



All Hallows Herald

All Hallows Guild—Stewards to the Gardens and Grounds of
Washington National Cathedral

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Thanksgiving Issue 2010

A Salute to the All Hallows Guild Garden Committee



Some AHG Garden Committee Members in the Bishop's Garden with the Horticulture Staff. Front Row: Anne Elsbree; Kay Diane Bowles; Mary Evelyn Dean-Mead; Peggy Steuart, Garden Chair, and Deanne Eversmeyer, Horticulture Manager. Back Row: Anne Wiebe; Patti Beatty, Julie White and Joe Luebke, Director of Horticulture.

The Garden Committee of All Hallows Guild has been the heart of the Guild from the beginning. Florence Brown Bratenahl, the founder of All Hallows Guild, created the garden guild of the Cathedral. She was the wife of the Cathedral Dean, George C.F. Bratenahl. Dean Bratenahl served Bishop Satterlee as he chose the Cathedral land and laid out the future Cathedral buildings with Olmsted Brothers, the foremost landscape firm in America. Dean Bratenahl was responsible for knowing and implementing the smallest and the largest details and carrying out the ideas of the Cathedral Board, the Bishop, and Olmsted Brothers. Mrs. Bratenahl voluntarily undertook to implement a tiny part of the plan, the landscaping of the Bishop's house, newly constructed in 1916 on the Cathedral Close and rising next to St. Alban's Church, All Hallows' Gate and chapel, the first building of the Girls' School and the Lane Johnson building of the Boys' School.

With foresight and great energy Mrs. Bratenahl never stopped in her efforts to have All Hallows Guild implement

the Olmsted plan. As head of the Garden Committee (1916-1928) she gave talks about the landscape in cities along the East Coast, collecting donations for the plantings. By the time of the General Convention in 1928 the garden of the Bishop's house was planted and it was opened to the public for a few days on that celebratory occasion. In it were plants mentioned in the Bible, ancient Gothic sculptures, an enclosed Hortulus garden of medieval herbs, and cedars brought from the Holy Land. The Bishop's vegetable garden and clothes drying area originally indicated were in the end left out.

Over the following eight decades with greater and lesser involvement of the Garden Committee the hillside of Mt. Alban became the exquisite 59 acres of today. Today the Garden Committee meets the third Monday of the month at 1 pm in the Cathedral Library. Reports from the members on Memorials, the Woodlands, Communications and the Bishop's Garden Docent Program are given. Director of Horticulture Joe Luebke reports on what is happening to thousands of native trees, historic boxwoods, lawns, playing fields, perennial borders, the West Front, the Woodlands, and Amphitheater. Changes or additions to the Garden are made deliberately and slowly with the history and planting ideas of Frederic Law Olmsted, Jr., and Florence Bratenahl as a guide and rule. A yearly budget for expenditures to maintain and beautify the grounds is proposed to the All Hallows Guild Board. Special projects and needs are proposed throughout the year to the Board. Committee members must be familiar with new good gardening practices, interesting plants and cultivars. They make trips to nurseries and gardens for information and stay apprised of educational opportunities for the members. The Garden Committee's practice has been to have one or two walk-arounds yearly with a consulting landscape architect to assess the state of the gardens.

Continued on page 3

A Salute to the All Hallows Guild Garden Committee (continued)

All Hallows Guild Garden Committee Chairmen

Mrs. G.C.F. Bratenahl, 1916-1928; Mrs. Daniel W. Knowlton, 1937-1946; Mrs. L. Corrin Strong, 1946-1949; Mrs. Julian A. Gascoigne, 1949-1950; Mrs. Elinor Donaldson, 1950-1951; Mrs. L. Corrin Strong, 1951-1952; Mrs. Julian A. Gascoigne, 1952-1953; Mrs. William L. Ritchie, 1953-1954; Mrs. James H. Douglas, 1954-1957; Mrs. Frank Gardiner Wisner, 1957; Mrs. Clayton Fritchey, 1957-1959; Mrs. Henry Porter, 1959-1962; Mrs. William Graham Clayton, 1962-1966; Mrs. Ned Russell, 1966-1980; Mrs. Sarah Broley, 1980-1985; Mrs. John L. Elsbree, 1985-1989; Mrs. William G. Miller, 1990-1993; Mrs. George D. Webster, 1993-1997; Mrs. Frances Lombard, 1997-1998; Mrs. Thomas E. Petri, 1998-2004; Mrs. Guy T. Steuart, II Co Chair 2002-05; Mrs. John L. Elsbree and Mrs. George D. Webster, 2005; Mrs. James A. Bensfield, 2005-2007; Mrs. Guy T. Steuart II, 2007-present.

Mrs. Bratenahl was a self-taught landscape designer, successful fundraiser and motivator, talented draftsman and artist. Today's Garden Committee is made up of many individuals with these same talents and this article is dedicated to the women who labor to preserve and maintain the cathedral grounds. Beginning with the current leadership of the committee, we will examine some of the committee's recent accomplishments and the members' responsibilities.

HEADING THE GARDEN COMMITTEE WITH VISION

Often the chairs have initiated and directed large landscape projects. Until recently, The Garden Committee Chair along with the AHG President served on the Building & Grounds Committee of the Cathedral. **Suzanne Miller** was chairman of the Garden Committee from 1990-1993 when the West Front ended its 70 years as a construction yard. She worked with the Building Committee and their chosen landscape architect Fay Harwell on the design for the renewal of the area as the oak grove setting of the main entrance to the Cathedral. **Mrs. George "Tuttie" Webster** (1993-1997) headed the committee when the restoration of the Olmsted Woods began. **Tuttie Webster** has said that her proudest moments as Garden Committee Chair came with

the beginning of the Olmsted Woods restoration. In 2007 the Guild completed the 10-year Olmsted Woods Restoration Project under the dynamic direction of **Dede Petri** and **Anne Elsbree** (both served as Garden Committee Chairs). Just under \$3 million was spent on the revitalization of the woods and the complete renovation of the outdoor amphitheater by All Hallows Guild. Under the leadership of **Llewellyn Bensfield** (2005-2007) the committee provided considerable guidance to the Cathedral Chapter as the North Front was replanted on top of the underground parking garage. When asked: "Historically, what do you think has been the most important role that the Garden Committee has played?" she answered "Historically, I think that constant vigilance to the maintenance of the grounds by dedicated volunteers and donors has allowed the grounds to flourish even when the economy flounders."

Today the Committee Chair is **Mrs. Guy T. "Peggy" Steuart, II**. Peggy, a Garden Committee member for many years and past president of the Guild is very familiar with every nook and cranny of the Cathedral grounds. Recently, a "walk-around" in the Bishop's Garden by the committee revealed areas in need of renewal. Subsequently, **Peggy Steuart** recommended to the AHG Board that a revitalization of certain areas of the garden was necessary. Michael Vergason, Landscape Architect for the North Front and the Amphitheater, was retained to revisit the vision and plans of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and Mrs. Bratenahl, and to provide the Guild with a concept, suggestions for plantings and design proposals. The Spring 2011 Herald will offer the specifics of this Bishop's Garden revitalization plan.

GARDEN DOCENT PROGRAM & GARDEN EDUCATION

In the mid 1980's, **Polly Mitchell** started on her journey of getting to know the gardens by working with the garden tour program. Until that time **Mary Russell** (Chairman 1966-1980) was one of the few people to give tours. Polly was soon joined by **Tuttie Webster** who was responsible for enlarging the committee into a dedicated group of volunteers. Tour information was prepared through research provided by **Suzanne Miller** studying Olmsted Brothers drawings for the gardens at the Library of Congress, the written files at "Fairsted," Olmsted's office in Brookline, Massachusetts, and the Cathedral's own files. Tours are now regularly scheduled. A self-guided tour brochure by **Polly Mitchell** and other garden docents with drawings by Babs Gaillard McNear is still in use. Seasonal blooming notes and docent educational materials have been diligently prepared each year by Mary Louise Thompson and Anne Roulhac. A slide show of the gardens and Close in different seasons was created, featuring photographs by Alexandra Scott. The slide show gave impetus for a calendar in color titled "Gardens of Washington Cathedral." **Polly Mitchell**



Nancy Symington, Joanne Murphy, Tuttie Webster

Remembering Peter A. McLachlan By Anne Elsbree



Peter A. McLachlan died this September. He was living in Colorado with his wife Margaret and close to their daughter, Leslie Ann. Pete was the Cathedral Horticulturist for 31 years. He came to the Cathedral in January, 1961. He was born in Scotland and received his horticultural training at Kew Gardens in London. During his time at the Cathedral Pete managed the Cathedral Greenhouse and supervised the beautification and maintenance of the grounds. He worked closely with All Hallows Guild and especially the Garden Committee. His knowledge of plants and their care was extensive and many of us on the Garden Committee learned a great deal from him. Working with Peter in the Greenhouse, propagating herbs from the gardens, inspired me to go back to school and become a landscape designer. When Pete retired in 1992 he was given a service in the

Cathedral Great Choir with a reception on the Bishop's Lawn. He was also honored by All Hallows Guild with a luncheon and with the fountain in the shape of a Scottish Thistle which is in the Norman Court.

The family is planning a service for Pete at the Cathedral in the spring. Condolences can be sent to Mrs. Peter McLachlan, Apt. 211, 1336 Hexcla Drive, Louisville, CO 80027

The above photo taken at the Dedication of Thistle sculpture & Fountain (1994) donated by All Hallows Guild to honor Peter McLachlan (second from left). The carving is Aquia Creek sandstone. Jay Hall Carpenter, Sculptor-in-Residence for more than 20 years, sculpted a clay model and it was carved by Master Stone Carver, Vincent Palumbo (far right). Also present—Peggy Steuart, Guild President and Joe Alonso, Head Mason.

Elizabeth “Betty” May—AHG Past President, Flower Mart Chair and Benefactor

Mrs. Ernest N. “Betty” May, Jr. died at her home on November 1st—All Saints Day. Betty joined All Hallows Guild in 1967. Two years later, she not only chaired Flower Mart, but served as President of the Guild from 1969 to 1972.

Always a staunch supporter of the Guild and its mission, Betty will also long be remembered for her generosity and graciousness in opening her home and gardens for meetings, luncheons, and for more than ten years, wonderfully popular White Elephant Collection Coffees. Betty personally greeted each guest who came bearing a prized gift for the White Elephant Sale at the Mart. A lovely buffet set in her beautiful home encouraged people to search their attics, garages and china cupboards for that perfect item that would tempt the thousands of shoppers eager for a treasure. All of this was for the benefit of the Cathedral gardens which she loved so much.

In 1997, Betty dedicated (paid for the restoring and decorating of) a carousel horse for the Guild's antique carousel, which delights young and old at Flower Mart. Her horse was given in memory of Betty's childhood horse named “My Chum.”

In 2007, the Bratenahl Award for outstanding contributions over many years to Flower Mart was given to Betty May in appreciation of her constant and continuing support of the gardens and grounds of Washington National Cathedral. We at All Hallows Guild will long remember our friend, President and benefactor—Betty May.

Betty's family has asked that contributions be made in her memory to:

www.allhallowsguild.org/donate

Two new additions to the Cathedral's Horticulture Staff

The Horticulture Department welcomed two new staff members this year, Deanne Eversmeyer, Horticulture Manager, and Toni Kislear, Bishop's Gardener. Deanne came to the cathedral from Washington Golf and Country Club (from which she had a gorgeous view of Mount Alban!). She has a Horticulture degree from Virginia Tech and lives in Falls Church. She is excited and challenged by the amazingly varied plantings and terrains of the Close-from the gardens surrounding the cathedral and the fields of the schools, to the Beauvoir vegetable garden and the green roof at St. Albans.



Left—Deanne Eversmeyer. Right—Toni Kislear. Fall Bishop's Garden

Toni, though new to her position since March, was previously a zone gardener for two years. She first came to the Cathedral as a summer intern (sponsored by AHG) while a student at Penn State, from which she has a degree in Landscape Contracting and Horticulture. Her favorite part of the Bishop's Garden is the Norman Walk, because of her special affection for ferns and other shade plants.

Flower Mart 2011—It is Austria!!



▲ Planning Flower Mart 2011 At the Austrian Embassy—
Front row: 1 to r—Andrea Schrammell, Ulrike Wiesner.
Back row: 1 to r—Christina Bordeaux, Boucie Addison.

We are fortunate that Flower Mart 2011 will have His Excellency, Dr. Christian Prosl, Austrian Ambassador to the United States, as its Honorary Chairman and Austria its honored country. Planning has already begun for our next Flower Mart, held May 6 & 7. Co-Chairs. Christina Bordeaux and Boucie Addison went to the Austrian Embassy and met with Andrea Schrammell, Counselor for Cultural Affairs and Ulrike Wiesner, interpreter and President, American-Austrian Cultural Society. Also, present at the meeting were Debbie Page and Dee Skillern of the Flower Mart Advisory Committee.

Committee positions are currently being filled, if you would like the experience and fun of working on Washington's favorite springtime fundraiser, call Debbie Page at : 202 387-2979.

Note: Austria has sponsored Flower Mart one other time—in 1961. 1 to r: Bishop Dunn, Mrs. John F. Kennedy, honorary chair, and Mrs. David Yerkes, Chair. ▶



A Salute to the All Hallows Guild Garden Committee from page 3

edited and produced the popular calendar for fourteen years from 1985-1998. At Sandy Scott's request, AHG brought to publication Sandy's book "The Soul in Balance." The book was a great success and is still on sale at the Herb Cottage as is the "Garden Guide For Families" written by **Dede Petri**.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

One of the Garden Committee's most important contributions to the landscape has been the donation of pro-bono landscape design advice. The committee is fortunate to have landscape designers whose expertise is invaluable in choosing plant material and new garden designs. **Sarah Broley** (Chair, 1980-85) was trained by John Brooke. **Suzanne Miller** attended Radcliffe Landscape Design Seminars. Currently, three have a degree in Landscape Design from George Washington University: **Anne Elsbree**, **Judy Peabody**, **Sally Boasberg**. **Sally Boasberg** came to the attention of All Hallows Guild when as the head of NCS's Facilities Commit-

tee, she coordinated the renovation of Hearst Hall and its grounds (1985-86). When asked what over-riding thoughts come into play when selecting plants for the Close Sally is candidly pragmatic: "What will work," she says. "We cannot garden as has been done in the past, we have to be aware of plantings that are relatively disease-free and low maintenance. Go for general effect rather than focusing on specific plants".

Judith Peabody and **Sally Boasberg** collaborated in the recent re-design of the Nitze Garden. **Sarah Broley**, working with Head Horticulturalist Pete McLachlan, designed a new planting plan for the upper perennial border using new hybrids to extend the blooming season and make the colors and textures of the garden more brilliant and more subtle. Sarah and Pete MacLachlan also designed the Huidekoper border and determined that the border should be predominately blue in color. **Anne Elsbree** (Garden Committee Chair 1985-1989), as Co Chair of the Olmsted Woods and Amphitheatre Restoration worked closely with arborists, erosion experts, and the landscape architect, Michael Vergason, planning bed design for the amphitheater, new trees, and removal of exotics in the woods.

More than 30 years ago, Anne supervised the renovation of the Bratenahl House Garden. The Cathedral had repurchased the property (built by Dean and Mrs. Bratenahl) to be the residence of the new Cathedral Provost.



Sally Boasberg, Judith Peabody, Suzanne Miller, and Anne Elsbree

HISTORIANS, WRITERS, AND PUBLICISTS

Having institutional memory is a valuable resource for the Cathedral. It is extremely important to the Garden Committee members that we accurately remember what went on before, to make good decisions about what to do today. **Suzanne Miller** is the acknowledged historian for the grounds and indeed the Guild as well. Her writings and charming stories have not only delighted, but informed. Her writing of the histories of the gardens and grounds for the All Hallows Guild's website are a wonderful gift for all who visit there (www.allhallowsguild.org). **Joanne Murphy** handled the communications for the Garden Committee including the Olmsted Woods and the Amphitheater for many years. In 1998, **Nancy Symington** accomplished a huge task by researching and describing the 43 "Plaques, Artifacts, Statues and Fountains in the Bishop's Garden and Elsewhere on the Cathedral Close." Originally written for Garden Docent information, it is an invaluable resource for all those wanting to study the gardens.

MEMORIALS & DEDICATIONS

Louise Beale has been a Garden Committee member since 1993. In the Memorials leadership position she deals with special gifts to the gardens. This includes benches, flowers, trees and objects for placement within the gardens. It also is a very personal and touching position in which she assists families with their privately planned ceremonies and remembrances in the gardens as they dedicate a garden gift. Louise has seen music, prayers and salutations given by these donors and she has found the experience especially fulfilling. Louise's mother, **Mrs. William L. Ritchie**, now deceased, was Garden Committee Chair, 1953-1954.

All Hallows Garden Committee 2010-2012

Mrs. Guy T. Steuart, II Chair

Members: Louise Beale, Patti Beatty, Llewellyn Bensfield, Sally Boasberg, Kay Diane Bowles, Lisa Dale, Anne Elsbree, Fran Lewis, Suzanne Miller, Polly Mitchell, Joanne Murphy, Judith Peabody, Dede Petri, Nancy Symington, Tuttie Webster, Julie White and Anne Wiebe.

We have named only a few of the dedicated members and achievements of the AHG Garden Committee over 94 years. Names, faces and events since 1916 sometimes fade, but now in the 21st century the continuing beauty of the 59-acre Close in a snowy winter or a lush springtime endures. Committee members, one and all, are devoted to our mission - their work is indeed the heart of All Hallows Guild.

The Medlar—A Taste of the Middle Ages

By Jeff Sypeck

Few pilgrims notice the tree near the northeast corner of the Bishop's Garden, but its fruit is notably hideous: small, reddish, rock-hard, with tentacle-like sepals encircling a grim hole that renders it all the more unappealing. Even so, this tree, the medlar—*Mespilus germanica*—boasts a pedigree that helps root the garden firmly in the medieval past.

In a ninth-century decree, the Emperor Charlemagne ordered the medlar to be grown on royal estates—but then as now, this strange tree demanded patience. Its seemingly rotten fruit undergoes “bletting,” or ripening, only after the first autumn frost, taking two to three weeks to become mushy and edible—whether it’s left on the vine or plucked and then stored amid sawdust and hay. Medieval people treated wounds and upset stomachs with medlar (even though one modern food historian warns against the fruit’s “violent laxative properties”), and medlar mixed with wine was thought to serve as an antidote to poison. Its place in the medieval garden is also attested in art: Visitors to The Cloisters in New York City can spot a medlar in one of the museum’s famous Unicorn Tapestries.



Whatever its practical value, the medlar also inspired humor. The French and English gave it obscene nicknames, and the elderly Reeve in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* ruefully likened it to old men: “Til we be roten, kan we nat be rype.” In the centuries that followed, Shakespeare cited the medlar as a symbol of rottenness; more recently, D.H. Lawrence

simultaneously praised and reviled the fruit in a 1921 poem, “Medlars and Sorb-apples,” in which he contemplated these “wineskins of brown morbidity” that hold “the distilled essence of hell.”

This fall, with the permission of the All Hallows Guild, I’ll harvest some medlar fruit and try to recreate a taste, literally, of early modern England. Digging into a cookbook from 1596, I’ll adapt a tart recipe that mixes “rotten” medlars with eggs, cinnamon, sugar, and ginger. Like most centuries-old recipes, this one is short on quantities and proportions, so these medlar tarts will be the result of trial and error—the same process faced, no doubt, by medieval cooks.

Florence Bratenahl imagined a “Garden for the Ages,” a place that fostered “a kinship with the best traditions of a

great past.” The medlar is a wry reminder that we’re bound to the Middle Ages by homely traditions, too, whether we’re gardeners, or poets, or hungry pilgrims passing on our way.

Note: Jeff Sypeck, a 16-year Cleveland Park resident, teaches medieval literature at the University of Maryland University College and is the author of the 2006 book *Becoming Charlemagne*. Watch for our Spring Issue and more about the medlar from Mr. Sypeck.



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A Fall Beauty



This magnificent Ginkgo (maiden hair tree) is located outside the Cathedral's Administration Building on the North side. According to Joe Luebke, Director of Horticulture, it was planted by former Head Gardener, Pete McLachlan. The Ginkgo is the last member of a family of trees common in prehistoric times, and was, in fact, thought to be extinct in the wild until rediscovered in the 17th century in eastern China. It is immediately recognizable by its columnar shape and graceful fan-shaped leaves which turn a lovely yellow in autumn and fall shortly thereafter. The Fall color show is regrettably short, so watch for it late October, early November.

Family: Ginkgoaceae

Would You Like to Help?

It takes funds to preserve and renew historic gardens. To learn more about the Guild's work, visit our website:
www.allhallowsguild.org

Your donation is gratefully received online or by mail: AHG Office, Washington National Cathedral, Wisconsin & Mass. Aves., NW, Washington, DC 20016