I chose to title my first “Reflections” column in October 2017 “Beginnings” because, as I began my term as ASHS President, it seemed appropriate to share some of my background and how I came to choose horticulture as a career. Early in my term, I also wanted to share what I had worked on as ASHS President-elect and what I hoped to accomplish during the coming year. As a long-term ASHS member, I had read and enjoyed the “Reflections” columns written by my predecessors in the position. I felt that many of these columns could serve well as position statements for our society on many topics. During my year as President-elect, I considered what subjects that I would enjoy reflecting on that would also be of interest to a broad section of my ASHS colleagues. However, rather than write my columns on such topics, I decided that I would build on the results of the activities of the Presidents who preceded me in office. This decision was made out of a sense of urgency about potential problems that I perceived might have a negative impact on the future of our society. I felt that the pending issues revealed in the 2016 survey of the ASHS membership provided excellent information concerning not only the strengths of our society, but also our forthcoming challenges. Some of these challenges were illuminated by President Curt Rom in a “Reflections” column in the ASHS Newsletter. In 2017, President John Dole formed three ad hoc committees to address issues that were identified from the surveys and to solicit broad-based recommendations that would build on the strengths of ASHS, address these potential challenges, and make our society even stronger in the future. President Dole later presented the recommendations of these committees in the ASHS Newsletter. After evaluating the recommendations of these committees and conducting further analysis of ASHS budgets and activities, I was further convinced that my efforts would be more useful to ASHS by addressing some of these challenges.

As incoming President, I had the opportunity and pleasure of appointing members to three new administrative committees recommended by President Dole’s committees and approved by the ASHS Board in 2017. These committees were the Events and Education Planning Committee, the Media Communications Committee, and the Partnership Development and Sponsorship Committee. These committees have been active in 2018 and have activities planned for the annual conference this year. I am especially excited about the activities planned for students. Based on meeting registration numbers, participation in these programs will be excellent. Descriptions for these programs may be found in the online annual program.

In my first column, I outlined areas that I believed were central to maintaining a strong future for ASHS. These areas included developing programs to increase the value of membership in ASHS for students, postdocs, and young professionals; attracting and retaining members who work with specialty crops but who choose to participate in other societies and meetings that they feel meet their needs better than ASHS; and what we need to do to maintain and improve the areas that are the foundations of our society’s success. At that time, I suggested that, because publications are so important to our society’s financial success, it was apparent that we needed to begin to move our publications to Open Access format.

After reviewing ASHS programs to evaluate where I felt that I could do the most good for our society, I decided to use my future “Reflections” columns to discuss some of these important
issues facing our society. Further, in an effort to be as transparent as possible, I solicited input from the membership regarding my suggestions concerning the most important issues that ASHS should address in order to assure future success.

As a result, my “Reflections” columns were directed toward the following areas after consultation and input from many members: 1) Can our Professional Interest Groups bring new energy and excitement to our conferences by making their workshops more interactive, focusing on identifying critical needs, and promoting working relationships with other organizations with similar interests? 2) What should we do to improve our conferences and the value of membership? 3) Would we find value in assigning DOI numbers to our past publications and digitizing our collections? 4) What should we do to improve our programs and activities to provide greater membership value to students and younger professional members from both academic and commercial backgrounds? 5) Finally, and most important from my viewpoint, I focused a major part of my effort on my “Reflections” columns concerning why and how we should move our journals to Open Access as soon as possible. In my opinion, this is currently the most critical potential threat to our society’s financial success. Given that our journals provide the major portion of our society’s income above expenses, it is critical that we keep them not only competitive but also financially sound. Our journals are the leading source of scientific information in the field of horticulture. That position may be jeopardized if we do not make them more visible to the world. There will be some transitional issues in taking our journals to Open Access, but the rewards to our members will far exceed those issues. I will present more information on our journey to Open Access and the benefits that lie at the end of the transition in my Presidential Address at the annual conference in Washington, DC, on August 3. My address will be recorded and available online. The information on Open Access will also be available in my Presidential Address when it is printed in HortScience. In this, my last “Reflections” column as ASHS President, I want to take this opportunity to say thanks to all of the ASHS members and administration for being so supportive of our society and for providing input and encouragement to me personally during my term as president. I have found during this year that our membership’s reputation for being cooperative, dedicated, and enthusiastic about the importance of horticulture to society is well deserved! ASHS has been an important part of my professional and scientific development throughout my career, and I continue to enjoy the many wonderful relationships that I have made because of ASHS. I have benefited from the advice, mentoring, and friendship of many in our society on both a professional and personal level. I have enjoyed the opportunity to serve our society and hopefully give back a portion of what I have received over the years. I will continue to be dedicated to our society and to pay as much forward as is possible.

So, I title this “Reflections” in all sincerity, Thanks for the Opportunity! Thanks for the opportunity to serve as your president, and thanks for your support throughout this busy, but exciting, year!