

MID-ATLANTIC RHODODENDRON NEWS AND NOTES

A Publication of the Middle Atlantic Chapter of the American
Rhododendron Society

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September 2016

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

October 29, 2016

PVC Banquet at Normandie Farm

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Rhododendron Blog www.rhododendron.org/blog/

Friends of the National Arboretum <http://savetheazaleas.org/>

FONA's Save the Azaleas and Boxwood site

MAC FALL MEETING 2016 AT PIPESTEM RESORT by Rick Bauer

Thirty-eight members of the Middle Atlantic Chapter (MAC) experienced beautiful weather, breathtaking scenery, delicious food, excellent speakers and the camaraderie of fellow chapter members at the MAC Fall Meeting the 9th to 11th of September at Pipestem Resort in West Virginia.

Festivities began late Friday afternoon as chapter members converged on McKeever Lodge, the location of the weekend activities. McKeever sits on top of a bluff with beautiful views of the valley and distant mountain peaks. It is a modern, comfortable hotel with a rustic feel. There is an additional seasonal hotel in the park, Mountain Creek Lodge, which is reachable by aerial tramway. It also has what has been described as one of the best restaurants in West Virginia. Eight of us decided to try out the restaurant and were not disappointed. The food was delicious and we ordered a number of different desserts, which we all sampled. While we had a leisurely dinner, we were confident that we wouldn't be late for the evening's speaker as Don Hyatt was enjoying dinner with us.

We made our way back to the lodge and assembled with the other attendees for Don's presentation, "A Walk in the Woods," which highlighted many of the hikes Don and George McLellan sponsor each year in various locations throughout the southeast. As is normal with Don's presentations, we were treated to beautiful pictures

and a great deal of humor. Don included a number of photos taken during hikes up to 20 years ago. It was amazing to see the participants and how they hadn't changed (much) over the years. After Don's presentation, many of the attendees convened in the



Clockwise from bottom left: Paul James, Barbara Hall, Elissa Steeves, Debby Sauer, Rick and Susan Bauer, Don Hyatt, and Bill Bedwell.

hospitality room, while others (myself included) called it a day.

The next morning was cool and beautiful. Many of us enjoyed the views of the mountains and wildlife from the back deck of McKeever Lodge. We then moved indoors for a delicious buffet breakfast before we started the formal program for the day.

Julie McQuade, a naturalist at Pipestem Park, gave us an interesting talk on the park flora, starting

with invasive species we would see followed by native species. She also commented on the problem with our common nemesis, deer. Their appetite for younger plants is decimating some of the plant species. As a result, mature plants aren't available to replace those that eventually die. She stated that due to the growing problem, Pipestem had instituted their first controlled hunt.



Hotel meeting room. Photo by Don Hyatt.

Jeanne Hammer told us of a change to the day's scheduled events. We were supposed to visit the Cole Boxwood Nursery near Pipestem, however due to recent outbreaks of boxwood blight in a nearby garden, Norman Cole had closed his nursery to all visitors to help preclude spreading the disease to his nursery stock. Instead, Norman came to our location to give us a presentation on the diagnosis and treatment of boxwood blight. He also brought a number of boxwood plants to share with the members in attendance.

After Norman's presentation, we formed up into



Naturalist Julie McQuade provides park information to MAC members in Sandstone Falls Natural Area. Photo by Jeanne Hammer.

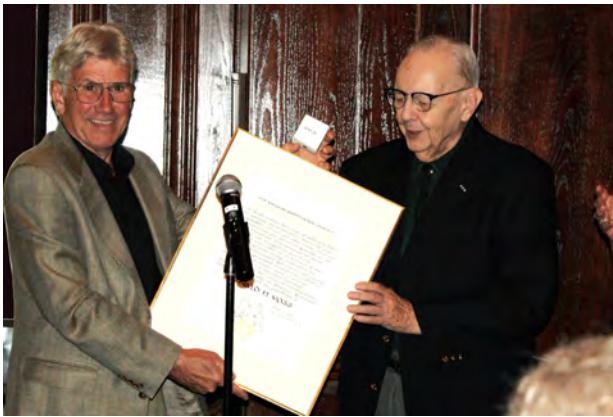
carpools for the trip to the National Park Service's Sandstone Falls Natural Area, a little over half an hour from the park. This is a beautiful, handicapped accessible area with great views of Sandstone Falls on the New River. Members who had visited previously said that the falls were a lot less active than when they had last visited, however they were still impressive and worth the visit. Julie McQuade accompanied us to the falls and provided us information on the park and its flora.

The visit to Sandstone Falls completed the formal program for the afternoon. Some members opted to go back to the hotel to rest up for the evening's activities, while others took the opportunity to visit other local attractions such as Brush Creek Falls or the hotel gift shops.

The evening's events started with the opening of the book sale, foliage show with one entry by Doug Jolley, a social period and a plant auction with Doug Jolley as auctioneer. As always, there were some beautiful and difficult to find varieties available and the bidding was very active. The auction was followed by a delicious buffet dinner. Because the setting sun was blazing through the windows of our meeting room, washing out the projector images, the evening's presentation was delayed until after the sun set. This provided the perfect opportunity to visit with other chapter members on the back deck of McKeever Lodge and enjoy the beauty of the setting sun. Our speaker for the evening was Professor Erik Nilsen from Virginia Tech. He spoke about "The Implication of Anatomy for Ecological and Physiological Tolerance in Rhododendrons." The topic dealt with the differences in structure between those rhododendron which evolved to be suited for temperate climates versus those suited for tropical climates. He explained how these differences allowed the plants to adapt to drought or freeze-thaw situations.

The evening's activities ended with Plants for Members (P4M). Attendees were afforded the opportunity to purchase quality plants for very reasonable prices. After the formal program was over, the hospitality room was once again open.

On Sunday morning we said good-bye to fellow chapter members as we made our way back home. We also had the opportunity to thank Jeanne Hammer and Doug Jolley again for all of the effort they put into setting up a wonderful weekend for our fall meeting. A number of attendees made one last trip to



Bruce Feller awarding the ARS Gold Medal to Don Voss in 2010.
Photo by Walt Przypek.



Lloyd Willis and George McLellan at Book Sale at Pipestem. Photo by Jeanne Hammer.



Sunset watchers on terrace before Erik Nilsen's talk. Photo by Jeanne Hammer.



Tram to Bluestone River Gorge, or according to Jeanne's husband Paul McWhinney, "Six minutes of terror." Photo by Jeanne Hammer.



Early morning view from McKeever. Photo by Rick Bauer.



Sandstone Falls. Photo by Don Hyatt.

the gift shops at the top of the aerial tram to Mountain Creek Lodge. I must admit that, while I'm not an avid shopper, I was impressed by the collection of various handmade crafts. I left with one myself....a bottle of "Road Kill" jam. It's delicious!

REMEMBERING DONALD H. VOSS NOVEMBER 6, 1922 - AUGUST 12, 2016

by Donald W. Hyatt (*Reprinted with permission of Don Hyatt from the Potomac Valley Chapter ARS Fall Newsletter: September 2016.*)

I had planned an article about our hiking trips in this issue but decided to postpone that so I could reflect on the life of Donald Hagen Voss. Don passed away on August 12 at the age of 93. He was more than just a good friend for over 40 years. He was a mentor, and an invaluable resource to me and many others. Don had a remarkable life.



The more I got to know Don, the more impressed I was with his intellect and depth of knowledge. It seemed to span all disciplines. Don had an air of authority but he did not try to intimidate. He never sought praise since the truly brilliant do not need such validation. I can still remember Don's humility as we presented him with the ARS Gold Medal in June of 2010 (photo below). The tribute on his plaque only hints at Don's lifetime of achievement and service:

For decades you have been a recognized authority on flower color, taxonomy and nomenclatural issues in the genus Rhododendron. Through your selfless volunteer efforts and willingness to share your specialized knowledge, you have benefited botanists and horticulturalists worldwide, which will have an impact for years to come. You are a prolific author who has written for the ARS Journal and many other prestigious publications. Your meticulous attention to detail, keen intellect and analytical skills have been appreciated in many ways, as District Director, technical reviewer, curator of herbarium specimens and advisor for many plant registrations. For these and many other lasting contributions you have made to the Society's goals, the American Rhododendron Society is pleased to present the Gold Medal to Donald H Voss.



A Life Member of the ARS and a highly respected leader, Don served as president of our chapter and he was president of the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA, too. He served simultaneously as our District IX Director and also a National Director for the ASA.

Don could instantly see the big picture but at the same time he noticed every detail and could pick up any inconsistencies. That skill made him a valuable reviewer for both the ARS Research and Editorial Committees where he served for decades. I think he proofread almost every article I wrote for the ARS.

Professionally, Don was an economist. He attended Princeton University, earning a BS in Public Affairs (1947) and MS in Economics (1949). He did interrupt his studies to serve in the U.S. Army during World War II. Don reached the rank of Captain by 1946, but then shifted to reserve status to continue his education. In 1970, he retired from the Army reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel.

After receiving his degrees, Don taught economics at Princeton until 1952. He then became an Associate Professor at Bucknell University until 1961. In 1952, Don married Betty (Elizabeth) Anne Gartrell who was an illustrator. They had one son, Donald Jr., in 1954. Don's father-in-law was Robert Gartrell, the hybridizer of the Robin Hill Azaleas. Of course, Don's favorite Robin Hill was 'Betty Anne Voss'.

In 1961, Don accepted a position with the Central Intelligence Agency and moved his family to Vienna, VA. He became an Economic Intelligence Officer for the CIA where he could apply his skills in data analysis in support of national security issues. Don was honored for his work at the CIA and had become a Division Director prior to his retirement in 1988.



'Betty Anne Voss' Photo by Donald H. Voss.

Don was a prolific writer. He authored 37 articles in the *ARS Journal* and co-authored one other. He wrote profusely for the *Azalean* and other professional journals, too. Always the teacher, his articles typically had a strong educational component that might clarify some technical issue, such as why *R. cumberlandense* is no longer called *R. bakeri*. Don was a noted authority in colorimetry, taxonomy and botanical nomenclature. He made significant contributions in the field of standardization of color.

I worked with Don over the years on a number of projects. One motivation was that it gave us an excuse to regularly meet for lunch. An early project was a website about the Robin Hill Azaleas. Don had already finished registering all of his father-in-law's hybrids and had written a number of articles about the Robin Hills. The website would be a source for online documentation and included many more images, detailed descriptions, and hybridizer notes. More recently, Don and I worked on a PowerPoint program about Rhododendron Registration. He provided the technical expertise and I did the programming and tried to gather photographs to help illustrate the concepts. There were sections about appropriate name selection, the registration process, botanical terms, and how to use the various color charts to evaluate a color accurately. That program is available through the ARS Store. (www.arsstore.org)

Don was a selfless person and a frequent volunteer. His record at the U.S. National Arboretum will not likely ever be matched. For 29 years, he volunteered several days a week at the Herbarium. He was honored many times for most

volunteer service and probably exceeded 8000 hours over the years.

In one of his early Herbarium projects on the Glenn Dale Azaleas, he collated extensive floral and foliage specimens, literature descriptions, and



Don Voss at the Arboretum. Photo by Barbara Bullock.

photographs.

A tertiary author for another major USNA project, Don directed the final editing and publication of a 330-page document titled, *A Catalog of Cultivated Woody Plants of the Southeastern United States* (Collection No. 7). He even wrote a database to assist with analysis since the study involved more than 14,000 herbarium specimens, field notes, and photographs.

Naturally, Don checked every rhododendron in the Herbarium to make sure that the thousands of specimens were properly described with any name changes up to date. He also rechecked approximately 4000 entries in the Arboretum's Type Specimen and Horticultural Standards Collections. That study involved extensive literature searches. Don even ran the Herbarium for more than a year when the Collections Manager position was vacant.

Don was a private person and did live alone. He had no immediate family since his wife passed away in 1969 and his son died in 2008. His friends in the horticulture world had become his family.

Don would have been 94 on November 6. In recent years, he had become a bit shaky and used a cane, but he never lost his independence and was mentally sharp to the end. He continued to drive himself to the Arboretum through congested rush hour traffic two days week to continue his work at the Herbarium.

On Monday, July 4th, an incident that Don would refer to as “stupid mistake” led to his demise. While doing laundry in his basement, he reached for something and fell. He was unable to get up and had no way to contact anyone. It wasn’t until Wednesday that he was discovered by his cleaning lady.

Don was weak, dehydrated, and bruised from failed attempts to get upright. They took him to Fairfax Hospital for a stay to stabilize him, and later moved him to a nursing facility. We thought he was on the mend, but sadly, Don developed aspiration pneumonia and that took his life in just a few days.

I visited Don a number of times while he was in the hospital. I shared photographs from recent mountain hikes and images of unusual native azaleas or rhododendrons we had seen. A few days before he got pneumonia, Karel Bernady and I stopped by to see him. It would be my final visit. I brought images of all the variations of *R. minus* we have seen in the wild. Don was very interested in that species and had written two articles about it for the ARS Journal in 2014.

The dwarf purple *R. minus* var. “smokianum” fascinated Don. It covers the top of Mount LeConte but has a very small footprint in the wild. Don warned that it may be unique enough to be a separate species, but he said it was very important for us to formally describe that plant.

Then Don changed the subject. He thanked us for our friendship over so many years. He also wanted to say how important our field work in documenting native plants has been. Of course, we shared our mutual admiration of Don. It reminded me of some talks I had with my late mother the week before she passed. Yes, Don was saying goodbye.

Many people in our chapter asked about Don’s final arrangements. As one could probably predict, he asked that there be no funeral or memorial service. He just wanted to be cremated and buried with his wife and son.

Don’s passing made me realize how important it is to tell people how much they mean to you while they are living rather than wait for the eulogy. That is why I am so grateful I had those final moments with Don. He was an exceptional man and we will miss him, but he has left us a wonderful legacy. Thank you, Don!

WELCOME TO NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Dale K. Berrong,
Danielsville, GA 30633

IN THE CROZET GARDEN by Lloyd Willis

What catches the eye in the garden today? One of the things is a flower bed that has at least forty hostas. Every *Hosta* appears to be exactly the same height and all are leafless in that bed. I’m guessing someone (me) forgot to keep spraying the liquid deer repellent on those hostas. That bed looks very neat with its eight inch tall green stems.



Lloyd Willis.

Another thing is a new circular flower bed. In the center of the bed is a large red Japanese maple which was grown from a seedling on our property. It is at least thirty years old with a diameter of about four inches. The first ring around the maple is periwinkle which was planted several years ago. The second ring is five one-gallon-size weeping Japanese maples. The third ring is nine one-gallon-size deciduous azaleas. The fourth ring is nine three-gallon-size evergreen azaleas. The fifth ring is nine one-gallon-size hostas. The sixth ring is eighteen quart-size hostas. Not bad—only fifty new plants.

Before the plants were added, my helper and I placed a stick where each plant would go. Son-in-law Bob came up, looked at the sticks, noted that he could see the pattern (he’s a fine arts major), and asked to be called when the plants were all planted. His request was honored.

So, where is the humor in this article? About a month ago we heard that a black bear was getting into trash cans in a subdivision about two miles away. It was a cute story. Folks had sighted the bear at their trash cans and left it alone. Two weeks later a bear visited our trash can twice in one morning. Total clean up time for both visits was over an hour. The bear story was no longer cute. I placed six bungee cords over the lid of the trash can. As the days progressed, I reduced the cords to 5, 4, 3, 2, then 1. No additional visits to the trash can have been made. End of the bear story—almost.

Last Saturday as we came home, one of the neighbors who lives in the cottage behind our house pulled into our garage drive and rolled down the car window. She was quite excited and said, "Did you hear me honking the car horn? Did you see the baby bear? It was on my porch. It was about this big (She held up a thumb and forefinger with a $\frac{1}{4}$ space between them.). Now I was excited to possibly see the world's smallest baby bear. Then I asked her to please show me how big the bear was using both her hands. The distance was about eighteen inches. Now, I was excited again thinking that if there is a baby bear around there could be a mother bear around. The neighbor left on her errand. I left to go hunt for the baby bear and its mother (after I had my afternoon nap).

**WINDBEAM WAY
WANDERINGS,
September 2016 by**
Doug Jolley

The spring garden season was terrific and late May and through June was also one of the best garden times in recent memory. The cumberlandenses, the kalmias, and the maximums of the *Rhododendron* world experienced sensational years. Cumberland azalea plants from five year old seedlings from the Smokey Mountains to decades old seedlings from early ARS meetings were in full anthesis by mid June and the cool month only prolonged the show. This was a *Kalmia* year for sure here and in the wild. Our 'Galaxy' with its maroon bands and petaloid flower anatomy is one of the show pieces. A seedling of the Red Max has been blooming now for a couple years and is a nice pink in bud opening to white with the characteristic green blotch.

Very nice *Rhododendron maximum* were encountered on an early trip to the Alan Seeger Natural Area near State College, PA. Some very deep pink albeit not red forms could be singled out in several spots in the natural area. Later during the last week of July, the *R. maximum* was in prime condition along the Scenic Highway near Cranberry Glades, WV. Our *R. maximum* blooms here from mid-June through the end of the month and



Doug Jolley.

depending on location, more can be enjoyed into early August.

Late July also brings the hummingbirds to our Plumleaf Azaleas. Our two prime specimens are venerable plants we obtained from Ken and Sandra McDonald in the late 1980's while on a trip to Williamsburg. They produce so many flowers that the season lasts most of August.

The rainfall this summer was on then off. Our immediate area did not experience the terrible flooding in late June that some parts of West Virginia experienced and vegetable crops and ornamentals all got off to a running start. By mid-July however, things began to heat up and dry out. Although we have not reached critical situations, we can use a rainy day or two any time.

The fall meeting at Pipestem was most enjoyable and it also brought to the group's attention the seriousness of the relatively new to the United States the disease boxwood blight. Norman Cole was very generous with his time in coming to speak to our members and generous in donating 50 plants of two of his patented boxwood. Virginia gardeners are sure to have a battle on their hands in the coming years as this disease increases its foothold on the state. Our Saturday host, park naturalist Julie McQuade was also thankful for the 240 pounds of black oil sunflower seed that the chapter donated to the park nature center in lieu of her accepting an honorarium.

With the MAC fall meeting over already, a welcome respite awaits and hopefully a tolerable winter.

COLONIAL VIRGINIA CHAPTER HOLLY SOCIETY OF AMERICA

MAC members are invited to a meeting of CVC HSA on October 22, 2016, at Saint Stephens Lutheran Church in Williamsburg, VA, from 9:30 to whenever the 1pm tour of the grounds of William & Mary by John McFarland ends. The speaker is Sue Hunter, president of HSA. A plant auction and lunch are also on the agenda. For more information and/or a registration form, contact Peggy McComb: phone 804-642-2449 or email m.mccomgbab@gmail.com



Remember all photos plus extra online photos can be seen in color and ENLARGED at MACARS.ORG. Click on Newsletter on left panel.

Memberships and renewals should be sent to our Membership Chairman Jeanne Hammer at 815 Porter St. Apt 301, Richmond, VA 23224.

Annual membership dues are \$40 per year.

Miscellaneous inquiries may be sent to the editor (address below) for forwarding to proper individual.

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