



Wisconsin Daylily Society, Inc

Issue 29

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www.wisdaylilysoc.org

Rosemary Kleinheinz, Editor

A not for profit organization promoting the enjoyment, awareness, and propagation of the genus *Hemerocallis*

DAN BACHMAN WILL VISIT THE WDS IN EARLY MAY

By John Sheehan

Our WDS group is starting off the real "Wisconsin" spring season with a visit from Dan Bachman of the Valley of the Daylilies Garden located in Lebanon, Ohio. On Saturday, May 2nd at 1:00 PM at the West Side Agricultural Research Station, Dan will discuss his well-established daylily hybridization program. He will review with us how he selects his crossing parents, how he dotes on his young seedlings, and he will explain the criteria he uses to decide if he will register a new seedling OR toss it into the compost pile.

Dan focuses on producing beautiful, well-formed, northern, winter-resistant daylilies, many of which are UFO's. His plants thrive in Wisconsin gardens. Before the meeting on May 2nd, take a couple of minutes to visit Dan's Website at www.thevalleyofthedaylilies.com to peruse his latest 2009 Introductions as well as his earlier introductions.

Be sure to bring your checkbook (or WDS Dollars to the Meeting); Dan is bringing to Madison about 10 of his newest introductions. We will auction them off to our meeting attendees and half of the proceeds will go to the WDS Treasury to offset Dan's travel expenses (the other half will go to Dan). See you then!



H. John Sheehan, Bachman 2008

UNDER THE BIG WHITE TENT - A GARDEN PARTY!!

We've been hearing rumors that there's a gorgeous garden amid the rolling hills on a farm between Mt. Horeb and Black Earth that we really must see! Thankfully Jeanette Golden has agreed to host our annual Garden Party so we can finally get to see what they are raving about.

Save the date, Sunday, June 28th at 1:00 pm, and plan to join us for a delicious potluck and a walk through a beautiful garden. Look for more information, a map and directions to the farm in the June newsletter.

WDS Officers & Board Members

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"May is God's apologies for February"

Calendar of Events 2009

May 2nd, (Saturday) 1-4 pm, West Ag Research Station **Speaker: Dan Bachman**
May 20-24, National AHS Convention Lake Mary, Florida
June 28th, (Sunday), 1:00 pm, Garden Party at the home of Jeanette Golden
July 10-12th, 2009 Regional Summer Meeting Naperville, IL
July 25th, Bus trip & Garden Tour, Green Bay
August 2nd (Sunday) 1-4 pm, Adoption, Auction & Potluck, Fitchburg Comm. Center
August 15-16th, Daylily Plant Sale, Olbrich
October 24th (Saturday) 1:00 pm, Annual Meeting, Fitchburg Community Center
Speaker: Paul Owen

Be sure to check our web site for updates.

****A NEW TWIST ON OUR YEARLY GARDEN TOUR*****by Wilma Brouwer-Herwig, Garden Tour Chair*

Well, I hope that you all are ready for a little mischief and mayhem (or just plain 'hem') this summer. Instead of a formal tour of 4 or 5 of our members' gardens, I have been working hard to put together a daylong outing to the wilds of northern Wisconsin. Don't forget to mark it on your calendars. The times are yet to be finalized, but I'd set aside 12 hours. This is what is planned:

Saturday, July 25th, we will board a 55 seat Badger Bus at the Dutch Mill Park and Ride. WDS will provide soda and water and a choice of a boxed lunch from B'Tayavon (the fantastic caterer we have been using for all of our events). The first leg of the journey will be the longest but it will be well worth the drive. Our very first, and lengthiest, stop will be at hybridizer Nate Bremer's Solaris Farms near Reedsville. Nate has over 1,200 varieties of daylilies for sale and we will have a buying opportunity here. You will be able to pre-order your wants via email or snail mail plus he will dig any others you can't live without while we are there. Check out his website <http://solarisfarms.com> and you can start planning your purchases now. We also plan to eat our lunch here or you can take it on the bus if you aren't hungry yet.

The second leg of our adventure will take about an hour to get to. If all goes as planned, we will land on the evergreen-graced (trees that is) doorstep of Phil and Luell Korth of Pinewood Gardens hybridizing fame. They live near Suamico. Once again, we can purchase daylilies here. They do not have many cultivars from other hybridizers for sale but do have gorgeous offerings that they have created. Visit their website at <http://daylily.net> then scroll down to Pinewood Gardens and left click on it. If cost is a factor (as it is for most of us) consider splitting a double fan with one of your daylily buddies. That way you get to enjoy a premium Wisconsin bred cultivar and support two of our own daylily wizards to boot.

A short hop, skip, and jump later, and we will be descending on Mark and JoAnn Jankowski's lovely, lovely gardens called Angelic Acres outside of Abrams. There is an angel theme in the first bed we will see, hence the name they chose for their place. HINT: ask JoAnn about the theme. In the past several years they have been selling daylilies and have developed a selling bed area set off to the side of their main gardens. It seems likely that another buying opportunity will be found here. Mark will send along more information if we are able to make purchases and I will pass it along to those who have signed up for this trip.

Sadly, the journey home begins after this stop. Hopefully we will all be so tired and happy that the lengthy ride back won't be unbearable. A stop at either a fast food emporium or a buffet-style restaurant will round out the 'victuals' part of our day. This will be an out-of-pocket expense for those who wish to eat.

Now, the answer to the question that you all have: What will the hefty cost for such a glorious outing be????? The Board did not even hesitate when I proposed that the cost for both a seat on the bus and the fabulous boxed lunch be.....drum roll please.....\$10. Yup, that's right, your eyes are not playing tricks.....ten, count 'em, ten dollars!!!! At this rate, we should have a bus full and that is the whole idea behind the miniscule cost. So, starting at the May meeting, I will circulate a sign-up sheet. A reminder will also be sent electronically to those with email and by regular mail to those who are not connected. More details and a schedule will be passed along as they are finalized. I hope we fill up the bus. Remember that it is first come, first served, so don't wait too long or the chance will be gone. Sit back and leave the driving to us! I'm looking forward to something different and I hope many of you are too.

GARDEN EXPO 2009 HAS COME AND GONE*By Diane Goodman*

The 2009 Garden Expo is but a memory. Taking place in mid-February, it offered numerous opportunities for gardeners to learn of new ideas in the plant world, and a chance to reconnect with "green" friends. The Wisconsin Daylily Society had a booth at the Expo that was staffed by over 30 of our members who assisted in set up, during the event, and tear down. By sharing the love of our "favorite" flower, we inspired 30 new members to join our organization. (That is 5 more than last year.) How cool is that???

Be sure to mark your calendar for early February of 2010 so you, too, can be part of the fun!

NEWSLETTER NEWS

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as I have enjoyed putting it together for you. It is chuck full of interesting information, exciting activities coming up in the next 3 months, and a HAPPY BIRTHDAY greeting to our beloved Hiram Percy. Be sure to read it through to the end. These fine articles from so many different members have made this newsletter possible. You all deserve my sincerest thanks. I'm sorry for the small print; there's just so much to include.

By the way, how would like to receive your newsletter in color? You can if we send it via email! Since over 83% of our membership (195 members) have email addresses, it would be of benefit to our treasury and our environment to send you the newsletter via email. Watch for further details.

Please be sure to support our Business Members whose ads are embedded in this issue.

"SOILS" BY SHERRY COMBS,**Soil Scientist at UWEX Soil and Plant Analysis Lab***by Barry Rowe*

Sherry gave us an excellent tour of the science and practice of the soil our daylilies live in. "Soil" actually refers to several distinct layers between the surface and bedrock. Soil particles can vary greatly in size, and come in shapes such as prisms, blocks and plates. Only the organic matter in the top layer we use provides nutrients to our plants. Nitrogen is the most important chemical for soils in our area.

This scientific knowledge led to practical gardening advice. Since 90% of the nitrogen decays each year, amend often with nitrogen-rich organic material. Sherry recommends adding one bushel of compost, grass clippings, etc., for every ten square feet. And since the root hairs dislike abrupt changes in soil structure, mix well with existing soil. Sherry also recommends "Post" herbicide if your daylilies are getting desparate.

Finally, Sherry warned us against "snake oil" products for your soil that make outrageous claims. I ran home and found products that "May well be the greatest breakthrough in horticulture in the last decade" with "Dozens of the world's science miracles in each drop."

EVERYONE LOVES TO WIN A DOOR PRIZE!

This is the tiime of year when you are invited to bring an unusu- al perennial for our door prize drawing at the May and June meetings.

If you have an extra plant you think other members would en- joy, bring it with you to the May meeting for our door prize drawing. Everyone goes home with a prize on these occasions!

JEAN BAWDEN - GUEST SPEAKER

By Diane Goodman

In February of 2008, our own Jean Bawden had agreed to be the guest speaker at our monthly meeting. However, Mother Nature sent us very poor weather, so the meeting was canceled.

Fast forward to February 2009. Jean was again invited to speak at our monthly meeting. This time the weather was much more pleasant, so we finally had the opportunity to hear Jean's presentation "Daylilies: Jewels in Your Summer Garden". It was delightful!

Using a power-point, and her innate "teacher" style we went from "basic" information to the "frosting" of her presentation. With a gentle humor from both the audience and Jean, she shared information about tepals, sepals, and other "good stuff". (Of course, the highly technical term "butt ugly" was interjected on occasion).

Her presentation concluded by sharing information of her hybridizing program at Earthspirit Farm and photos of some of her "kids". Her gentle demeanor and passion for her plants poured out in every minute of her program.

It was really worth the wait!!

THE ORIGINAL HAPPY-EVER-APPSTER

An Evening with Darrel Apps

By Wilma Brouwer-Herwig

Nope, I hate to admit that that's not a Wilma originalism. But it is clever. It came from a Wisconsin gentleman who grew up on a dairy farm in the middle of the state, pursued a doctorate in horticulture at the UW-Madison under the tutelage of Professor Ed Hasselkuss, moved to the University of Kentucky as an assistant professor of horticulture, became head of education at Longwood Gardens, began Woodside Nursery in the middle of a barren field (in New Jersey, no less), took up hybridizing to the tune of over 300 of his own creations, and became known as Doctor Daylily. Wow, not too shabby a list of accomplishments!

On Wednesday night, March 15, 2009, more than 170 members of both the WDS and The Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society were packed together cheek-to-jowl to enjoy a talk by the Appster himself. These two plant societies, who each hold a different place in their hearts for and differing opinions of the merits of daylilies, peacefully occupied the same Olbrich meeting room without incident. This was mostly due to the perspective that Dr. Apps himself brought to the table. He is not keen on the vast arrays of only daylilies that can often be found in an overly-avid hem lovers garden. A one-plant theme is not the gardening style he favors as it can be boring and limits the gardener in their appreciation of other varieties of plant life. Mixing it up also extends the season of bloom and adds interest throughout the year. To this end, he has tried his hand at hybridizing a wide array of plants that include toad lily, astilbe, clematis, hydrangea, fothergilla, and crab trees. And there were others too numerous to remember. His broad focus on garden plants that perform well is what kept the WHPS members interested and the WDS members excited to pick up some companion plant tips.

Dr. Apps is the father of "Happy Returns" (yellow), "Dynamic Returns" (deep pink), "Pardon Me" (red), "Apricot Sparkles" (soft apricot), and other popular rebloomers. His credo in creating daylilies has been to produce a superior garden plant that has a long bloom period, stays open for many hours, has good foliage, is a good increaser, and does not need much deadheading. He has patented many of his plants under the Happyeverappster and Trophytaker registered names. Other easily recognizable Apps creations begin with either the "Woodside" or "Bridgeton" monikers. Many of us are familiar with "Final Touch" (a late pink), "Big Smile", "Woodside Ruby", "Big Time Happy", and "Dinner And A Movie" (a double pink). All of the above are great performers in the colder gardening zones of the Midwest.

Although Darrel and his wife sold their nursery in 2007 and moved back to Wild Rose here in Wisconsin, he still hybridizes on a very small scale. Let's hope that he continues to improve the reblooming genes in the northern hardy daylily culture.



Conrad Wrzesinski and Jean Bawden
Photo by Kathi Dwelle

Membership News

The winter months since our last newsletter have been busy for this Keeper of the Membership Roster! Many new members came to us as a result of the Garden Expo in early February. One of our new members wrote on her membership form, "Enjoyed meeting your enthusiastic volunteers at [the] Garden Expo." Two of the hallmarks of WDS are our friendliness and our zeal for all things daylily. Continue to spread the good words about this nearly twenty year old society.

Look for fellow members from your neighborhood or non-Madison locations and invite them to share rides to our meetings. Double the pleasure of the day by sharing ideas to and from the meeting.

New members by location: Arlington: Shana Dalton; Baraboo: Jim Konicki; Belleville: Jill Robek; Beloit: Gudrun & Charles Haynes and Barbara Kuska; Blanchardville: Deanne Holmstrom; Blue River: Debbie Cupp; Brooklyn: Kim Hegstrom; Cambridge: Heidi Summers; DeForest: Marcia Milhone; Janesville: Jane Mishleau; Jefferson: Deb McCool-Cloute; Lone Rock: Paul Pratt; Lyndon Station: Cathy Kodelsky; Madison: Jean Bennett, Janice Gary, Ann & David Hardel, Barbara Lee, Rhonda Mishleau, Carol Ottenstein, and Lark Zonka; Monona: Katy Hampton and Sande Mason; Mt. Horeb: K & A Nursey and Jennifer Swiggum; Oxford: Judy Van Schoyck; Poynette: Jean & Robert Wadsworth; Sullivan: Patricia Gilbert; Sun Prairie: Lenora Borchardt and Carol Dann; Verona: Wendy Benz, Tom Brunner and Rick Govek; Wauwatosa: Marne Taylor; and Woodstock, IL: Suzanne Eck.

Welcome to all thirty-nine of you! We hope to meet you at our May meeting and/or summer events. Happy Gardening!

Postscript: With this newsletter you will find your latest copy of our Club Roster. Hope you like the "new look". Please remember that this is provided for your convenience and is not to be shared or used for outside promotional purposes.

Please note this new email address for Chris Zeltner we just received: czeltner356@gmail.com.

Gene Dewey, Keeper of the Mailing List

Editor's Note: Here's a huge THANK YOU to Terri Maliszewski-Kane for making sure all of the 170 attendees at our joint meeting with the Hardy Plant Society were well fed. Folks in the "other organization" were so pleasantly surprised and we of WDS sat back and relished the recognition Terri brought to our society. She's great - and the goodies were delicious!

“DOG GONE DAYLILIES”

By Wilma Brouwer-Herwig

“And you can take that about any way you want!” These were the blunt first words spoken by Melanie Mason, a spirited, totally entertaining, and knowledgeable hybridizer from out east. You just know that when the speaker begins with a statement like that, you are probably going to be in for a wild ride. She did not disappoint and the energy and the laughs remained high throughout her entire program.

She began dabbling in daylilies way back in 1986 and counts Pat and Grace Stamile as her mentors when they still lived on Long Island. Melanie and her husband, the golden labs, the cats, the horses, and the Black Angus cattle live on Longlesson Farm, which is nestled in the foothills of the Adirondacks in far eastern New York state. She has worked her magic breeding cows, Labradors, and daylilies. The daylily endeavor has gone so well that her efforts turned into a business named North Country Daylilies. No matter what animal or plant you are trying to improve, she declares that you need vision in your choices; don't succumb to tunnel vision and be open to serendipity. She does use all tets but this is only because it gets costly when you work with both dips and tets. Breed “good on good” and “be careful of what you use” as genetics problems can be hidden, only to re-appear generations later. “Don't continually use the same plants – outcross more.....think of the genetic soup that the parents bring to the line.”

Although daylilies are part of her bread and butter, Melanie readily characterizes our beloved hemerocallis as “just a garden plant, after all, and it must play well with others”. If it opens well, takes a minimum of fuss and bothers to grow, and responds well to reasonable care, then it is worth looking at its other qualities. Does it have a pretty face, a decent bud count, good branching, consistent bloom, garden presence? Can it stand up to “shoe-sucking, carpel tunnel inducing clay soil?” She is adamant that a hybridizer must keep the bar up and not make excuses for poor performers. Her's are registered only after they meet these goals and after that, because she likes them. With three Honorable Mentions to her credit, it seems that she's living up to her own standards (“Mabou” and “Astral Voyager” in 2008, and “Bordello Queen” in 2004). “Festival of Lights”, “Lyrical Ballad”, “Screen Saver”, “Longlesson Avalon”, and “Candlelight and Cabernet” are more of her creations that keep the bar high. Check out her '09 babies and you know she knows what she is doing. The biggest bonus is that her daylilies are hardy in zone 4.

If you weren't at the April meeting you really missed something. Melanie was a font of information and a hoot, too. It was an entirely entertaining afternoon with a very funny daylily lady who also raises cattle who are “not just pasture ornaments”. Despite the fact that the cattle all have names, they do sometimes end up on her dinner plate like poor Destiny who reportedly “tasted pretty good”. Personally, I think the daylilies have the better end of the deal!!



Melanie Mason at our WDS meeting

Photo by Kathi Dwelle

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*

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WDS HYBRIDIZERS' MEETING

By Pat Sturdevant

We held our second meeting on March 7th at the West Ag Station. Attendance was up from our previous meeting, with 25 attending. Topics covered a wide variety, including water, fertilizer & soil amendments. Jean put together a great exercise on identifying colors & their clarity.

We took a working lunch, going over seed starting and hybridizing hints, while we ate. A great discussion followed about bridge plants and their use in building your line. We covered so much that we ran out of time to have a seedling slide show! And Paul Pratt provided plenty of snacks to make sure we didn't run out of steam!

Stay tuned for an announcement on the date of our next hybridizer meeting.

WINNERS OF 2009 PHOTO CONTEST

by Conrad J. Wrzesinski

At the February general meeting, members of the Wisconsin Daylily Society voted for their favorite daylily photos in the Fourth Annual WDS Photo Contest. Photos could be of an individual daylily bloom, a daylily clump, daylilies with companion plants, or daylilies in a garden setting. Each member could submit a maximum of two photos. Photos must be taken by the member submitting the photo, but did not need to be taken in the member's garden.

Winning photos in alphabetical order by photographer:

Kathi Dwelle with her garden photo of 'INTEGRATED LOGISTICS';

Diane Goodman with a photo of 'RICK RACK RUFFLES' surrounded by a background of perennials;

Tom Kleinheinz with a photo of a clump of 'HURRICANE BOB' in bloom;

Wendy Reichel with a close up photo of a single flower of 'SWALLOW TAIL KITE'.

An enlarged print of each of the four photos will be on display in the Wisconsin Daylily Society booth during the February 2010 Garden Expo and later presented to each winning photographer. Each winner also received a certificate for a daylily of their choice at the Wisconsin Daylily Society Sale to be held August 15th and 16th at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. The winning photos can be viewed on the WDS web site (www.wisdaylily.org).

The popularity of the contest continues to grow. Photos from 27 WDS members were entered in the Fourth Annual WDS Photo Contest. Last year 23 WDS members submitted entries in the photo contest.

SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT DAYLILIES

Just what is a "slightly different daylily"? Be sure you attend our Annual Meeting in October to find out. Paul Owen, owner of the "Slightly Different Nursery" in Polkville, NC will be here to tell us more about the subject. Remember, October 24th at 1:00 pm at the Fitchburg Community Center. Be there!

SIGN UP

BEFORE THE BUS IS FILLED!!

By John Sheehan

Dear fellow WDS Members—We have only about 10 spots left on the bus that will take 40 enthusiastic WDS Members to the 2009 AHS Region 2 Summer Meeting in Naperville, IL, in July of 2009. The Wisconsin Daylily Society is subsidizing the cost of the bus ride—The cost of the bus ride is \$20 (cash or WDS dollars) per WDS Member. The bus is available for WDS Members only; if your spouse or special friend wants to go with you, that person must be a member of the WDS. Since we had only 40 seats available on the bus TOTAL (and more than 225 members in the WDS!!), you should act quickly to reserve your spot.

If you wish to reserve a seat on the bus, send a payment of \$20 (cash/check/WDS Dollars) to Barry Rowe, WDS Treasurer (1850 Epworth Ct., Madison, WI, 53705-1217). If you have internet access, you may go to our WDS Website to download and print out copy of a form which, when filled out, can be sent to Barry.

IMPORTANT—If you wish to attend the 2009 Summer Meeting in Chicago, remember that our \$20 bus fee is for transportation to/from Naperville and lunch on the way to Naperville. You must register for the Summer Meeting itself and make hotel reservations yourself. To locate all of the meeting registration details and hotel reservations data, simply go to the Region 2 Website. If you do not have access to the internet and do not have a neighbor or friend who can help you get this information, give me a call (608-274-4921).

Editor's Note: If you've never been to a Summer Meeting, this is the year to go. After all, the price is right - and you can leave the driving to Phil, our favorite busdriver.

On the way down to Naperville, our members will be given the rare opportunity to visit Song Sparrow Nursery to see Roy Klehm's daylilies up close and personal! He has also offered to open up his sales area for our group and will hold our purchases until we come back through on Sunday. There will be at least one more stop on the way down.

Don't miss this weekend filled with fun, friends and our favorite flower!



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tasted "SOFT SAFFRON"*?
*(Names of daylilies)

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One day the following message from **Barry Rowe** appeared in the Kleinheinz email Inbox. *“I have had some time to research a topic I’ve wondered about. I knew that the AHS got its start somewhere in Iowa, and that a radio show and daylily round robins were somehow involved. I found more specific information and put together the attached article.”*

I was thrilled to receive it, enjoyed reading it, and am proud to publish it here for you to read and enjoy! THANK YOU Barry!

THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN HEMEROCALLIS SOCIETY



Henry



AHS Birthplace



Helen

Ever wonder how an international organization of almost 9,000 members got started? This is the story of a brother and sister, Henry and Helen Field.

Henry was born in 1871 on a farm along the Nishnabotna River in southwest Iowa. He became a horticulturist, businessman and visionary. He provided the forum for the founding of the AHS, and gave his sister a voice to reach the many daylily growers.

His true calling emerged by age six, when he harvested his mother’s flower seeds and sold a packet to his aunt. By 1899 he was selling seed from his own catalog, and would eventually serve over a million customers.

Henry saw radio as a profitable side business and as a way to promote gardening. In 1924 he started station KFNF, The Farmer’s Friend (“Keep friendly, never frown”), on the third floor of his seed house. He prevailed upon his sister to host a half-hour show called “Garden Club of the Air.”

Helen was five years younger than Henry. She, too, would prove to be exceptional: a poet, a suffragette, and eventually the “Flower Lady of the Midwest.” She provided the organizational skills and became the hostess for the inception of the AHS.

Her radio garden show became so popular that she couldn’t field all the letters pouring in from around the Midwest. Helen hit upon the solution that “Flower Grower” magazine devised in 1943. She organized her listeners into specialized round robin groups, sending letters to each other instead of her. One particularly large group was the daylily round robin.

The year 1946 saw great changes. The world experienced its first full year of peace in a long time. In America, people finally drove around without having to consider, “Is this trip really necessary?” And in Iowa, Helen was dealing with a pushy daylily round robin.

Great changes were taking place in the garden as well. Only a year before, “victory gardens” were filled with vegetables. It was considered unpatriotic to plant flowers, since vegetables helped the war effort at home. But the war ended in 1945, rationing ended in 1946, and people began making space for flowers again. The round robins asked Helen to encourage her brother to reinstitute his Midwest Flower Show, discontinued because of the war. The daylily robins also wanted a place to get organized.

Helen reached an agreement with her robins to hold a flower show. She would host the event and broadcast radio announcements, and Henry would provide the facilities. The robins would organize and staff the event, led by the daylily round robin. Helen called a get-together, flower show and picnic.

“Operation Hem Show” opened on July 13, 1946, at the Henry Field Seed Company in Shenandoah, Iowa. According to an eyewitness, “The public advanced by the hundreds and poured through every breach.”

Daylily enthusiasts held a charter meeting at the auditorium of the seed house in the afternoon. Helen Field Fischer was the moving spirit in that meeting. Henry and Helen’s sister Jessie wrote the historic words, “We here today organize a Midwest Hemerocallis Society.” The name would soon change to the Hemerocallis Society, and finally become the American Hemerocallis Society in 1954.

The Helen Field Fischer Gold Medal Award for distinguished and meritorious service was created in her honor. She was the first recipient in 1950. Henry Field’s seed catalogs still faithfully arrive in the mail every spring.

Thank you, Henry and Helen.

SERENDIPITY, SORT OF

An Interview by Ruth Horrall



Serendipity means an aptitude for making fortunate discoveries accidentally, rather like some hybridizing blips. (Serendipity, therefore, is a much-used daylily name.) Some events happen sequentially while others unfold. . .well, accidentally. Take Hiram Pearcy and the initiation of WDS. As his garden grew, so did we.

In 1989 Hiram had several conversations on the garden tour bus during the National AHS meeting. When Annie Weinrick and Leo Sharp chatted with him, they learned (or discovered) that the big state of Wisconsin had NO daylily societies. Annie, then AHS president, and Leo, then Region 2 RVP, probably thought the conversations were fortuitous accidents, but they suggested starting a Wisconsin society. Now, hybridizers know some pollens “take” and others just don’t. The seed for a Wisconsin club formed in Hiram’s imagination during that bus ride.

Why Hiram? His studies at Indiana University had prepared him for his twenty-five-year career directing Madison’s West High Orchestra, playing violin in the Madison Symphony Orchestra and teaching violin—not horticulture—to students in his home studio. He was on the cusp of retirement and toying with new ways to occupy time. Investigating gardening, he whittled down choices of flowers and chose the daylily for his specialty because someone told him daylily culture was easy. Hemerocallis is care free, unlike roses. Ha! Ask him now whether caring for about 700 daylilies is a walk in the park.

You see, Hiram knew a bit about daylilies because of the wife of one of his cousins. (He couldn’t count the number of his cousins because his dad came from a family of nine siblings.) Anyway, this cousin’s wife knew Marge Soules and did a lot of hybridizing and sent Hiram her plants.

So he was on the 1989 tour bus to learn more about daylily culture, and then his real journey began. He felt a Wisconsin club would have to start locally so he contacted Olbrich Gardens. OBG posted a notice of an organizational meeting being held at Hiram and Jane’s home. Some of the key founding members drawn to that first meeting were Betsy Trowbridge, Marja Bennett, Reynold Peterson, Tim Miller, Steve Lesch, and Marian Schumacher. Olbrich offered to provide free meeting space after our club began in earnest. Beginning in earnest meant the first circulated newsletter in winter of 1990. Steve Lesch gave the first monthly program. It was entitled, “Daylilies in the Landscape.”

A bit of background: the Pearcys built their Verona, Wisconsin, home in 1972 against a hill which overlooked a very flat area behind the house. Hiram and Jane envisioned their two sons, John and Joe, playing in this space, but the kids were unpredictable and played mostly in their neighbor’s yards!

Though the boys didn’t use the site for play, they were recruited to help dig the first large daylily bed in the center of the yard. Many years later, hundreds of people have enjoyed the splendor of daylilies spilling throughout the entire backyard. So a play space evolved into an AHS display space. Anyone who has seen Pearcys’ collection comes away with renewed love and respect for our flower.

Having been raised on a farm near Martinsville, Indiana, located on Clear Creek, afforded Hiram experience in raising angus cattle, sheep and pigs. No doubt he also absorbed many lessons in agriculture. However, there was a great deal to be learned in his new “job” as WDS’ first president. He traveled to Joanne Larson’s Illinois home to glean information about presentation of a judged daylily show. We have mounted only one judged show in our first twenty years because most club members are more interested in garden tours, plant auctions, sales, and plant adoptions.

The year 1990 was the first year for touring members’ gardens. There were three gardens visited and Hiram and Jane’s was one of them. Jane became duly famous for her cookies and bars, hospitably offered on tour days.

Hiram’s eightieth birthday is celebrated in April and it closely coincides with our WDS twentieth anniversary. Looking back to his first WDS presidency and to his Region 2 RVP term, I asked whether he regretted anything about those years spent in service to our organization. He said he only wished he’d had more experience before accepting the RVP position. He really had too many tasks in 1996; his own garden was toured, he oversaw the planning of the first Madison Region 2 meeting, and served as RVP!

He may have had faint misgivings about his leadership of WDS, but the society he dreamed and worried into existence is prospering, and we are so very grateful to our fine, caring leader and mentor. Hiram sat in the right seat on that tour bus in 1989. We are glad that he had the vision to imagine the truly cohesive and supportive community we have become.

When asked for advice to carry forward into the next twenty years, he replied, “Stay solvent.” Wise words for these times!

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