

## F. P. Lee Commendation 2003

Mary Rutley, Brookside Gardens Chapter vice-president, presented the chapter's 2003 F.P. Lee Commendation to Don Voss of Vienna, Virginia, at their annual meeting on December 7, 2003, at the Brookside Gardens Educational Center in Wheaton, Maryland. The commendation in part reads:

*The Frederic P. Lee Commendation for distinguished contributions to furthering the knowledge of and appreciation of Azaleas is awarded by the Brookside Gardens Chapter of the Azalea Society of America to Donald H. Voss.*

*In recognition of your outstanding participation in the activities of the Brookside Gardens Chapter in advancing the propagation, care, and general appreciation of Azaleas. Presented with deep gratitude during the 24th annual meeting of the*

*Brookside Gardens Chapter on the first day of December in the year 2003.*

Donald H. Voss is an economist by training, and an active gardener with a scholarly interest in azaleas and rhododendrons. He is an expert on the azaleas of Robert Gartrell (Robin Hill hybrids). Don says he has been interested in ornamentals since the 1930s, but that he must attribute a preoccupation with azaleas to meeting the Gartrells in late 1946, after which he became a frequent visitor. He is also a former chairman of the Society's board of directors and a former keeper of the Society's database. Don currently volunteers at the Herbarium of the U.S. National Arboretum. He has been a member of the Society since 1980 and is a regular contributor to *The Azalean*. In fact, since 1984 he has contributed 25



articles to the journal, covering such wide-ranging topics as the definition of what an azalea is, Robin Hill hybrid names and origins, horticultural nomenclature, the life cycle of the evergreen azalea, color perception, and horticultural information on the Web (with Bob Stelloh) and azalea-sporting research (with Richard West).

## My First Encounters with Azaleas and Rhododendrons

John Migas — Saugatuck, Michigan

*[With this article and the following one by the late Charles Mann, John Migas begins the story of how well azaleas do in Michigan, to prepare the Society for the ASA convention to be held in Holland, Michigan, in 2005, Ed.]*

It was the first weekend in May 1985. I had just closed on my home here in Saugatuck, Michigan. Being my first home, I was really excited. I had discovered this house in February when the weather was very cold, with a lot of snow cover. It wasn't until that warm spring day in May that I really could get a good look around the house. After moving in some furniture and having a late breakfast, Dad and I decided to take a walk around.

"Wow," I thought. "I just bought a house in the country, with a wood-burning stove, almost two acres, and only one neighbor, who lived across the road." Having grown up in the city, I was on Cloud Nine.

As we walked around, we noticed the grass—what little there was—needed cutting. We also noticed that there were a lot of weeds, brush, wild sumac, wild blackberry

bushes, and sassafras. At the time I don't think I knew what I was getting myself into. As for my Dad, bless his heart, he started yanking some sassafras, sumac, and honeysuckle out and within a few hours we had the yard looking better already.

I started to cut grass and Dad started the grill. After lunch it was back to clearing. We decided to clear out an area not too far from behind the house that had two bushes with big weird looking green leaves on them. We yanked and yanked and yanked and just couldn't budge this weird looking bush. As we attempted again and again, our first visitors arrived, my cousin Betty and her husband Joe. As they approached, she asked what we were doing. We told them we were clearing some of the brush away from the house and that this big green bush