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# SOCIETY NEWS

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## Northern Virginia Chapter

Joe Klimavicz, *President*

### Election of Chapter Officers

Election of officers for the 1998 chapter year was held at the December 1997 meeting. The following officers were elected:

President: Joe Klimavicz  
Vice President: Dan Krabill  
Secretary: Virginia Banks  
Treasurer: John Krogmann

### 1998 National Convention Update

Our 1998 National Convention is a very important chapter event, and we will need everyone's help to pull it off. The convention will occur 30 April - 3 May 1998 at the Holiday Inn at Tysons Corner, Virginia, and the convention committee chairs are listed below:

Plants: Dave Raden  
Transportation and Lunch: Dave Nanney  
Registration: Dave and Virginia Banks  
Hotel: Dan Krabill  
Tours: Don Hyatt  
Speakers: Bruno Kaelin  
Publicity: Phil Louer

The complete convention article appeared in the December 1997 issue of **THE AZALEAN**. Thanks to everyone who helped produce this article; especially Phil Louer. In summary, I think we are on schedule with the convention planning, but we still have a lot of hard work ahead. We really need your support and we will be getting in touch with you.

## Glenn Dale Preservation Program 1998

William C. Miller III

The ASA's National Project at the Glenn Dale station is entering its 16th year. Coincidentally, it is also its final year. On November 27, 1997, I informed the ASA Board of Directors (BOD) of my intention to withdraw from the Glenn Dale Preservation Program (GDPP). With the pressure of matters at work and at home, and the recognition that the opportunities at Glenn Dale had diminished, managing a graceful sunset to the project had been on my mind for a number of years. Since the GDPP is an ASA National Project, the BOD had the option of appointing someone to "carry on" in my place. It was my recommendation, however, that an orderly termination of the project made more sense. While the value of the germplasm that remains in the woods cannot be overstated, no one would be willing to put forward the major commitment of manpower, time, and money that would be necessary to support a rescue.

ASA members have followed the program's progress through the reports that appeared annually in the March issue of **THE AZALEAN**. With more than 25 articles in **THE AZALEAN** from a number of people, two books (*The*

*Bell Book* and *The Glenn Dale Azaleas Revised*), and an offshoot project (Dick West's Ten Oaks Glenn Dale Project) directly related to the research that we did at Glenn Dale, I would say from a productivity point of view that the project was an unqualified success. That it did not succeed in achieving all of its goals is not so important, but it is a lesson to be learned.

For those not familiar with the story, the National Project at the Plant Introduction Station at Glenn Dale, Maryland, began in the early 1980's with the efforts of Roger Brown of New Carrollton, Maryland, who was the president of the Ben Morrison Chapter. Roger Brown and Frank White had discussions with Dr. Howard Waterworth, the chief of the Germplasm Resources Laboratory at the Glenn Dale station, which resulted in the issuance of a special USDA permit on June 17, 1982. As president of the Brookside Gardens chapter, I was an *ex officio* member of the Board of Directors (then called Board of Governors), and I remember the Board's deliberations. For the record, I was not entirely in favor of the proposal, as I had major reservations about the ASA's ability to sustain such a commitment. Not to be denied, there was a very strong but general sense that the ASA needed a "national project." The Board approved the project despite a lengthy list of concerns, and the ASA's first National Project was born with Roger Brown as the program's leader. The agreement with the USDA called for the ASA to restore the original azalea test area and to develop and maintain a germplasm preservation garden for named and unnamed azalea cultivars. In the Fall of 1982, general work sessions commenced which resulted in considerable progress being made toward restoring the former test area. This was a formidable task since the area was badly overgrown with volunteer/nuisance plant material due to the many years of neglect. A committee was formed (Roger Brown, Andy Dietz, and myself) to create a working document to provide a structure for the ASA activity which the Board eventually reviewed and approved. At that point, I decided that I would do

what I could do to support the project since I knew that it would be difficult. Dr. Bruce Parlman, the Glenn Dale location leader, who was very supportive of our efforts, made a coldframe available for our purposes. Plants donated for the proposed germplasm preservation garden were stored there while the two-acre area was prepared. This included a large population of numbered but unnamed Back Acres hybrids that George Harding donated.

On June 12, 1984, Dr. John Creech, former director of the U.S. National Arboretum, met with Andy Dietz, Tony Dove, and myself for a walk through the azalea woods at Glenn Dale. Dr. Creech pointed out a number of special plants and described the general organization of the historic area. He was also able to locate a very old ledger that was the key to the plantings. This ancient document was to become very important later on when the focus of the project turned from maintenance activities to an analysis of what was planted in the woods.

As I predicted, "national" interest in the new national project waned quickly and precious few (eventually none) of the project's most vocal proponents could be found in attendance on work days. After a few short years, there was only a small group of a half dozen or so individuals, like Margaret Church, who could be counted on to help. Work days were typically scheduled in the months of September, October, and November, since Spring was out of the question, given the crush of other activities, and Summer was too hot. Most of the time was consumed in pulling weeds from the newly laid out garden, in reapplying mulch, and in planting new acquisitions as they were received. It often took all day just to address the weed problem in the new germplasm collection area. On one occasion, we put down Typar® thinking that an artificial mulch fabric was the answer to our weed problem. Unfortunately, we discovered that the industrial grade weeds that we were dealing with grew down through the artificial mulch so that either the weeds

were well anchored or the mulch came up with the weeds. After a number of frustrating years, it became obvious that we would never be able to maintain the two-acre germplasm garden under the existing conditions and with the level of ASA commitment.

Recognizing that progress was a function of the resources that could be applied to the project, a new direction was established when I was the only person to show up on a work day. My personal interest in Glenn Dale involved doing research on how the Glenn Dale hybrids were developed, on the history of the Plant Introduction Station, and on the people who were part of the story. To that end, I sought and was given permission to study the old files at Glenn Dale. Those old files had long since been separated from the current files and had been moved to a long abandoned residence called "Al's House." One could think of Al's House as a three-story "attic" that, without power, was dark, hot in the summer, and cold in the winter. It was the final resting place for things that were "in the way," old files, boxes of old journals, and ancient laboratory equipment. Those files were found to contain working documents and notes of the period and letters that Ben Morrison wrote to individuals at the Glenn Dale station after his retirement in the early 1950's. From some of the working papers, I was able to trace the development of the Belgian-Glenn Dale hybrids and published a definitive article in June of 1984 in **THE AZALEAN**. A Morrison letter was discovered that contained a drawing that diagramed his understanding of "sporting" in azaleas. The diagram became the centerpiece of the article entitled "Pattern of Sporting" that Dr. Charles Evans and I published in early 1985. Also to be found in the historic files were old manuscripts and copies of articles written by Ben Morrison like his article entitled "Azaleas and Rhododendrons From Seed" that was republished in **THE AZALEAN** in early 1987. Other ASA members like Ed Rothe became interested in the azaleas at Glenn Dale. Ed conducted a detailed study of the

Ghent and other deciduous azaleas in the woods and published a report in early 1989.

It was in the late 1980's that Dick West (now deceased) came on the scene. Dick wrote many articles derived from the research that we did at Glenn Dale. His drive and enthusiasm resulted in numerous collaborations, the development of a non-ASA spin-off project at the Ten Oaks Nursery that he and I co-sponsored, and ultimately the revision and republication of Morrison's Monograph 20. Dr. Bill McIntosh and Dick West were the main participants during the scheduled Glenn Dale work days in the last years, and focus turned to the historic plant material in the woods. It was Dick West's dream to improve the US National Arboretum's collection of Glenn Dale hybrids and to establish verified collections elsewhere. This led to the development of Dick's "Ten Oaks Glenn Dale Project." We believed that it was going to be possible to locate original plants at Glenn Dale with the aid of the old journal that Dr. Creech had helped us locate earlier. A considerable amount of effort was expended in trying to locate the boundary markers of the various plots to establish the spatial relationships necessary to identify individual plants within the plots. Perhaps our greatest success in this regard occurred in 1994 when we discovered in Plot 9 what may be the only existing plant of 'Alexandria'. A close second was the discovery of B32140 which is the unnamed parent plant from which 'Cinderella' and 'Satrap' were selected.

As one might expect, any activity that lasts this long is bound to have low points too. Perhaps the greatest disappointment occurred one night in March of 1995 when an arsonist torched "Al's House." The historical documentation, dating back some seventy years, was totally destroyed.

To those who participated in the ASA's first and oldest National Project, I say thank you and well done. □