

In Memorium

Remembrances of Jane Newman

From NVA "Azalea Clipper" July 2017

Barry Sperling: I always enjoyed talking with Jane and once asked how it all got started. She told me that the man who worked on her car invited her over to see his azaleas. She particularly liked 'Quakeress' and that remained a favorite. I remember the huge plants in her driveway (12' tall or more) that showed the possibilities when they are cared for as she could. As you will read below, Jane was a stalwart of the NVA Chapter who helped to make our meetings a gathering of experts as well as friends. We'll all miss her and think of her.



▲ Jane Newman

Dan Krabill: The Northern Virginia Chapter and the Azalea Society of America lost a very good friend and great azalea person with the death of Jane Newman on May 16, 2017 at the age of 91 at her home in Great Falls, Virginia. Jane joined the ASA in 1979 and was a founding member of the Northern Virginia Chapter. She was an avid collector of azaleas, growing many hundreds of varieties in her garden. She was particularly interested in the Glenn Dale collection of 454 varieties, of which she grew and photographed the great majority and was one of the premier experts. Jane happily shared her plant material and knowledge with chapter members and others. She was a very active participant at the ASA's Harding Garden at the American Horticulture Society for many years, both in weekly work sessions and regularly donating plants that one participant described at the time as being "bigger than Jane." She was a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of *The Azalean* from 1993 through 2012, and wrote articles for it for years. In recognition of all this, the ASA awarded Jane the Distinguished Service Award at its 2009 convention.

One of my favorite memories of Jane is a phone call I got from her years ago in which she said, "Come over and dig it up." She was referring to the hard-to-find Glenn Dale azalea 'Pied Piper', from which she had previously provided me with cuttings several times and which I had been singularly unsuccessful in rooting. We will miss Jane's good humor, sharp wit, knowledge, and generosity.

Don Hyatt: I knew Jane for many years but she never shared too much about herself with me. We just talked azaleas. I do know that 'Quakeress' was the plant that sparked her interest and started it all. She had a huge plant on her driveway loop and I planted the variety at my street edge as a remembrance of her. She was probably one of the best people we ever had for azalea identification. She studied her azaleas very closely, especially the Glenn Dales. I was sure she could tell all 454 Glenn Dales apart by sight, even at a distance of 20 ft. :) Jane and I discussed battling deer and we had mutual interests in companion plants. She did take loads of pictures of her azaleas but she was very "camera shy" herself. She didn't want her own picture taken.

Jane's Unique Design Idea

Don Hyatt reported this very clever idea of Jane Newman's for grouping hostas, but a similar idea could work for azaleas—as a change from arranging them by hybrid groups, colors, or season of bloom: Jane decided to arrange her hostas in her garden in small clusters according to some general theme related to the name. For instance, she liked putting all the hostas named for foods together like 'Guacamole,' 'Gumdrop,' 'Espresso,' and 'Ribbon Candy'. Those that were named for song titles were planted together like 'White Christmas,' 'Rhapsody in Blue', and 'Tiny Dancer'. Those whose names related to US history were planted together like 'Patriot', 'Liberty', 'Independence Day', and 'American Eagle'.

In Memory of Jim Thornton

Hale Booth—Signal Mountain, TN

Jim Thornton was a real bulldog. I don't say that just because he lived near the home of the University of Georgia Bulldogs. Jim had an amazing ability to tackle big projects, get a good grip and hold on to whatever it was till he could shape it to what he wanted. I think he is the only person who has ever written an article for *The Azalean* about pruning azaleas with a chainsaw.

Jim was well respected in the ASA for his years of service as vice president (1995-1997) and president (1997-1999) of our organization. He helped charter the Oconee Chapter in 1991 and worked with it until it closed in 2015 and helped organize both the 1997 Atlanta and 2013 Athens conventions. In 2013, he was awarded the society's Distinguished Service Award. His long record of work, coupled with his ability to bulldog tasks, led to Jim being the logical choice to be charged with organizing what would become the society's highly successful azalea research program. Jim Thornton organized what was initially named the ASA Azalea Research Foundation Committee and composed of members that were appointed by the ASA board. We never had a meeting. He was the first chairman of this committee. Jim saw to it that

everything was done by email. Jim never seemed to sleep. We would get emails from him at all hours, often beginning around 5 am. After a few hours Jim would be following up politely hounding us to respond to his ideas. "Hey y'all anybody out there?" There was a lot to do to actually turn a research program idea into a real ASA program. Jim tasked us with developing areas of focus based on input from members: figuring



▲ Jim Thornton

out what questions to ask in a research proposal; how to rank proposals; when to take applications; how to raise money; figuring out how much we could afford to award and so on. Often, I and others would get a phone call from Jim to discuss these various issues. Through his efforts within a year we had organized our azalea research program, solicited proposals, and were on our way to making our first research grants on behalf of ASA within a few months. Jim stepped down from the committee chairmanship after this first year of organization and development, but remained an active and supportive committee member until his unfortunate death in early July 2017.

Jim was very dedicated to the society and would volunteer to tackle many jobs that most of us would more likely want to dodge. One of my fondest memories was seeing this intense looking man that turned out to be Jim come roaring up to the 2013 convention hotel in Athens, Georgia, in a pickup truck that was literally groaning under the weight of a huge helter-skelter mound of azaleas in the back bed. The plant sale had arrived.

I doubt that I will ever need to crank up my chainsaw to prune my azaleas, but Jim Thornton with the support of his wife Patsy gave much to the Azalea Society of America and a lot of that gift was as a dedicated role model from which many of us have benefitted.

In Memory of Kathleen L. Van Veen

Courtesy of Van Veen Nursery website and The Oregonian

Kathy Van Veen (Jan. 6, 1947 - April 26, 2017), of the Van Veen Nursery in Portland, OR, joined the ASA as an at-large member in 1985. She also advertised in *The Azalean* and on the Sources page on the ASA web, specializing in rhododendrons and azaleas, custom propagation, heritage trees, and promising "80-year-old rhododendrons... and the Japanese version of rhododendrons in America."

The nursery had been started by her grandfather, Theodore Van Veen, Sr. in 1926 "...as a means of supplying his landscape clients." A native of The Netherlands, he was a forward thinker who produced cutting-grown rhododendrons in his nursery. The operation passed down to his son Ted in 1961, and then to granddaughter Kathy in 2003. According to the nursery's website, she carried on



▲ Kathy Van Veen

the knowledge of her ancestors and was said to have been able to "root a pencil." She was active with the American Rhododendron Society and was awarded the ARS Gold Medal in 2011.

She attended the University of Washington in Seattle where she ran track and graduated with a doctorate. She was a life-long member of Mensa. Rhododendrons were Kathy's life. Her career began when she was still in high school, working part time at the Van Veen Nursery, moving to full time after college, and taking control in 2003. With her work and innovations in rhododendron propagation, she soon became a respected leader in the international rhododendron community, following in the family's footsteps.

Kathy also served as President of the Portland Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society and Chair of Friends of Crystal Springs Rhododendron Garden. She never stopped learning and teaching about rhododendrons, and always enjoyed volunteering on the subject. In addition to the nursery, Kathy loved her family and friends, her several cats, and her two garrulous cockatiels. She regularly jogged to the top of Mt. Tabor, had a wicked sense of humor, a ready smile, and walked her daily errands. She was always happy and found humor everywhere.

LOST Aromi Azaleas

The Aromi Legacy Project is seeking members' help in locating any (crossing fingers for all), of the following hybrids: 'Four Sisters', 'Indian Yellow', 'Jack of Hearts', 'Sundown', 'Lavender Lad', 'Red Echo', 'Red Embers', 'Salmon Sequin', 'Sea Spray', 'September Song', or 'Twilight Queen'. If you have, or know a location for, any of these, please contact Sherrie Randall, Aromi Legacy project lead, at: frecklesr1@hotmail.com.