

GROSSE POINTE GARDEN CENTER, INC.  
50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION  
GROSSE POINTE WAR MEMORIAL  
January 21, 2000

Today, we are here to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Grosse Pointe Garden Center. There have been 26 presidents, each serving a two year term except for three who have been in office for one year. Karen Hostetter has held the privilege of serving two times. The presidents are listed on the back of your program.

Under reflections in the program, I have listed some points of interest to which I will refer in my talk. This will be followed by a slide presentation and conclude with a short talk and slides of the Children's Garden by Chairman, Norah Williams.

The Grosse Pointe Garden Center originated from the Garden and Grounds Committee chaired by Mr. Vincent DePetris on September of 1949, when the Grosse Pointe War Memorial was formed. Headquarters was then and still is, Mrs. Algers former bedroom on the second floor of the Alger House. Representative of nine clubs made up the original committee. There were: Garden Club of Michigan, Little Garden Club, Grosse Pointe Women's Farm and Garden, Junior League, Grosse Pointe Garden Club, Ibex, Grosse Pointe Park Garden Club, Pointe Garden Club and Grosse Pointe Woods Garden Club. *(old & new)* 7

The purpose of the Garden and Grounds Committee was the maintenance and care of the Alger Gardens. A donation from each club was used until the War Memorial was established.

Within a year and a half the Grosse Pointe Garden Center was born with officers and a set of Bylaws. Miss Marie Louise Anderson became the first president and Mr. DePetris, the advisor and first Honorary Member.

Miss Anderson served on the Board for 24 years. Following her presidency she served as Membership Chairman for about twenty years. Her vision for the Center was to have 1,000 members and 1,000 book in the library.

Those early years were busy ones for the Center. There were dreams of a "test garden" for new flowers, getting volunteers to be present in the office, and what exhibits and programs to have.

In 1951 the Garden Center co-sponsored an open meeting for the community with the Grosse Pointe Garden Council on Dutch elm disease. In October, they had a chrysanthemum show throughout the rooms of the War Memorial. Each garden club and several local florists donated arrangements, and specimen plants by Mr. DePetris.

In December there was a Christmas Decoration lecture by Mrs. Schultee from the Cleveland Garden Center.

By 1952 active membership of \$1.00 was available to the community and a test garden (40' x 80'), was planted in the spring. In June, the 18<sup>th</sup> century granite millstone, once used by the Windmill Pointe Grist Mill, was donated to the Trial Gardens by Mr. George Lauhoff. Landscape architect, Eleanor Roche, was commissioned to design the gardens. She chose a wheel design with flower beds radiating from the millstone in the center.

The Trial Gardens have always been planted by members of the Grosse Pointe garden clubs. In the beginning, the interest was testing new bulbs and plants. Gradually, the testing concept was replaced by one of aesthetics, color schemes and theme gardens. There was a period when required heights of flowers was important and only a select garden committee did the planting. Seeds were started by members' gardeners in private greenhouses.

Through the years the Trial Gardens had problems with watering and drainage, weather was too hot for the flowers, white flies, rabbits devouring the plants and children riding bicycles through the gardens.

Improvements were gradually made through the financing of the Center, contributions and from the Garden and Grounds Committee. Brick walks were installed, a large perennial bed was added, the hillside was landscaped, and a retaining wall added. The War Memorial installed a sprinkling system which was gratefully received.

In 1958 the Trial Gardens won a national award for outstanding achievement in the field of horticulture by the Federated Garden Clubs of Michigan. This was the highest national award for a group project. At the time of this presentation, the gardens included 2 large iris beds where the perennial bed is now located and a large herb garden. There were also gravel paths.

This was not the first award received by the Grosse Pointe Garden Center. In 1955 they won three awards: two were from The National Farm and Garden Association for the best staged Flower Show and Best Scrapbook. The third award was from the Michigan Horticultural Society: an Award of Merit for sustained superior performance for the past four years.

In 1952 the lecture file was created. It was a listing of outstanding speakers and programs both locally, as well as nationally. This information was gathered from members and garden centers from other states. This was a source from which the Center obtained many of their speakers for their programs.

The spring lecture series were held on Wednesdays using local garden club members as speakers, as well as local experts in the field of gardening and horticulture. Programs were often preceded by lunch. Mrs. McGinty, in charge of the food at the War Memorial, prepared such delicious dishes that she was made an Honorary Member as long as she was employed by the War Memorial.

Money has always been needed to run the Garden Center. The house tours began 1953. They were not only popular but a good source of income. For many years J.L. Hudson's furnished, free of charge, the tickets and brochures for this event. The many flower shows and

horticultural exhibits were proud events that displayed the skills of the exhibitors. Mrs. Alger's love of roses led to the rose garden contests in the area. Another money making endeavor was the Fair on The Green where plants, garden related articles, even baked goods were sold. This event was held outdoors and each garden club participated.

By 1958 our membership reached 1,010 and remained in that range for the next ten years. Another important event took place in the fall of 1959. Mrs. Raymond Berry gave the Center \$300 as a memorial for her husband, to be used for horticultural programs and educational projects. By June of 1960 the fund, through donations, had grown to \$2,008.44 and ready for the first Berry Memorial Lecture. Later, when Mrs. Berry died, she willed \$10,000 to the Garden Center to further perpetuate the fund.

The first Berry Memorial lecture was quite an exciting event. Mrs. John Knight, from Cuyahoga, Ohio, presented a Christmas lecture and demonstration entitled, "Holiday Enchantment" in celebration of the Center's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Panic time set in when 325 reservations were received. Frantically, the location had to be changed from the War Memorial to South High School. There was a lot of telephoning plus announcements in the papers. The War Memorial Director, Mr. Lake, stationed one of the gardeners at the gate to direct traffic to the high school. A shuttle service was set up. Christine Edwards lined up ten cars with drivers from members of the Board, and two contributing services of chauffeured cars. It was felt by all that Christine should have been awarded the rank of a 5-star general. There were over 400 to view the program followed by a beautiful tea at the War Memorial.

In February 1961, Mrs. Hansel Wilson, former President of the Center, competed in a flower show at Cobo Hall and won top prize for her arrangement. She received a trip to England to the Chelsea Flower Show where she did an invitational arrangement and became a fellow of the Royal Horticulture Society.

In May 1961, active dues were raised to \$2.00. Mrs. Stevenson donated a birdbath with a figurine to the Trial Gardens. In 1962, \$2,000 was given to the War Memorial for planting by the Fries Auditorium.

In 1966 our first scholarship of \$500.00 was given to Dr. Duane Green from Michigan State University for his study of Horticultural plants. This student was selected by Dr. John Carew, Chairman of the Department of Horticulture at Michigan State University. Dr. Carew was most helpful in future years in selecting the recipients of our scholarships. He was so well appreciated that he too was made an honorary member of the Garden Center.

In 1972, in place of the regular House Tour, the Garden Center in conjunction with the War Memorial, provided hostesses for the Tour of the Dodge House, Rose Terrace. This proved to be very profitable. \$17,291.26 was made and divided between each organization. From our profit we were able to give \$4,000.00 to Cottage Hospital for landscaping their roof garden for convalescing patients and \$4,000 to Bon Secour Hospital for landscaping of their new emergency entrance. \$500 was also given to the Detroit Garden Center.

Also in 1972, new brick walkways were installed in the Trial Garden but not finished in time to plant the gardens and 1,200 white petunias were planted around the Center. Mrs. Douglas Campbell won a national photo contest sponsored by Horticulture Magazine and her photo appeared on the cover of it's fall issue.

In 1978 our founding father, Mr. Vincent DePetris died. He was a nationally known hybridizer of chrysanthemums, landscaper, gardener and owner of a local nursery. In 1979 the DePetris Memorial Fund was established to be used for the Trial Gardens. A big solicitation campaign began to reach a goal of \$30,000.00. Each Center member was contacted and Elizabeth Parcells performed a special concert to raise money. There were 250 donors and Mrs. Mark Stevens was the "Fairy Godmother" to help us reach our goal.

In 1980 under Judy Bigelow's guidance, a 36" x 24" needlepoint hearth rug was created by several members of the Board for a raffle. The rug has six frames each with a different flower. It is now hanging over the fireplace in the Garden Center Room. Judy won the raffle and graciously gave it to the Garden Center.

In honor of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Fran Parcells created a beautiful brochure in color for the Garden Center. This was done in 1980.

One of the nicest honors a person can receive is to name a garden or a place in his or her name. Two of our members are so honored. One is Millie Allen. "Milly's Way" is the pathway on the hillside garden. The other is The Grace Adams Harrison Children's Garden in honor of Grace. Certainly, our Berry and DePetris Memorial Funds honor some dear friends. The most recent tribute was established in 1996; The Sue Abbott Tribute Fund, by her family and friends for a yearly program on flower arranging. Sue was an outstanding flower arranger and Garden Center member.

*Funds  
Trial  
Gardens*

In 1990 there was great interest in merging with the Council of Grosse Pointe Garden Clubs. Through the years the two organizations worked closely together, each being represented on both boards.

The Garden Council began in 1948. Their main interest was a medium through which various garden clubs may co-operate in better service to the community. On the top of the list was beautification. Most of the crabapple trees and other trees along Lakeshore Drive were planted by the Council. 1955 was the first sale of crabapple trees and mass a planting of 738 trees. There was forum on Dutch Elm Disease co-sponsored with the Garden Center. The garden tours began in 1974 and the Trial Gardens were included beginning in the 1980's.

Many of the same people were active in both organizations. Mrs. Frederick Schumann was the first President of the Council. She was active in the Garden Center and later President of the Detroit Garden Center. Mrs. David Lowe was Garden Tour Chairman for the Council and House Tour Chairman for the Garden Center. The second median on Lakeshore is landscaped in memory of her from funds of the Center and Council. When Mrs. Mann died, a crabapple

tree was planted in the Trial Garden in her memory. She was on the Center Board and President of the Council.

The Council of Grosse Pointe Garden Clubs was dissolved in the fall of 1991 because beautification of the Pointes was in the hands of the Beautification Commissions in each municipality.

The union of the Center and Council did take place. The only change was a new set of ByLaws. The Garden Center kept its name and both Memorial Funds, the Eska and Raymond Berry Fund and the DePetrus Fund.

I feel very fortunate in having served as President of both organizations. My garden was on the first and last Garden Tour of the Council; 1974 and 1991. I hosted the first meeting in regards to the merger and was Garden Tour Chairman of the new Garden Center in 1992 and I am pleased that the eight perennials that I donated to the new Perennial Bed in 1975 are still blooming.

In conclusion, I am happy to relate that the association with the War Memorial has been a very good one and hope it will continue for the next fifty years.

Mary Lou Boresch