she dedicated her career to making that a reality. Appointed to Teleflora as director of industry relations in 1980, and later promoted to vice-president of industry relations in 1986, she started the company’s education department. “To this job Rocky brought a new vision,” says Phil Rulloda, AAF, AIFD, PFCI, of the Southern California School of Floral Design in Anaheim. Her department at Teleflora was responsible for hundreds of

programs a year and Rocky herself has given countless presentations and seminars, and has commented at various state and national conventions and shows.

One of her most notable contributions was to revitalize the Teleflora Units program. Started in the 1940s, the Teleflora Units had served as a mostly social program, but Rocky put a new emphasis on education and started the tradition of bringing a team of floral designers to the Units to teach workshops on floral design and business. She also made sure her education team visited both small and large groups, to give all florists equal opportunity to learn. “Rocky is known for being accessible to everyone,” says Rulloda. “[She] takes care to visit small towns and rural areas as well as the big cities ... in part because of her concern for staying in touch with florists everywhere.” Rocky insisted every Unit host two workshops a year, but some hold as many as ten.

She also started Design America, an annual floral design competition held by Teleflora to teach florists competition skills, as well as how to work together. Over 1,000 designers would compete each year at the regional level, and then winners would go on to national and international Teleflora design competitions. This lasted from the late ‘80s to mid ‘90s.

“Champion of the Florist”

“Rocky Pollitz has dedicated a lifetime to helping the floral industry’s ‘little guy’ – retail florists,” says Rulloda, who also calls her “champion of the florist.” She owned (with husband Gerd) Ana’s Florist in Riverside, Calif., from 1965-1980 and communicated florists’ concerns to Florafax, as a member of the wire service’s Forum 21 panel, from 1976 to 1980. With this group she also traveled all over the world gaining information for use in presentations to American floral designers.

“She could see hidden talent in people ... and knew how to bring it out of them,” says Farrell. Rocky served as mentor to many floral designers, especially those who were on her Teleflora Unit education teams. She helped redesign the look of floral arrangements in posters for organizations such as SAF and Teleflora, and made sure to pass her

knowledge along. “She helped me as a commentator and educator and [helped me with] doing floral design for photography,” says Carol Caggiano, AIFD, PFCI, of A. Caggiano, Inc., in Jeffersonton, Va., who was one of the floral designers on Rocky’s education team and now does floral design for SAF’s photo shoots. “She was always willing to take the time to teach you and show you how.” Farrell says that through Rocky’s role as a presenter and commentator, as well as her role at Teleflora, “the number of designers she impacted was seriously in the hundreds.”

Over the course of her career Rocky also has helped shape and advance the American Institute of Floral Designers (AIFD) as she served in numerous leadership positions including a rare two-year term as AIFD’s president from, 1976 to 1978. During her time as president, she re-wrote the organization’s by-laws to draw more members from all over the country. She currently is a trustee emeritus of the AIFD Foundation, which has established a scholarship fund in her name.

Past and Present

Rocky was introduced into the floral industry in the early ‘60s. She opened her own store in 1965 and worked there until she joined Teleflora in 1980. (The store was then owned by her daughter, Susan Overton-Ayala, until 1995 when it was sold). In addition to presenting and commenting at hundreds of seminars and conventions, she wrote a column called “Ask Rocky,” in *Flowers &* magazine for more than 20 years and served as publisher for three years.

Rocky has served as a floral consultant to several consumer publications, including *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Women’s Day*, *King’s Syndicate Publications* and *Architectural Digest*. She has received many industry honors, including: AIFD’s Award of Distinguished Service to the Floral Industry in 1992 and Distinguished Service to AIFD in 1993, and SAF’s Golden Bouquet (Paul Ecke, Jr.) Award and PFCI’s Tommy Bright Award (both in 1995). She also has received the American Horticulture Society Award and numerous state association awards. Rocky served as a member of SAF’s Government Relations Committee (from 1999-2002) and PFCI Committee (from 1991

–1994). Though she retired from Teleflora in 2003, she still remains an active participant in the floral industry as a consultant, designer and commentator.

For more information or to nominate an industry member for SAF's Floriculture Hall of Fame, visit www.safnow.org/awards or contact SAF's Debi Aker at (800) 336-4743; daker@safnow.org. For photographs of the 2007 Industry Awards Dinner, contact Shelley Estersohn at (800) 336-4743, or sestersohn@safnow.org.

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The Society of American Florists is the association leader for all segments of the floral industry including wholesalers, growers and retailers. SAF is proud to provide marketing, business and government services for more than 12,000 participants in the U.S. floral industry.