

Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, Inc.

520 North 15th Street
Wilmington, NC 28401

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Inscriptions

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The Rehder Boys

Written by Julie Rehder

They were tall, lean men with drawls as thick as the sorghum once processed on the shores of the Cape Fear River in their hometown of Wilmington, North Carolina. Erect and deliberate in their strides they would bob and weave through the thickest of long leaf pine forests and complex spider webs until emerging in the bright Carolina sunlight to check on one of their favorite "honey holes" of carnivorous plants. To them these were sacred places, the indigenous home of the Venus Flytrap and other native pitcher plants. Henry and Stanley Rehder made these trips together for decades, just as their father had done before them, bending their lanky bodies over and over to record new growth in an area or to curse the developers or poachers who were destroying the remaining plants they had hoped future generations would enjoy.

Henry Rehder, the debonair commercial florist, could easily fit in the lounges of country clubs or fine European gardens as he did in the paper strewn passenger side of his younger brother's well-worn Jeep. And Stanley, the mixed plaid and stripped outdoorsman who was most at ease with a fishing pole, shovel or straight flush in his flytrap-seed stained hands, used his skill with story telling to keep his listeners fascinated for hours. These two brothers shared parents but not childhoods due to the decade difference in age but they found kinship and friendship out among the Carolina Bays, especially during the twilight of their lives.

Born in 1911, Henry Burbank Rehder and George Stanley Rehder, born in 1922 were local legends when it came to plants, especially carnivorous plants. For Henry, the joy centered mostly on the beauty from stem to flower and for Stanley it was the bare roots and soil that stirred his excitement. Flower growing was in their DNA. Their grandparents, Henry and Johanna, had settled in the harbor town of Wilmington from coastal Bremerhaven, Germany during the height of the Civil War. To remind herself of her homeland Johanna planted flower bulbs in the modest yard located steps away from the gates of Oakdale Cemetery. Passersby

noted the beauty and rarity of Johanna's flowers and asked to purchase them to place on the graves of their loved ones. Recognizing an opportunity to supplement the income of her husband's dry goods shop Johanna established Mrs. H. Rehder Florist, a business that would remain a part of Wilmington culture for four generations.

Henry and Stanley's father, Will, joined his mother in the floral business and received his formal training in Brooklyn, New York before returning to his hometown to expand the shop and greenhouses. For decades, "Mr. Will" served Wilmington society's needs for flowers for every occasion but he was happiest when he took his sons into the woods to hunt for carnivorous plants.

On these long trips they mapped out the areas that contained flytraps, pitcher plants and vast amounts of the hearty, shiny southern smilax to ship by train to the fine hotels in the north. They studied the tracks of the wild game that inhabited the area for a later hunting trips and instilled in Stanley the desire to prove that big cats still roam the Carolina forests.

During WWII Henry served as a Merchant Marine, Stanley served in the US Army 66th Infantry Division in France, and the middle brother, Billy, flew the Himalayan Hump over India. Changed men after these experiences, Henry took ownership of Will Rehder Florist, the retail part of the business, and Stanley applied the horticulture skills he learned at NC State College to build Rehder's Greenhouses into a large wholesale operation of seven acres under glass. *Continued on page 2*



Stanley Rehder caring for a Venus Flytrap
Photo courtesy of Brownie Harris

BE a Friend of Oakdale Cemetery!

Please mail your tax-deductible contribution to:

Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, Inc.
520 North Fifteenth Street ❖ Wilmington, NC 28401

Questions? Call us at 910-762-5682



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Membership is for one year ❖ Many volunteer opportunities!

Please contact me about volunteering!

A REMINDER

To all the Friends of Oakdale, when receiving this periodic publication, this is not a reminder of your membership status. The Membership Committee sends out a specific letter. These letters are mailed to you annually when the time arrives according to the month you had renewed last or joined.

Calendar of Events

Friends of Oakdale Cemetery Board Meetings

Board meetings will be held virtually until further notice due to current COVID-19 restrictions and precautions. Time and date TBD.

Free Camellia Tour and Workshop

Saturday, March 20, 2021, 9:30 a.m.
Hosted by Tidewater Camellia Club, donations appreciated.

DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC NO WALKING TOURS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED FOR 2021.
WE HOPE THIS CHANGES, BUT CANNOT FORECAST WHEN THAT WILL BE. PLEASE MONITOR OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER OR OAKDALE'S WEBSITE FOR ANY UPDATES.

Deadline for ordering Easter Lillies

Monday, March 15, 2021

Easter is April 4, 2021. The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery are offering for sale full, fresh Easter lillies for the graves of loved ones. See details on insert sheet of this newsletter.



The Rehder Boys

Continued from front page

Stanley grew the mums, carnations, poinsettias and lilies, and Henry knew how make sure every home had a Rehder plant or gorgeous arrangement in it. Henry's son, Henry Rehder, Jr. kept the florist tradition going after "the Rehder boys" retired and later became a media personality and noted author on Southern gardening prior to selling the business to fulfill a calling as a Lutheran pastor.

During their long marriage, Henry Rehder Sr. and his wife, Barbara created one of the region's most beautiful home gardens. Full of winding pathways with lush specimens of azaleas, camellias and flowering trees, their spacious garden was the open to the public each spring and featured in many national and statewide magazines. Their small greenhouse contained specimens of exotic tropical plants and their picture-perfect pocket vegetable garden was a source of great pride and fresh food for their table. In contrast, Stanley's passion was not found within his own yard but in his friend Pete Watkins' Fun City Farms, a multi-acre tract off of Rogersville Road tended by poker and fishing buddies. They grew butter beans and corn, tomatoes and cukes, and filling his Jeep with the FLYTRAP license plate as a mobile farmer's market he would bestow his share of the crops upon clients and pretty receptionists throughout town. He was also an accomplished surf fisherman and was happiest when "the blues were runnin'" along the Carolina shores. After a hail storm and furnace malfunction destroyed the greenhouses Stanley Rehder became a successful commercial realtor allowing him to continue his hunt for flytraps and picture plants as he scouted places for future development.

Will Rehder had taught his sons how to recognize depressions in the soil, the wet bogs containing life sustaining mosses, flower spikes and other signs of carnivorous plant life. In later years these dedicated weekend plant detectives discovered and recorded hundreds of carnivorous plant sites. As their memory of locations began to wane (remember, this was before GPS capabilities) the two brothers would take along small irrigation flags to designate special areas to alert roadside mowers to avoid their beloved plants. Always trusting, Stanley was beyond despair when these flags would steer a poacher right to the place where the Flytraps were most vulnerable. Stanley and Henry befriended dozens of homeowners in places like Boiling Springs, NC and taught them to protect the treasures in their yards. They took carloads of visitors from across the world to see the plants in the wild. While Henry enjoyed categorizing all of the varieties of sarracenia plants in the area and submitted for verification an unusual hybrid rubra and minor found at a Boy Scout Camp. The Smithsonian verified its rarity and named it *Sarracenia rehderi* in his honor.

The science was not the draw for Stanley. It was the pure uniqueness of the Venus Flytrap plant and his pride in it being indigenous only to Southeastern North Carolina that made it his obsession. He spent years trying to convince any willing legislator to stiffen penalties for poaching and to categorize the plants as an endangered species. He routinely called the newspaper to request articles on the plants and to expose poachers for their deeds. He began to experiment with collecting flytrap and Sarracenia seeds and started The Flytrap Company in the 1970s as a way to supplement his income but also as a way to repopulate areas that had lost plant life. He harvested seed pods, dried them in brown paper bags in his attic, separated seeds from the pods by lightly rolling them through a screen onto a cardboard box and measured them into vials carefully marked by hand drawn numbers on adhesive tape. He also carried a video camera with him on most outings and kept notes on his discoveries in worn composition books.

In his quest to make the area known for its unique plant life, in the 1970s and 80s he contacted national television shows to pitch his stories about the strange plant only found wild in Southeastern NC. He was successful too! National morning shows, Good Morning America and The Today Show plus the popular prime time show of the time, That's Incredible, flew him to their studios to exhibit and demonstrate the traps and pitchers. The story of his interview by Barbara Walters was one of his most-told tales because he managed to startle her into a shriek when he pulled out the live Palmetto bugs he brought to feed the plants.

In the 1970s, while looking for some land for development, Stanley discovered a boggy location in the center of one of the most populated areas of town owned by the MacRae family's Oleander Company. A roadbed had been cut but abandoned when the area was named a wetland. Two natural springs fed the bog in this natural Carolina Bay. A few flytraps and pitcher plants were there but he saw an opportunity to scatter additional seeds to create a unique Flytrap and Sarracenia preserve that would be a showplace for visitors and a living laboratory for the elementary schoolchildren who were schooled in close proximity. After receiving permission from the MacRae family Stanley and Henry gathered and sowed seeds for more than two decades, kept the area trimmed and clean and even set up a box of brochures to help eager visitors identify the plants and learn about their rarity. The word was out that this spot was a must see location for nature lovers.

Henry's death in 2004 increased Stanley's love of the place they had shared together. Several years ago the NC Coastal Land Trust worked with the MacRae family and the City of Wilmington to create an easement on the property that would protect it for generations to come. This amazing collaboration was completed in April 2012 when the garden was officially named by the City of Wilmington as the Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden during the official Flytrap Frolic Weekend, now an event held by the NC Coastal Land Trust to raise funds and awareness for the preservation and protection of Venus Flytraps. The Garden was added to the Cross City Trail and the City of Wilmington Parks Department took over the maintenance of the property, the development of signage and made it more accessibly by completing a parking area, pervious surface trails, and wooden overlooks that enhances the area. Stanley got to see his vision for this location begin but didn't get to see its completion. He died on October 1, 2012 but his handiwork is still in evidence as the plants follow a distinctive curve along the walkways he built within the garden.

Within just a few weeks of the opening of the garden, poachers entered in the dead of night and removed an estimated 900 Venus Flytrap plants, approximately 90% of the mature plants. This horrific act created a fury of support for greater security and scrutiny of the garden as well as increased penalties for poaching and endangered status. If there is a silver lining to this tragedy it was the outpouring of support from volunteers who replanted the garden and the community's interest in visiting the garden. The City's stewardship, the owner's generosity and the NC Coastal Land Trust's leadership have been critical parts of a preservation puzzle. Today the garden thrives. Take a walk any time of the year, but especially during the growing season, to view for yourself how two brothers made their passion a community treasure. ❖

A Letter from Friends of Oakdale Cemetery President

Greetings,

January is a month of beginnings and transitions, a fresh slate if you like. The Friends of Oakdale are looking forward to new happenings as we move into 2021. We are working towards new projects that will continue to enhance the beauty of Oakdale. It's your faithful contributions that continue to ensure these projects happen.

Unfortunately, due to the uncertainty of COVID, we have not scheduled any walking tours for this year. We know these are popular with many people and we hope we can continue them at some point. In the meantime, come out and enjoy a stroll through the cemetery.

The Friends of Oakdale greatly appreciate your dedication and commitment and we look forward to your continued support.

Chris Nelson
President
Friends of Oakdale Cemetery



Oakdale Just Got a Little Prettier

Thanks to Girl Scout Troop # 898 for coming out in December to plant 200 daffodils down the main avenue near the Hebrew Cemetery gate entrance. Also thanks to the Loblolly Garden Club for installing a monarch butterfly garden this Fall which is located near the main gates. And thanks to the Wilmington Women's Club of North Carolina for donating 3 new Live Oak trees. All of these projects will benefit the cemetery for many years to come. Thank you ladies for all that you have done to promote the natural beauty of Oakdale. ❖



Pen, Pencil or Paint!!!

Once again the Urban Sketchers of Wilmington came to visit Oakdale for a few hours to capture the artistic essence found within these hallowed grounds. Whether it's via a pen, pencil or paint these artists created beautiful etchings that were truly inspiring. As one artist said, "Oakdale is one of her favorite places to draw, because it's so peaceful and there are so many aspects to sketch." ❖



Caring for Camellias

The Tidewater Camellia Club has been working hard in Oakdale despite the Covid pandemic. Thanks to Matt Hunter, past president of the club who has made it a mission to improve many of the camellias found in Oakdale. Mr. Hunter has held Camellia Workshops to teach participants proper pruning methods, grafting and other unique tidbits that benefit one of our regions prize horticultural species. The Tidewater Camellia Club also wishes to continue these efforts and even look into adopting Oakdale's camellias as an ongoing club project. The next scheduled free (donations appreciated) Camellia Workshop is scheduled for Saturday March 20th at 9:30 a.m. ❖



www.oakdalecemetery.org

For those interested in Oakdale Cemetery, the website provides spectacular photography by Kenneth Newland. Featuring a fresh updated look and offers a more user friendly experience, improved navigation, and more interactive resources including maps, burial database, the ability to purchase items online, history, news, calendar of events, comprehensive cemetery information, newsletter archive and much more.



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