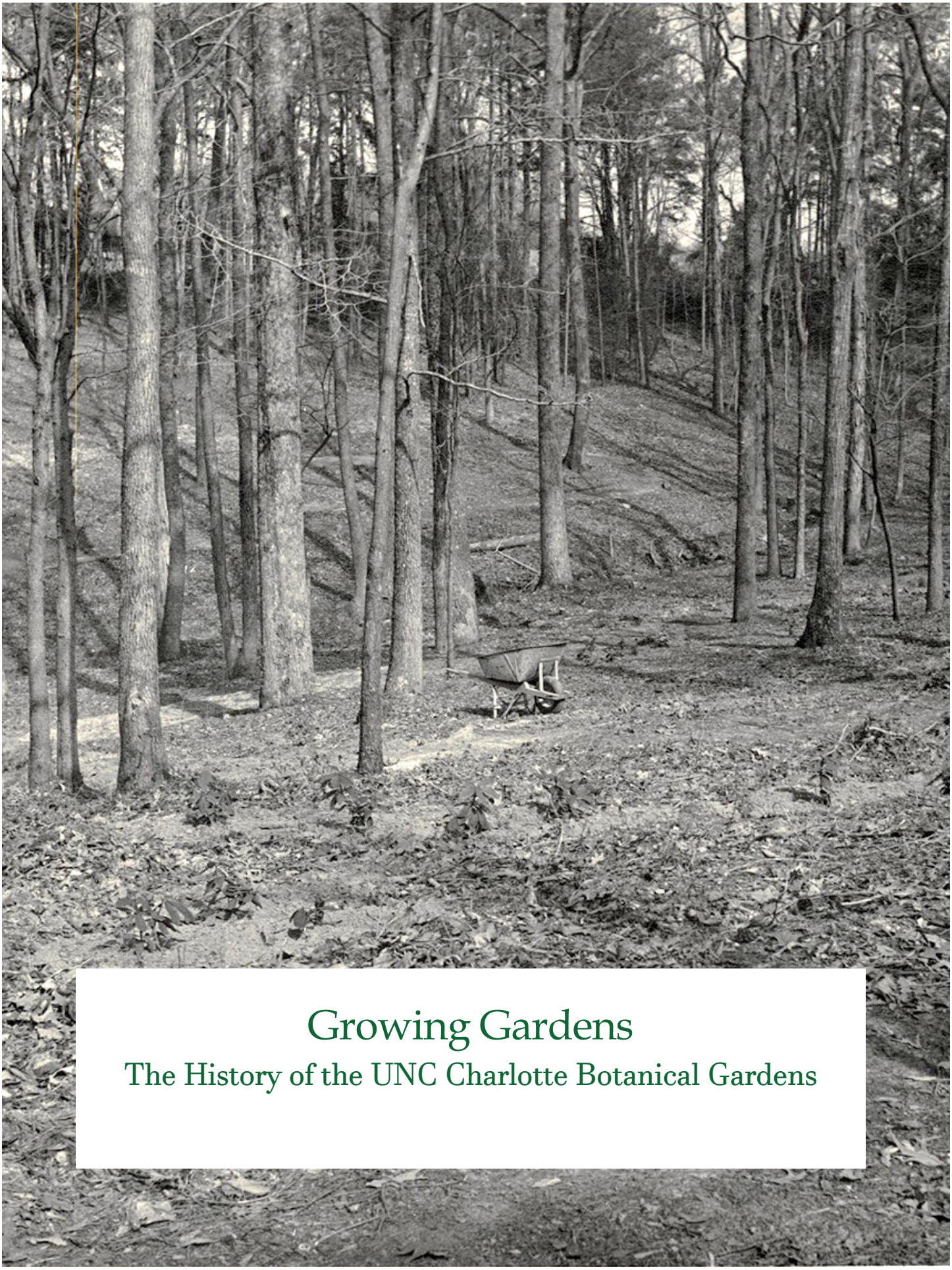

Growing Gardens

The History of the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens

Herbert Hechenbleikner by Josette Gourley Arvey, 1991

Growing Gardens

The History of the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens

Susan Scholly
2016

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Forward

When I accepted a position with the UNC Charlotte Biology Department and Botanical Gardens in 1997 at the tender age of 27, I was excited but green (pun intended). I was new to the world of public horticulture, had a shallow understanding of public gardens, and certainly had no idea what it takes to bring a botanical garden into being or to lead in its evolution. But I knew in my bones that this was a special place – a place of beauty, knowledge and learning, and intention. I came to understand that it was also a place with potential to grow and serve the community, the sort of place that matters very much in our world.

Throughout my years of learning, sharing, and growing as a leader in the organization, I would get glimpses of the past and snippets of stories from Larry Mellichamp that hinted at how some wooded land on a new campus in 1966 became the garden I joined in 1997, but no full story came to life in my mind. The older I got, the more I craved to hear the entire story from multiple perspectives. History informs today's actions. Stories are important!

Unfortunately, I also began to understand what a monumental and time-consuming task it would be to gather those perspectives, much less tie them all together into a coherent story. I do not remember the exact moment Susan Scholly, a lively new volunteer at the Garden who had already taken it upon herself to write a children's program for the Glen, suggested she write our history. Knowing how much time, patience, dedication, and talent (did I mention patience?!) it would take, I probably did not let myself hope it would really happen.

But happen it did! Susan worked steadily for more than a year. She pursued interviews from every person past and present that would answer her phone calls, and transcribed many hours of tape. We could never have imagined what she was able to do with these interviews and our rag tag collection of facts, snippets, photos etc… She brought life and humor to what could have easily been a dry string of names, dates, and events. To share with you that she did it with a smile and curiosity and excitement – all throughout the project – tells you something about Susan. The history of the Gardens is sprinkled with "angels". Susan is one of them and without her the others would soon have been lost in time. I hope you enjoy her unique gift of storytelling as much as we do. Thank you, Susan, for this invaluable work.

Each public garden has its stories. UNC Charlotte is young by University standards and is uncommon in having a botanical garden grow up along with it. This is our story, in our context, and like all good stories each person, each event plays its part and the sum of both reveals and exceeds those parts, just as in the systems of nature. The gardens are growing, new stories are forming, and I can't wait to hear the next chapters!

Paula Gross, Associate Director
January 2018

A Note from the Author

I visited the Botanical Gardens for the first time in 2004, when our daughter was a UNC Charlotte freshman. I thought it was a delightful and intriguing place, and about a year later I decided to volunteer. I was eventually hired on part-time, and along the way I gave tours, hosted on Sundays, and led a children's program. I had a great time, especially as I saw how much visitors enjoyed the Gardens and Greenhouse.

I'm not a botanist or horticulturist, or even a master gardener. Marketing and English were my areas of study, and for many years I taught college classes and wrote articles about cultural happenings in Kalamazoo, Michigan and elsewhere. However, I've always found plants fascinating, so I had fun learning as time went on.

One day, when I was a still a volunteer, Paula Gross asked if I'd be interested in writing the history of the Gardens. I shrugged and said, "Okay." It didn't sound like a complicated task—just write out Dr. Mellichamp's memories.

Well, the project grew. In the university library archives I found documents—memos, newspaper articles, annual reports, and much more. I interviewed people—former and current Garden employees, volunteers, and family members. Each person told a story from her or his own perspective and memory. This led to interesting variations and contradictions, so this History is by no means a definitive account of events. Sometimes it was a challenge to weave the various stories into one coherent tale, but I don't think it really matters in the end whether something happened in 1972 or in 1973. What matters is that people who love plants, trees, soil and sunshine have created such a wonderful place.

Several years have passed since I began this project. I left Charlotte two years ago and now live in Salt Lake City, Utah. I'll always remember the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens as a special place, and I'm glad I got to be a small part of its history.

I've had fun learning more about the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens. I hope you do, too.

Susan Scholly
November 2014

Thanks to

The people who have made the Gardens wonderful.

Everyone who shared memories, thoughts, and photos.

The many people who are not mentioned in this history, but who have helped to make the Gardens a success.

My son-in-law, Chase Rogers, for help with layout and design.

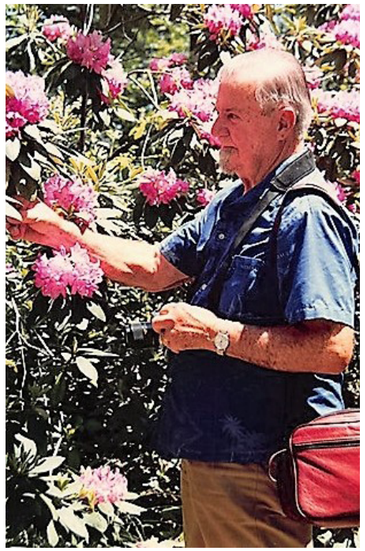
Part One
1966-1975

Mini-Skirts and a New Garden

Beginning of the Glen

Nature never goes out of style.
—Tanner Robert Turville

Our story began in 1966. Students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte were listening to tunes like "Good Vibrations" by the Beach Boys and "Summer in the City" by The Lovin' Spoonful. Miniskirts and Beatle "mop top" haircuts were the cool new styles on campus, and for those who could afford them, Mustangs were the hot wheels.



Dr. Hech 1999

Meanwhile, Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner—known as Dr. Hech (pronounced "heck") to students and some colleagues—and then head of the Biology Department at Charlotte College, was less interested in pop culture than in laying the groundwork for what would eventually become the Van Landingham Glen.

In 1964 Charlotte College was awarded the University status and officially named University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Dean Wallace Colvard stepped in to become its first Chancellor, and because you can't have a campus without buildings, he and other administrators needed to develop the fledgling university's infrastructure. With the help of an architecture firm, they soon drafted a master plan that included not only buildings but also space reserved for nature—wooded areas, lakes and gardens, "with the conviction that a pleasant environment is more conducive to work and study."

That all sounds nice, but the fact is, noble ideas sometimes fall by the wayside in the midst of development. It takes more than just a well-intended master plan to let nature thrive. Fortunately, Dr. Hech wasn't waiting around to see how the whole provisions-for-natural-areas would be implemented. He was too busy outside putting his shovel where the dirt was and laying the groundwork for a rhododendron garden on the campus of the newly formed University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

He and fellow rhododendron enthusiast, Ralph Van Landingham, had put in motion plans to create the garden on the grounds of the university. They had both become interested in rhododendrons, and these shrubs were to become the basis for the new garden.

Dr. Hech had been landscaping on campus for years and had discovered that the soil was better on the north side, so he pushed his wheelbarrow in that direction and got busy. The area had never been used; in fact, the oldest tree had been standing for 200 years. It was a steep ravine, so it had never been farmed, and no buildings were planned to be built there. And so, because no one else seemed to want it, Dr. Hech claimed it. True, this new piece of land was full of rocks, but Dr. Hech believed that with a lot of work, this small woodland with loamy soil and a meandering stream could be cultivated. Armed with a shovel and determination, he began clearing for the new

Dr. Hech in UNC Charlotte Woodland, 1968

rhododendron garden.

Gumption and self-sufficiency were necessary back then. Dr. James Matthews, who was hired in 1964 to teach in the Biology Department, remembers how resourcefulness had become a habit for people who were with the college in the early years: "Back in the days of Charlotte College, if you wanted something done, you had to do it yourself. We were so poor back then we had to write out our exams on the board because we couldn't afford a mimeograph to run them off."

So with plenty of I'll-do-it-myself attitudes and his sturdy shovel, Dr. Hech had set out to tame the wild territory he had claimed. While astro turf, the oft-maligned fake grass invention, was making its first appearance at Houston's Astro Dome that year, there was nothing fake about what Dr. Hech was beginning to plant in his new adopted area.

So as the students in mini-skirts were driving by in convertibles, the head of the Biology Department began work on what would become the Van Landingham Glen, digging, hauling, pulling, and planting rhododendrons with gusto.

A Colorful Character

Dr. Hech

If two people were exactly alike,
one of them would be unnecessary.
—Larry Dixon

By all accounts, Dr. Hechenbleikner was a, umm, colorful person. "A university isn't worth its salt if it doesn't have a real character," Ken Sanford, an early member of the UNC Charlotte staff, once said of Dr. Hech. "He was one of them."

An article in the Charlotte Observer described Dr. Hech this way: "Throughout his life, he blended the Old World and the American South. He spoke with Carolina's accent and wore a European-style goatee. He visited historic cathedrals and kept rattlesnakes at his home."

Dr. Hech had come from a family of colorful characters. He was born in Austria in 1909. He moved to the U.S. at age three when his father, a chemist, took a job at a nitric acid plant in South Carolina, and later worked for Duke Power. In Charlotte, the family, including his brother and sister, lived on what was then rural Carmel Road. They were wealthy—as a scientist, his father had made a substantial amount of money from patents.

According to Dr. Larry Mellichamp the second Director of the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens and affectionately known as Dr. M, the Hechenbleikners were self-sufficient: "They were not only financially independent, they were also independent with their ideas. Dr. Hech didn't follow the rules. He ignored them, or went around them." And like the rest of the family, he liked to do things his way. His daughter, Madeline Hechenbleikner Freeman, remembers, "Daddy took a driving test for his one-eyed brother. They must have looked more alike back then."

Dr. Hech was certainly well educated. He earned a bachelor's degree at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, then went on to Harvard University to earn a Ph.D. in Zoology. He later moved back to Charlotte, and he and his wife, Margaret, had two sons, Richard and Herbert (aka Buddy), and a daughter, Madeline.

Dr. Hech loved the outdoors—traveling, mountain climbing and exploring faraway places. Because Dr. Hech was from Austria—land of the Alps—he had a particular affinity for mountains. "He was a mountain person, not a beach person," says Madeline.

He was a true adventurer. He traveled all over the world, searching for distinctive things of nature—unusual rocks, rare plants, or even "unfriendly" critters.

Ken Sanford knew Dr. Hech for many years. He remembers the time in the late 1960s when Dr. Hech invited faculty, staff, and their families out to his house for a picnic. Their host went down to his basement, came back out and showed off his prized pet. "He brought out Oscar, the oldest living rattlesnake," says Ken. According to Ken, Dr. Hech's claim of his snake's distinguished age was officially documented: "He had papers from some organization that said that it was the oldest rattlesnake living in captivity." Oscar's owner was equally distinguished. "There aren't many campuses where you find someone who can pull out a rattlesnake."

Oscar, Dr. Hech's pet Rattlesnake

At only 5'9", Dr. Hech was a stocky, muscular man with strong opinions known for speaking his mind. According to Dr. M, Dr. Hech was not afraid to claim that things in Europe were better and that he didn't bother much with trying to be "politically correct."

Dr. Hech was also averse to collaboration. "He didn't like to cooperate," says Dr. M. "He didn't like meetings or committees. He thought a committee of two was one too many."

Dr. Hech once told a journalist, "You either have to be mean or persistent to get things done. I have a certain persistent streak. Let's say determination. My wife would call it stubbornness."

Former Biology Department Chair, Dr. James Matthews, described him this way: "Hech was opinionated but nice. He was a typical German; you didn't tell him what to do."

What Dr. Hech lacked in warmth and fuzziness, he made up for in individuality. He was very much a man of contradictions. Sophisticated, yet gruff. Well-educated, yet down-to-earth. Frugal, yet generous. Impatient, yet caring. Blunt, yet endearing. UNC Charlotte administrator, Bonnie Cone, once said that beneath Dr. Hech's rough exterior he was, "kind, caring and considerate. There wasn't a thing he wouldn't do for his students and friends."

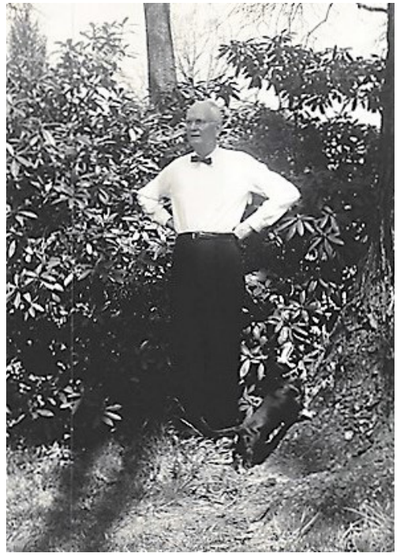
Dr. Hech's strong, eccentric personality was what the Gardens needed. A wimpy conformist wouldn't have cut it.

Blooming Aspirations

Growing Rhododendrons in the South

It's not easy being green.
—Kermit, the Frog

Dr. Hech's interest in rhododendrons was inspired, at least in part, by his friendship with Ralph Van Landingham, Jr. Ralph was a successful stockbroker in Charlotte who had built a large home at 2010 The Plaza. His father, Ralph Sr., and mother, Susie Harwood Van Landingham, a famous women's activist from a prominent family in Atlanta, had moved their family to Charlotte in 1913. Ralph, Jr. had taken a liking to rhododendrons in the 1960s and planted an assortment of the colorful-flowered shrubs in their five-acre garden. He enjoyed showing off his collection, and, when they were in bloom, the Van Landinghams opened their garden to the public.



Ralph Van Landingham ca. 1962

Many plant lovers and rhododendron enthusiasts attended, and the events were highlighted in newspaper articles. The Van Landinghams hosted many parties and get-togethers, and as Dr. Mellichamp points out, there Dr. Hech could mingle with movers and shakers, some of whom helped support the Gardens.

So what was the big fuss about a rhododendron garden? After all, the shrubs now grow in many gardens and yards in this part of the south. Back then, however, most gardeners had little luck in keeping them green and blooming, perhaps because many of these rhododendrons were not particularly heat tolerant.

Dr. M says, "Trying to grow rhododendrons in the south was like trying to make a snow cone in the summer. People would buy rhododendrons from growers in cooler regions like the west coast or New England, have them shipped here, and plant them out. They would bloom the next spring, and then die in the summer heat."

However, things in the shrub department were changing.

Undaunted and resourceful rhododendron aficionados were joining forces to overcome the shrub growing obstacles. They believed that, although it wasn't easy, rhododendrons could thrive in southern gardens. One pioneer was Dr. Charles Dewey Jr. was an electrical engineer who lived in Charlotte and was a pioneer in growing rhododendrons in this area. He had recently written an article for the American Rhododendron Society Journal titled "Some Experiences with Rhododendrons in the Southern Red Clay" (so heat wasn't the only problem). Another was Dr. Donald Kellam, a local orthopedic surgeon who was also very knowledgeable and experienced in growing

rhododendrons. Dr. Hech was learning and was apparently too stubborn to be defeated.

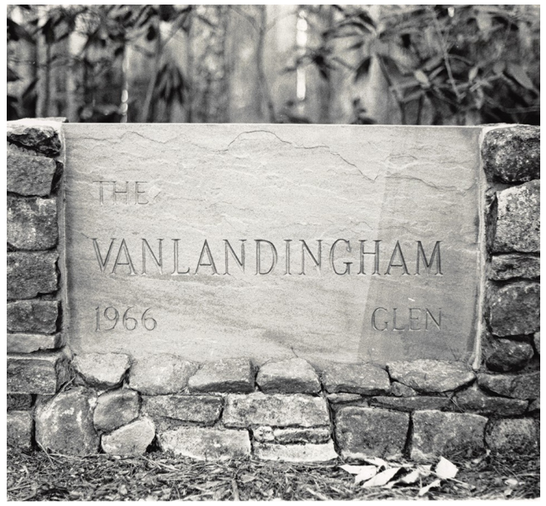
These three were discovering how it could be done—with rhododendrons that are heat tolerant enough to withstand southern temperatures. They considered light and soil conditions and experimented with hybrids that are descendants of the wild native rhododendrons. Progress was slow, with plenty of false starts. After all, growing rhododendrons was not their "day job," and all three had demanding careers. They were, however, learning more and more, and becoming more and more successful.
They shared their knowledge with Ralph Van Landingham, and eventually, his estate garden became well-stocked with rhododendrons that were thriving.

This success inspired Ralph Van Landingham. He began to get ideas.

The Big Idea

Plans for Van Landingham Glen

You will enrich your life immeasurably if you approach it with a sense of wonder and discovery, and always challenge yourself to try new things.
—Nate Berkus



Stone Glen Sign

Ralph Van Landingham began to envision a garden on the University campus that would highlight rhododendrons. He wrote a letter to administrator Bonnie Cone in January 1966 that began, "It is my wish and hope that I can create a beautiful Rhododendron, Laurel, and Azalea garden for the University of North Carolina Charlotte in the area selected by Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner."

He hoped that planting could begin that spring and summer, and asked Charles Dewey and Ted Dinson (who had successfully planted in Van Landingham's home garden) to assist Dr. Hech with the project. Mr. Van Landingham explained that he had opened an account with Harris, Upham & Company in which he would place stock and could sell periodically to fund the project. He wrote that, "… someday this will be a garden of which the University will be proud, and which will justify being named the Van Landingham Memorial Garden."

Bonnie Cone was, indeed, supportive of the plan. So three powerful people were enthusiastic about the project. Ralph Van Landingham had money and stature in the community. Dr. Hech had the strength and scientific knowledge. Bonnie Cone had a positive attitude and influence at the University.

Now, time to get down to specifics. Later that month, Dr. Hech wrote a memo to Bonnie Cone that made it clear that he was enthusiastic about the project. He described the campus site he had chosen as, "…ideally suited. The terrain is heavily wooded, has two small streams, steep hills, rock outcrops, good drainage, and humus soil." He said that they would begin planting in February if possible and that the garden would include 120 hybrid rhododendrons, 50-70 azaleas, 75 hemlocks, and several dozen hollies and other companion plants." The one acre on which he planned to plant a few rhododendrons was now designated to be a two and a half acre garden full of colorful, flowering shrubs and beautiful trees.

One more element was needed. Although the University had a great deal of land on which to build, the Garden they were proposing would occupy a portion of it. Administrators were beginning to plan what would go where on the new campus. The top administrator, University Chancellor D.W. Colvard had approved the garden plan, so the project had officially gotten underway. He wrote a letter of thanks to Ralph Van Landingham for his generosity. This paved the way for Dr. Hech to break ground for a campus garden in 1966.

Dr. Hech and First Glen Sign

Algae and a New Friendship

Dr. Hech and Larry Meet

Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit; wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.
—Miles Kington

In fall, 1966, Larry Mellichamp, who would eventually become the Botanical Gardens Director, had graduated from high school in Charlotte and was a freshman at UNC Charlotte. When he enrolled in Dr. Hechenbleikner's Plant Biology class in the summer of 1967, a partnership which would ultimately guide the future of the Gardens.

Because Dr. Hech didn't particularly like lecturing, he kept lessons simple and instead gave his students challenges. Dr. M remembers one very well. Dr. Hech assigned them to find, and bring in, a sample of blue-green algae. Dr. M says, "I had messed around ponds since I was 10, so I found the algae at Freedom Park, put it in a jar and took it to class. I was so excited to have been given a challenge I knew I could fulfill" Apparently the other students hadn't been as resourceful because Dr. Hech was impressed with Larry's find. "Dr. Hech looked for students with something special—a talent, and who would respond to challenges," says Dr. M.

This mutual respect led not only to a mentor/protégé relationship but also to a lasting friendship. Dr. M says that even as a kid he had always enjoyed spending time with grownups, and apparently he found Dr. Hech especially intriguing. On a class trip to the mountains, he rode along with Dr. Hech, and he remembers it as a special opportunity to get to know his unconventional and witty professor.

That year The Beverly Hillbillies made its television debut, and perhaps Dr. Hech had the show in mind as they traveled the backcountry. "He told me about whiskey bushes (corn)," says Dr. M, "and he claimed that the mountain people, the 'hill Williams' as he called them, used them to make moonshine."

Dr. Matthews, then one of Larry's Biology professors, said that Larry was earning Dr. Hech's confidence. "You needed that because if he liked you, he liked you, and if he didn't like you, he didn't like you."

It's a good thing that Dr. Hech liked his student, Larry Mellichamp. Dr. Hech had no way of knowing this at the time, but he was having a profound influence on Larry, one that would eventually lead his apprentice to carry on and develop his work.

Collecting Trip Adventures

Dr. Hech and Larry Hit the Road

You've got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, or you might not get there.
—Yogi Berra

The new garden needed a lot of native plants, and since the best way to get them is to go to where they naturally grow, Dr. Hech and his new assistant Larry Mellichamp hit the road and headed for the hills (and elsewhere). These collecting trips invariably turned into

Linville, NC 1967, Larry with Feather Bells During First Field Trip with Dr. Hech

'where-the-heck-are-we' adventures.
We never planned ahead for field trips," Dr. Mellichamp says. "We never ever looked at road maps. We never knew where we were going, never knew what we were going to find, we never knew where we were. But we got there, saw interesting things, and got back." As Larry got older, he'd try to follow maps, but Dr. Hech would say that they didn't need maps, that he knew where they were going as the straight-drive station-wagon with air conditioning bounced along on what were sometimes rutty roads. "He never would admit that we were lost." When Larry would suggest that they "stop and collect some of those plants" Dr. Hech would say, "oh, we'll get those on the way back." But guess what. They never went back that way!

The two, mentor and student, went on many collecting excursions—spring, summer, fall, winter—from the mountains to the coast to dig up plants and bring them back for the new garden. According to Dr. M, Dr. Hech was "a true field biologist." While driving down the road (and occasional non-road), Dr. Hech recognized and pointed out plant life from inside the car, and he didn't have to get out and walk over to them to identify them. He talked to Larry about unusual plants and trees, talked about wasps' nests, chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease, birds, leaning trees, witches broom, and many practical things. As Larry learned more, he asked more questions. Dr. Hech could answer and explain so much—he was a world traveler and knew about all forms of natural history.

"One thing I've tried to teach students is to be observant," Dr. Hech once told a journalist. "So many people go through life, and they only see what they want to see, and that can be narrow and limited. I like to learn about almost everything. To me, they make a unit. It's all one big package. That's what I tried to get through particularly to some of my students."

As a scientist, Dr. Hech naturally used scientific terms when identifying specimens. While this method was appropriate and often necessary from a technical point of view, it frustrated some of the less scholarly people in his life.

His son Herbert (Buddy) remembers that when he was about ten years old, he went "botanizing" with his dad and some of his dad's friends. Buddy listened to the plant-expert adults talk back and forth using scientific terms and Latin names for each plant. "I got tired of it," says Buddy, "and I said, 'Why don't you tell me what the real names are?' Dad said, 'Those are the real names.'" Of course, Buddy wanted the common names. "Latin didn't compute with me, then or now. I just wanted to know if something was a sunflower." Buddy says that sometimes he would shrug and say, "Looks like a rose to me, Dad."

"When we went hiking, Daddy was always teaching us along the way," his daughter, Madeline, remembers. "He was pointing out rocks, fossils, animals, and plants, and using Latin names. He insisted on using Latin names."

While Dr. Hech was enthusiastic about collecting rhododendrons for the new garden, he wasn't as enthusiastic about labeling them once he got them there. Dr. M thinks that there are probably several reasons why Dr. Hech didn't go too much effort labeling specimens: "He thought he would always remember. It was too much trouble. He didn't think he was doing it for anyone else." By the seventies, Dr. Hech must have realized that identifying was a good idea, after all. Armed with a hand-held Dymo embosser (the old-fashioned gun thing that presses letters one by one on a narrow tape), he began some labeling. He got a heavy-duty model that would emboss on copper tape so the label would not be too conspicuous when hanging by a wire from a shrub (which mostly were the only plants he labeled). Even today those persistent copper tags are vital to identifying certain specimens.

In those early days, Dr. Hech paid for some plants out of his own pocket; Ralph Van Landingham gave him money for others. He traveled around to nurseries to buy rhododendrons from various nursery owners. He didn't want to pay much—always pinching pennies while still getting what he needed. He would walk away if the plants were too expensive in his mind.

"I believe in saving," Dr. Hech once told a journalist. "I'm more careful spending other people's money than I am my own." Dr. M said in the same article that Dr. Hech was, "a very thrifty, frugal person, bordering on stinginess. On the other hand, if he wanted to buy you something, money was no object." Dr. M said that he almost never paid for food and lodging while on plant collecting trips with Dr. Hech.

These days, an adventurer doesn't need a map. The adventurer can just whip out a smart phone, go to the GPS function, enter the location, press "GO," and head down the road. The image on the screen shows the quickest way, and the voice says: "Turn right, turn left…."

Before long, Voila! The adventurer is there!

But…the modern adventurer missed the fun of bouncing down rutty, rocky roads, or pulling over to check out an unusual wildflower growing on the roadside. His companions—students or kids—haven't learned how to find, identify, and appreciate the rocks, plants, and animals you can only discover when you wander.

Dr. Hech probably had the right idea. Hop in, roll down the windows, and let the dust fly.

Woodland Inspiration

Planting the Glen

To me a lush carpet of pine needles or spongy grass is more welcome than the most luxurious Persian rug.
—Helen Keller

Dr. Hech was friends with another pioneer in growing rhododendrons in the south—Dr. Earnest Yelton. He lived near Rutherfordton—on the way to Asheville. "Dr. Yelton's property was 'landscaped' naturally with native trees and shrubs and wildflowers," says Dr. Mellichamp. His five or six acres was heavily wooded with magnolias, rhododendrons, and other native plants. In the fall of 1967, Larry Mellichamp journeyed with Dr. Hech to Dr. Yelton's home and took pictures of his garden.

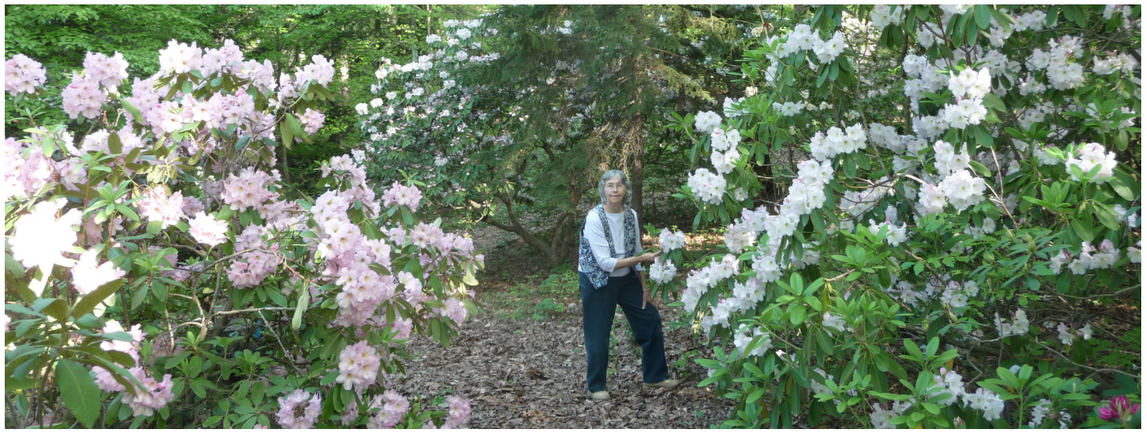
Dr. M says, "This possibly inspired Dr. Hech to develop the Van Landingham Glen in a similar naturalist manner with natives. He knew many natives anyway, but he had not designed such a planting. Most of his landscaping that I saw was more formal—such as school grounds, or were not conducive to naturalistic 'woodland' plantings."

Dr. Hech was planting rhododendrons in a wooded area on campus and was including plants that were native to the Carolinas (but not just to the Piedmont). Perhaps in Dr. Hech's eyes, Dr. Yelton's natural landscaping was a living example of what a woodland garden could be.

That year in California the Redwood National Park was created to protect the redwoods and to preserve their forest environment, and in Charlotte, Dr. Hech was inspired to make the new rhododendron garden into a true woodland garden.

Dr. Yelton was supportive of Dr. Hech's plans and invited him to come back for seedlings. Dr. Hech and Larry drove back to Dr. Yelton's that fall in Dr. Hech's station wagon with an open trailer. "We dug 2-to-3-foot rhododendron seedlings from where Dr. Yelton had lined them up to grow," Dr. M says. "He gave us dozens of unnamed hybrid rhododendrons that he had grown himself and had run out of room. We brought them back to campus and planted them in masses and borders in the new woodland garden. Dr. Hech labeled them 'Yelton Hybrids.'"

Dr. M says that many of the hybrids were fragrant because Dr. Yelton used Rhododendron fortunei as a parent. "A tiny few are among the best



Audrey Mellichamp with Yelton Rhododendron Hybrids, 40 Years Later

plants we ever grew in terms of floriferousness [which is how much a plant bears flowers] and fragrance, but only two or three would have been worth naming because most of them did not grow into attractive specimens." He points out that while most of these earliest rhododendrons have died and been replaced, some are still doing well. You can count on one hand the number of hybrids that became "good-doers" and have lasted more than 45 years.
"I hardly ever saw Dr. Yelton again," says Dr. M. "I consider this 'Yelton trip' my introduction to rhododendron gardening. As 100% naïve as I was as an undergraduate student, the images and incident stayed with me and provided an anchor for future work."

Larry was pleased to be working with his mentor, but planting those first rhododendrons was no easy task. "I was on my hands and knees," he says, "and Dr. Hech handed the plants to me and I put dirt around the plant roots. He busted me once because I was wearing rubber gloves. He said, 'Don't use those rubber gloves. They're too expensive to use in dirt.' He probably used them for mixing chemicals. So I took them off and worked in bare hands. As time went on, I found that I liked using cloth gloves, so I found appropriate pairs."

"He asked me for help, so I helped. Other students didn't have the same interest." Larry remembers. He wasn't working for pay because it wasn't a real job, but Dr. Hech gave him "a little money" from time to time.

While rhododendrons were the primary reason for the Glen, Dr. Hech began planting other plants as well. He didn't include Japanese maples, camellias, or other exotic beauties, instead focusing exclusively on natives, and he knew them well. He planted azaleas, hemlocks, magnolias, mountain-laurel, silverbells, wildflowers and ferns from the mountains to complement the rhododendrons.

All the while, the fund that Ralph Van Landingham had established supplied money to continue the project. In January, 1968 Dr. Hech wrote a letter to Ralph Van Landingham thankfully acknowledging a check for $968.53 (proceeds from the fund) and thanked him for his continued support and interest in the Garden, adding, "It is evident that in a few years' time it promises to be one of the outstanding features of our campus."

It all came together. Ralph Van Landingham's generosity and interest in rhododendrons, Dr. Yelton's property as a model, and Dr. Hech's knowledge of native plants, all combined to create the Van Landingham Glen.

A Hands-On Hobby

Dr. Hech in the Glen

When you see someone put on his Big Boots, you can be pretty sure that an Adventure is going to happen.
—Winnie the Pooh

Wrought Iron Glen Sign

Talk about a big backyard—Dr. Hech worked in the Glen as if it were behind his own house. He was a hands-on man who thrived on working the soil, and although he enlisted the University ground crew when they weren't busy, he did much of the manual work in the Glen himself. On afternoons when he didn't have to teach, he changed his clothes and headed out to the Glen. "He'd say he was going to 'get a few licks in the Glen'," Dr. Mellichamp remembers.

Dr. Hech had to fight the enemies out there: invasive plants, like Japanese honeysuckle, that covered everything. As Ray Stevens was singing "Everything is Beautiful," Dr. Hech was trying to eradicate all that was not so beautiful in the Glen. He cut down saplingsand cleared the way for trails. A master of fortitude, he kept clearing little parts at a time, and since we're talking about acres, this was no mean feat.

"A human bulldozer, an ox with a brain," was what Dr. Hech called his Glen assistant, Jim Leiby, a business student whose brute strength helped to transform the Glen by moving heavy rocks, trees, and pipes. Dr. M remembers that Leiby, "seemed twice the size of the average person." Jim told journalist Vivian Fogle that, "Dr. Hech used to get a kick out of it when I'd carry something someone else would request a front-end loader for."

Jim also shared with a journalist an anecdote that illustrated Dr. Hech's own heartiness in balancing his administrative and gardening duties. According to the story, Dr. Hech was out in the Glen, wearing his dirty work clothes and wielding a wheelbarrow when a pompous looking man in a suit walked up to him and asked him where to find "Dr. Hechenbleikner." Dr. Hech put on his best country accent and directed the man to his office. As soon as the stranger was out of sight, Dr. Hech dropped the wheelbarrow, hurried in to his office, and greeted the startled man from behind his desk.

Dr. Hech may have scurried behind his desk to surprise the guest, but sitting behind a desk, particularly when it meant doing paperwork, was not his idea of a good time. A true outdoorsman, he avoided being trapped in his office whenever he could. Dr. Matthews remembers a time in those early years when the department was ready to become accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities.

Dr. Matthews remembers that they had to "write a self-study explaining our program, our vision, and our projections for the Biology Department. Hech hated paperwork, so he laid the papers on my desk and said, 'Here, this has to be done.' I was a rookie back then and he was the boss, so I couldn't say no. That freed up Hech to work in the Gardens and do what he wanted to do. I wrote the self-study with the projection for the Biology Department's next two years."

So was Dr. Hech pleased with the result? Dr. Matthews laughs and says, "I don't think Hech

even read it."

And so the Van Landingham Glen was growing from one acre to seven acres "one lick at a time." Dr. Hech dug holes in the loamy soil and picked out rocks to make borders. Dr. M remembers that, "As he laid out trails in the woods, he tried to incorporate the natural lay of the land: natural rock features, going around the creek, and looking for ways to make interesting paths through the Glen."

Dr. Hech wanted the Garden to look natural and as native as possible, so he edged the paths with locust logs from the North Carolina Mountains and covered the paths with locally collected aged sawdust.

Buddy Hechenbleikner sometimes helped his dad in the Garden when he came home back to Charlotte. "I helped him plant things and clean up—there were more limbs falling off those big trees than you can count."
As they worked, Dr. Hech never asked Buddy for his opinion about the Gardens. Buddy remembers that, "as long as he was happy with the way things looked, that was the only judge he recognized. If he was pleased with the way things went, no amount of criticism or suggestions would carry any weight with him. He was single-minded about doing things his own way. Dad never had an opinion he didn't love."

As he did things his own way, Dr. Hech and his occasional help planted the one-to-three-foot-high rhododendrons, and sometimes too close together—two feet apart when they would eventually grow ten feet wide. "This led to crowding," says Dr. M, "but it didn't matter because they all just grew up together."

The Glen became a personal hobby to Dr. Hech. "He always said that someday he would have either an arboretum or a zoo," says Dr. M. "Plants are a whole lot easier to take care of than animals, so he got into plants." Of course the garden was to enhance the campus, and Dr. Hech knew that the Glen eventually would be open to the public, but he didn't know how or when. Until then it would be a pet project extraordinaire. Dr. Hech liked to show off the Glen to visitors and friends. Dr. Mellichamp says, "He viewed it like his personal garden: kind of 'invitation only'."

Dr. Hech took his daughter, Madeline, on tours through the years—proudly showing her around. "He seemed pleased with the whole idea of it." Dr. Matthews remembers that when he ventured down to check out progress in the Gardens, Dr. Hech was obviously happy to be doing his own thing. He says, "Hech might tell you what he was doing, and you might make a comment, but he didn't ask for advice. He didn't say, 'What do you think?' He just said, 'This is what I'm going to do.'" That was okay with Dr. Matthews. "I didn't interfere with Hech's Botanical Gardens. I wasn't interested in working in the Gardens. We tend to drift in the direction where we feel the most comfortable." He was, however, impressed with his colleague's project. "Hech had a vision. He was looking at the future and visualizing mature gardens."

Back then it wasn't designed for people to wander down for self-tours. The gates were kept locked, there were no benches, and the plants were not labeled. For the public, the Van Landingham Glen was like a beautiful piece of art waiting to be unveiled.

Peace in the Garden

Van Landingham Glen Dedication

You can't be suspicious of a tree,
or accuse a bird or squirrel of subversion,
or challenge the ideology of a violet.
—Hal Borland

Astronauts landed on the moon in 1969, and down here on earth, college students were vehemently protesting the Vietnam War (500,000 troops were fighting that year).

Yet there were peaceful events on *terra firma* that year, too. One was the celebration of a beautiful area on UNC Charlotte's campus where people could relax and enjoy nature. The Van Landingham Glen dedication ceremony was held on Sunday, April 27, under the shade of tall trees in the beautiful woodland which then included 250 rhododendrons of blooming age, and about 700 plants that would bloom in a few years.

The program included remarks by Bonnie Cone (Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs & Community Relations), Susie Cordon (Ralph Van Landingham's niece), Dr. D.W. Colvard (Chancellor), and Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner (Director of Gardens & Grounds and Professor of Biology). Ralph Van Landingham, the donor who had made the garden project possible, was unfortunately too ill to attend. He had never married, so his niece, Susie Cordon, represented him at the dedication.

Not wanting to stand out in the crowd, Larry Mellichamp watched the dedication from behind a tree and took pictures with Dr. Hech's fancy camera.

Chancellor Colvard remarks seem particularly eloquent:

"While a university does not have a soul, it has a style and a demeanor that affect the lives of its students, of its faculty, and the whole of society. It strives to cultivate the intellectual, physical and spiritual qualities of all who come to it for any purpose. Its style, if it is to achieve its purposes, must stir the soul and lift the spirit of the individual. As we build classrooms, libraries, gymnasiums, and dormitories, we delight in the additions of gardens, lakes, and carillons as parts of our style and our environment."

The Van Landingham Glen was being celebrated approximately three years after Dr. Hech had begun digging. And the Glen's allure was just beginning.

Glen Dedication, April 1969, Dr. Hech, Susie Cordon, Dr. Colvard, Bonnie Cone

PROGRAM

3:00 p.m. April 27, 1969

Welcome . . . . . Dr. Bonnie E. Cone,
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs
and Community Relations

Presentation of Garden . . . . . Miss Susie Cordon,
Niece of the Donor

Acceptance for the University . . . Dr. D. W. Colvard,
Chancellor

Dedication of Garden . . Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner,
Director of Gardens and Grounds
and Professor of Biology

Invitation to View the Garden . . . . . .
Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner

THE VAN LANDINGHAM GLEN AT THE UNIVERSITY
OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLOTTE
BY HERBERT HECHENBLEIKNER

In 1960, Ralph Van Landingham decided to convert an old fashioned, largely overgrown five acre yard into a rhododendron garden. With the help of Charles Dewey and others, but mainly the former, he began planting rhododendrons. In 1966, after having had success with these plantings, he became interested, with Dr. Hechenbleikner, in a rhododendron garden at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

The site chosen was almost ideal. Tall trees--many had to be cut in the initial thinning operation--furnish high shade. In the center of the wooded, rather rocky slopes two small streams converge. The soil is a sandy loam with considerable humus content and good drainage. An indigenous plant also indicated this as a good site, for along one branch were several native Azalea nudiflora, some as much as seven feet tall. The ground, in places, is literally carpeted with wild ginger (Hexastylis arifolia) and hepatica (Hepatica americana). There are presently about 250 hybrid rhododendrons of blooming age together with 700 small plants which should begin blooming during the next two to five years. In addition, there are several dozen specimens of native azaleas, rhododendrons, and various woody and herbaceous plants native to the western North Carolina mountains.

A primary concept of this garden is to keep it as natural as possible in appearance with no exotic plants, whatsoever, except the hybrid rhododendrons. To promote the natural appearance of the site the paths were constructed of locust logs, as edging, from the North Carolina mountains and aged sawdust obtained locally.

There are a few rhododendron species plants, exotic, represented and more are planned each year. There have been two plantings made each year, in the fall and the spring. Most of the younger rooted cuttings set out were from material obtained from the sponsor's garden at 2010 The Plaza. In time, it is hoped that this Glen, which is now on an area of three acres, will be expanded to ten or twelve acres and eventually become a test garden for the Piedmont section of the Carolinas.

This rhododendron garden will be endowed by the sponsor so that it may continue to grow and develop to keep pace with the expansion of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Glen Dedication Program 1969

Comrades with Shovels

Piedmont Rhododendron Society

There's a lot of intelligence in the hands.
When you pick up a shovel,
the hands know what to do.
—Tom Waits

Dr. Hech, Dr. Kellam, Mr. Dewey, and other optimistic rhododendron growers had begun having periodic meetings to share ideas. Their collaborations became official in 1969 when they applied to the American Rhododendron Society to form a Piedmont chapter.

They were in. They had many years of informal meetings and gatherings. In 1999, Larry Mellichamp compiled minutes, notes, and newspaper articles, creating a dossier to document the Piedmont chapter that was kept in a large notebook and was displayed at Dr. Hech's 90th birthday party. He also kept a copy of the certificate from the Rhododendron Society chartering the Piedmont club.

The Piedmont Rhododendron Society members traveled, shared ideas, and experimented with propagating rhododendrons and azaleas to create hybrids from native shrubs.

A member of the chapter, Dr. Robert Means (a surgeon in Winston-Salem, NC), wrote an article "Propagation and Hybridizing in the Piedmont Area" in the summer 1994 Journal of American Rhododendron Society. In it he writes that when he joined the newly formed Piedmont Chapter in the early 1970s, he "began a never-ending education." He explained by writing, "There was a generous exchange of knowledge from such outstanding members as Herbert Hechenbleikner, Larry Mellichamp, Don Kellam, Marshall Stillwell, Tracy Lounsbury, Sr., and many, many, others. Frequent field trips to the mountains, private gardens, and regional meetings provided affordable plants and propagation material."

The Society chapter that Dr. Hech and his colleagues formed grew to the American Rhododendron Society Piedmont Chapter/ Southeastern Horticultural Society. Its mission statement was to "encourage interest in not only the genus rhododendron, but in all horticulture." The Piedmont chapter disbanded around 2012 due to dwindling member involvement.

One of the Society's websites showed a cluster of creamy yellow flowers of a rhododendron named "Herbie," a hybrid created by Dr. Yelton and named for Herbert Hechenbleikner. The caption refers to Dr. Hech as, "one of the founding members of the charter of the Piedmont American Rhododendron Society who helped establish the growing of rhododendrons in the Charlotte area as a regular part of growing in the South."
"Herbie" is just one of the reminders that Dr. Hech and his comrades were successful in growing (and showing others how to grow) green and vibrant rhododendrons where no green and vibrant rhododendrons had grown before.

Rhododendron Club, ca. 1970

Rhodendron Club Members Working on Glen, 1992

Making It All Possible

Ralph Van Landingham's Endowment

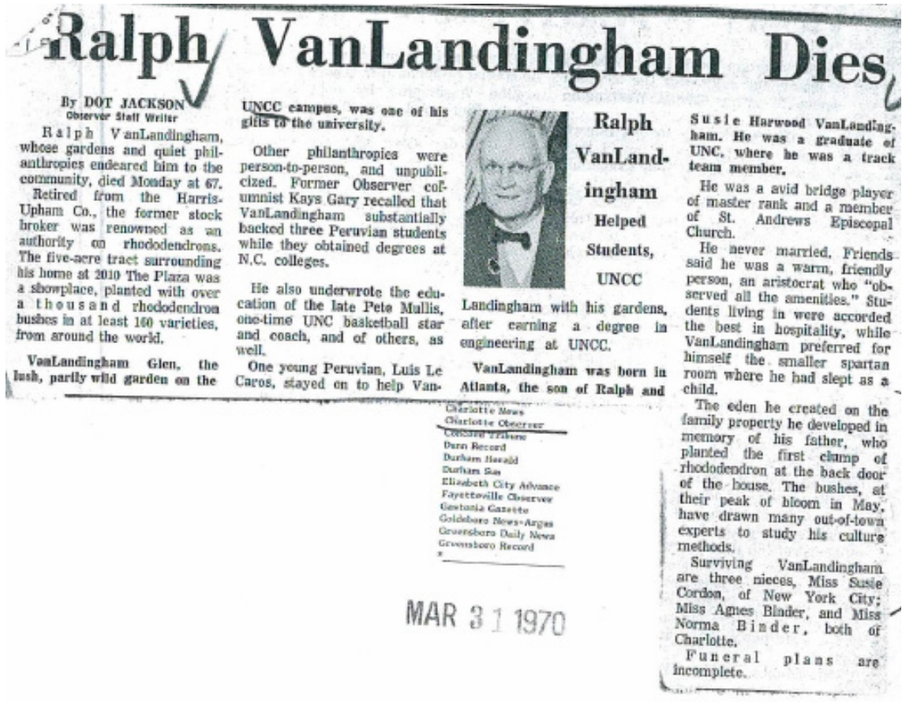
You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.
—Dale Carnegie

Ralph Van Landingham was not only a respected local businessman and philanthropist, but also known to be a warm, friendly person. He died in March, 1970 at age 67. He had graduated from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, and was a member of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Charlotte.

The $150,000 endowment he left for upkeep of the Van Landingham estate on The Plaza (which the University eventually sold), and the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens would help to push the campus gardens forward. He was apparently more than just a wealthy man who felt obligated to leave money to a cause. He wanted to share with the public the garden experiences that he had enjoyed.

Mr. Van Landingham's endowment allowed the Glen, named for him, and the Susie Harwood Garden, named for his mother, to grow.

Dr. Mellichamp remembers that Ralph Van Landingham's death deeply affected Dr. Hech: "It was a great blow to him. He ordered a wreath of beautiful rhododendrons for the funeral and then set it out in front of the Glen entrance. He had lost a long-time friend."



Ralph VanLandingham Dies

By DOT JACKSON
Observer Staff Writer

Ralph VanLandingham, whose gardens and quiet philanthropies endeared him to the community, died Monday at 67.

Retired from the Harris-Upham Co., the former stock broker was renowned as an authority on rhododendrons. The five-acre tract surrounding his home at 2010 The Plaza was a showplace, planted with over a thousand rhododendron bushes in at least 160 varieties, from around the world.

VanLandingham Glen, the lush, partly wild garden on the UNCC campus, was one of his gifts to the university.

Other philanthropies were person-to-person, and unpublicized. Former Observer columnist Kays Gary recalled that VanLandingham substantially backed three Peruvian students while they obtained degrees at N.C. colleges.

He also underwrote the education of the late Pete Mullis, one-time UNC basketball star and coach, and of others, as well.

One young Peruvian, Luis Le Caros, stayed on to help Van-

Ralph VanLandingham Helped Students, UNCC

Landingham with his gardens, after earning a degree in engineering at UNCC.

VanLandingham was born in Atlanta, the son of Ralph and Susie Harwood VanLandingham. He was a graduate of UNC, where he was a track team member.

He was a avid bridge player of master rank and a member of St. Andrews Episcopal Church.

He never married. Friends said he was a warm, friendly person, an aristocrat who "observed all the amenities." Students living in were accorded the best in hospitality, while VanLandingham preferred for himself the smaller spartan room where he had slept as a child.

The eden he created on the family property he developed in memory of his father, who planted the first clump of rhododendron at the back door of the house. The bushes, at their peak of bloom in May, have drawn many out-of-town experts to study his culture methods.

Surviving VanLandingham are three nieces, Miss Susie Cordon, of New York City; Miss Agnes Binder, and Miss Norma Binder, both of Charlotte.

Funeral plans are incomplete.

Charlotte News
Charlotte Observer
Greensboro Tribune
Dunn Record
Durham Herald
Durham Sun
Elizabeth City Advance
Fayetteville Observer
Gastonia Gazette
Goldsboro News-Argus
Greensboro Daily News
Greensboro Record

MAR 31 1970

Charlotte Observer Obituary, 1970

A New Orchid Home

The First McMillan Greenhouse

One of most attractive things about flowers is in their beautiful reserve.
—Henry David Thoreau

In 1970 what was to be the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens consisted solely of the Van Landingham Glen. That was about to change. A greenhouse was soon to be added, thanks to a wealthy and generous Charlotte couple, Dorothy and Dr. Thomas McMillan, a psychiatrist and land developer. Dr. Hech and Bonnie Cone had known the McMillans for some time; in fact, Dr. Hech lived across the street from them on Carmel Road.

Dorothy McMillan had grown orchids for many years. She took the blooms to hospitals for patients to enjoy, gave them for birthday and Christmas gifts, and sent them home with customers at the Charlotte candy company run by her first husband, Joseph Schoenith. The Schoenith Foundation was set up in his name, and money from the foundation would be used to help fund projects at the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens.

Dr. McMillan was Dorothy's second husband, and he also appreciated his wife's favorite flowers. Their orchid collection grew. They had traveled to Hawaii many times, and in 1970 they decided to make it their home. They wanted to donate their collection of 2,000-3,000 orchids from all over the world to the University. That December, Silas Vaughn of the Facilities Advisory Committee, wrote a letter to thank the McMillans for their donation and to inform them that the plants had been valued at $27,322.

It was a large and valuable collection, and required a suitable home. The McMillans, therefore, donated $5,000 to build a greenhouse.

Dr. Hech wrote a memo to Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Dr. Philip Hildreth, explaining the plans: "This greenhouse would be 21 x 60 feet, and would be equipped with heaters, fans, water systems, etc. so it will [be] easy to maintain without much care or trouble." What an understatement that was, Larry later noted.

The site chosen for the greenhouse was behind the woods and behind the Services Management Building. Always enterprising, Dr. Hech built it with the help of some friends, one of whom was in the steel business. It was a massive project. They built the aluminum frame, and Dr. Hech nailed on pieces of fiberglass. Wood was cut for the stair-step benches. When it was finished, the structure was 40 x 60 feet, and in went the orchids, enough to fill the greenhouse, and that's a lot of orchids. Most were cymbidiums and cattleyas, and many were lavender-colored, apparently the McMillans' favorite orchid shade.

Building the greenhouse had been an ambitious and arduous task, but what Dr. Hech had predicted would "be easy to maintain without much care or trouble" turned out to be not all that he had hoped for. "It was homemade and adequately built," says Dr. Mellichamp, "but not suitable for an orchid collection. Because it was not air tight, it was too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer. It had inadequate ventilation and cooling. The first winter it was too cold, and half of the orchids died. The following summer was too hot, so half of what was left died."

It was only then that the Biology Department hired a lab instructor, Dr. Katharine Greg. She was an orchid expert who had done research on their care, and was a big help; but she obviously could not overcome the problems of the inadequate greenhouse.

This first greenhouse was definitely not working out very well, but it was a start.

A Log Cabin in the Woods

Dr. Hech in the Glen

Imagination is more important than knowledge.
—Albert Einstein

In 1972 James Bond went on another espionage escapade in Diamonds are Forever; the music died (but not really) in Don McLean's song "American Pie," and all heck broke loose as the Watergate scandal erupted.

Meanwhile, back in the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens, Dr. Hech was breaking loose, too. He was in his own wild place breaking free from life in a twentieth-century city, and was creating a rustic world reminiscent of earlier times. He liked to imagine the Van Landingham Glen as an idyllic space where he could fulfill, as Dr. Mellichamp puts it, "a long-time dream of a bucolic place," simple, honest, and rustic. He was, after all, a sophisticated man who appreciated the beauty and virtues of unsophisticated places.

A log cabin is about as rustic as you can get, so Dr. Hech built one in the Glen. Now this is where the mystery comes in—where did the cabin come from? Many stories have been put forth by former and present staff members. One person says that Dr. Hech salvaged the logs from a hundred-year-old barn that was being torn down somewhere in this region. Someone else claims that Dr. Hech found an existing old cabin somewhere and moved it to the Glen. Perhaps the most intriguing story (silly, but fun to imagine) is this: It was the log cabin in which Abraham Lincoln was born. Dr. Hech drove his truck up to Kentucky, sneaked onto the historic homestead under the cover of darkness, dismantled the cabin log by log, hauled it back to Charlotte, and rebuilt it (cowbell and all) in the Glen.

"Hmmm, I'd hate to dispel such a good story!" says Brad Black, who worked with Dr. Hech in the Gardens back then. "Could be true, but I expect

Winter Cabin

that I would have heard it. Reality is that Dr. Hech and I drove just north of Shelby to pick it up."
He says that because it was already taken apart, he never saw the original structure, but doubts that it had ever been anything impressive. "We assembled it without detailed plans, more or less fitting pieces as they seemed to fit best, and made things go together into a working shed. If the cabin was of historic nature, I'm certain that there would have been much greater attention to detail, with pieces numbered and plans from the disassembly to use for reconstruction."

That all makes sense; nonetheless, there is still mystery to the old log cabin in the woods. This explains why curious children (and some inquisitive adults) shyly pull open its thick wooden door to peek inside.
Regardless of its origin, the cabin was more than just a quaint, rustic addition to the scenery. It was a handy shed in which Dr. Hech stored shovels, hoses, wheelbarrows, and other tools of his trade. The tools and plants in containers are now housed in Fort Jackson (named for Harland Jackson), a fenced-in nursery area at the east edge of the Glen, but the rustic cabin continues to add character to what Dr. Hech imagined to be a peaceful, bucolic world.

Little Sweet Betsy Trillium in the Glen, Cabin in Back

Cabin Under Construction, ca 1972

Part Two
1976-1985

Changing Roles

Dr. Mellichamp at the Helm; Dr. Hech Breaks Free

Real success is finding your lifework
in the work you love.
—David McCullough

In 1970 Larry Mellichamp graduated from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with a Bachelor's degree in Biology, then headed north to the Great Lakes State to attend the University of Michigan where he earned a master's and a Ph.D. in Botany in 1976.

Dr. Larry Mellichamp, 1990

The 1970s were a great time to study botany. Nature preservation, including the protection of natural areas and rare plants, was an increasingly important topic during this time; in 1973 the Endangered Species Act was passed into law to "protect species and the ecosystems on which they depend."

Dr. Matthews says that his former student made the right choice when he chose his graduate degree. "Larry studied botany instead of horticulture, so he also learned about wild plants in nature, as well as hybrids."

"I am not a crook," claimed Richard Nixon as the Watergate scandal exploded, "Shark! Shark!" screamed the woman on the beach in Jaws, and "Hello, Dr. Hech," said Larry Mellichamp in those mid-seventies summers when he visited the Gardens. While he was in graduate school, he frequently came back home to Charlotte and spent time with Dr. Hech, who was always happy to see him and to show him what was going on. Larry watched Dr. Hech build the log cabin in the Glen and the original fiberglass-and-aluminum-frame greenhouse for the McMillan's orchids.

Larry also kept in touch with Dr. Matthews, and he and Dr. Hech mentioned the idea of Larry coming back to the Gardens after he finished graduate school. Dr. Matthews knew the timing would be perfect because Dr. Hech was going to retire as a professor, and that they would need someone to teach Botany and Horticulture. They would also need someone to manage the Gardens and Greenhouse. Not only did Larry Mellichamp fit those requirements, but Dr. Hech was also confident that if Larry came back, he wouldn't mess up things. According to Dr. Matthews, "Hech knew Larry and trusted him. Hech didn't consider him a threat to the Botanical Gardens, or to Hech's own vision. Larry was smart enough, and knew Hech's work well."

So when he graduated from the University of Michigan and returned to Charlotte in 1976, Larry, now Dr. T. Lawrence Mellichamp, came back to his *alma mater* and the UNC Charlotte Gardens with Dr. Hech's and Dr. Matthew's blessings and began his career. Larry was pleased to be back on his home turf. "It was a dream job—to come back to a place I knew, to manage a garden where I had helped to plant some of the first plants. I knew many of the people on campus. I knew all the history." Dr. Mellichamp was in place at the helm, making a whopping salary of $11,000. In his new position, he became "Dr. M" to students and many colleagues.

Partners

Audrey and Larry

Never lose the childlike wonder. Show gratitude.
Don't complain; just work harder. Never give up.
—Randy Pausch

Dr. Mellichamp brought someone back with him from the University of Michigan. He and his wife, Audrey, had met there while she was studying for a Master's degree in Botany. She says, "Larry and I were always a team because we were graduate students in botany together."

Although a native of Michigan, Audrey was willing to move down to Charlotte with Larry, who was enthusiastic about returning to the Gardens that he had helped Dr. Hech start. "Larry applied only at UNC Charlotte because he wanted to come back," Audrey says. "It was good timing, because his mentor, Dr. Hech, was retiring. I think it was meant to be."

The move south entailed a lot more than just throwing a few personal belongings into a trunk and starting down the road. As true botanists, Audrey and Larry took along some plants. Fussy plants at that. "Our teamwork started when we brought back plants from the University of Michigan Botanical Garden," says Audrey. "Larry brought the plants that needed the cooler weather in the back of a U-haul truck that he and his dad, Bill, drove; and I had the cacti and succulents in my car because there was no air conditioning in my car. I was okay with that, and the plants were okay with that. They started blooming in the car, and some didn't smell too good. It was so funny. We eventually got down to Charlotte."

Once Audrey and Larry got settled in Charlotte, they had to get into the swing of caring for the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens right away. "When I first got here," says Audrey, "I was a part-time gardener for Dr. Hech for about six to eight months, just to get my feet on the ground. That gave me an appreciation of the Glen and for Dr. Hech."

Audrey Mellichamp, 1976

Dr. Hech had retired as a professor but stayed on to work in the Gardens—for no pay. Dr. M says, "I can see him throwing his hands up and saying, 'Hooray! No more faculty meetings. No more classrooms. No more grading tests. I can work in the Glen full-time'."

While Dr. Hech was free to pursue his labor of love outside in the Glen, there was work to be done every day in the old greenhouse—not least of all, tending the plants. Because plants don't know how to turn on the hose and don't understand the concept of regular business

hours, the Mellichamps were busy, even on weekends.

"Larry would go off with his staff or on student field trips" Audrey remembers, "and I would water in the greenhouse and talk to visitors. We were in tune to that because we had a very good upbringing at the University of Michigan, where you do talk to visitors and tell them what you have and what is special about the plants."

"People just don't realize that plants need to be watered on the weekends and holidays," says Audrey. "Even a Biology professor asked us what we did on the weekends. When we said that we come into water the plants, he said, 'Oh, the plants need to be watered on both weekend days, too?' He was surprised that the plants took so much care. I said, 'Well, you have to feed horses, don't you? I mean, you can't leave them on the weekend.'"

She says that Larry, "has an uncanny instinct" that is invaluable in running a greenhouse. "He can walk into the greenhouse and know that something is just not right. He'll go around and know if something is off, or needs to be checked, or something is left open. He'll walk around until he finds it. That's an unusual skill that he has."

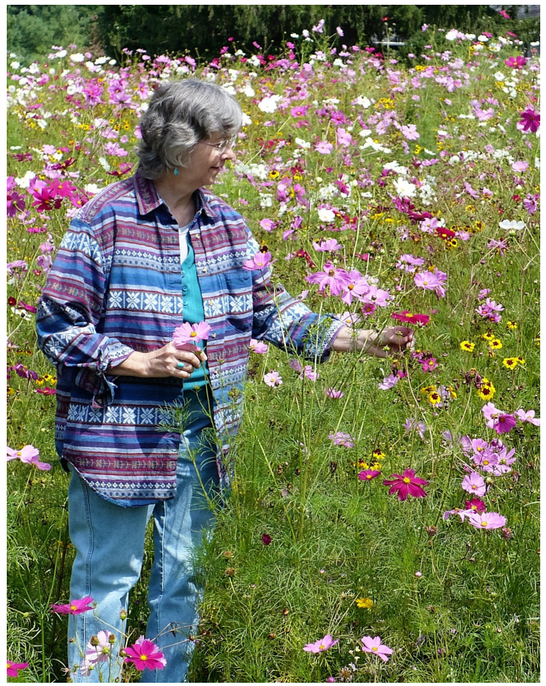
Judging by what they accomplished together in those early days, it's apparent that both of the team members—Audrey and Larry — have unusual skills. Moving fussy plants was the easy part.

Night Time Enchantment

Twilight in the Greenhouse

The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our senses to sharpen.
—W.B. Yeats

"Since I came from a Botany education, I enjoyed walking through the Glen," Audrey says, "seeing the skunk cabbage when it was in bloom in the early spring and other spring flowers. I can relate to the Glen. But then when the Susie Harwood Garden developed, with the pond and the Asian



Audrey Enjoying Flowers

Garden, that was unique."
From the early days on, the Greenhouse has been a special place for Audrey. "The Greenhouse at night is magical," she says. "There are few lights on. You have a different atmosphere, different smell."

Sharing this experience makes it especially significant. "A special memory is when our night-blooming cereus cactus was blooming at around eleven o'clock one night," Audrey remembers. "We called up Bonnie Cone (who just lived across the street in College Downs) and said, 'Do you want to come over and see this? It's a rare opportunity.' She got dressed and we went and picked her up, and she came and looked at our flower—the big white bloom. It was a special time, a magical time. She was always ready to do those things, to support our efforts. It was nice to know her."

Night Blooming Cereus Cactus, (left-right) Hazel and Paul Delcourt, Bonnie Cone, and Audrey Mellichamp

Tending a greenhouse is a whole lot of work. It takes dedication to water plant after plant seven days a week while handling other responsibilities. But it takes more than dedication, i. It takes what Audrey and Larry have an appreciation for the magic of the nighttime bloom of a cereus cactus, and a desire to share the experience.

A Woman of Substance

Bonnie Cone

Trust that little voice in your head that says, 'Wouldn't it be interesting if...,' and then do it.
—Duane Michals

Developing the Gardens was a major endeavor that needed financial support, hands-on labor, and administrative backing. One influential administrator who strongly backed the projects was Bonnie Cone. She was a highly respected leader of UNC Charlotte, and her interest in and support of the Gardens was invaluable. "Bonnie Cone was very supportive of the Gardens," says Dr. Mellichamp. "She thought it was a wonderful thing."

People not only admired her, but they also listened to her. "She was quite an institution," says Dr. M. Bonnie Cone earned a master's degree at Duke University, acted as Director of Charlotte College, helped to found the University of North

Bonnie Cone

Carolina Charlotte, and served as a member of its administration.

“She was famous for helping many kids get into the University despite low grades or lack of money—just because she believed in them,” says Dr. M. “And many proved her right. They didn’t want to disappoint her. She talked to women’s groups and minority groups about her struggles back in the days when those folks didn’t get much attention.”

Bonnie Cone at Plant Sale

Ken Sanford also well remembers Bonnie Cone. She was one of the people he admired. In his book, Ken writes about her many administrative accomplishments, but he also highlights how she touched individual people’s lives. He says that she encouraged students to reach their full potential: “Many of Cone’s students said that they had been headed toward mediocre futures until she inspired them and turned them around.”

Ken knew her not only as an influential leader, and student mentor, but also as a kind friend. Ken and his wife, Alice, had invited her over for dinner to celebrate his hiring on at Charlotte College, but that evening their son, Tim, was sick and needed to go to the hospital. Miss Bonnie (as many people called her) insisted on staying with their younger son, Scott, so that both Ken and Alice could accompany Tim to the hospital. Ken wrote, “Neither one of us could believe that the president of a college had babysat for us that night.”

In later years Bonnie Cone stayed on as Vice-Chancellor of Development, specifically in charge of fundraising. She knew everybody and everybody knew her, and there were people who would donate only to her personally. Dr. M remembers that she was always on the phone when he visited her in her office. She gave him advice: “She told me to always keep up with your donors. Write them letters on the anniversary of their gifts. Keep in touch. I’ve always remembered that.”

One of her enduring traits was that she was always positive. Dr. M says, “An appropriate title for a Cone biography would be ‘It’s a Pretty Day’. Her motto was always be positive and never say anything negative; if you can’t say anything good, just say ‘It’s a pretty day.’”

As their friendship developed, Bonnie Cone felt comfortable asking for Dr. M’s horticultural help—so comfortable in fact that she would occasionally call him in the middle of the night to say that she needed a plant for this or that, or that they needed to visit someone with a problem. During the 1980s, Larry and Bonnie spent a lot of time together. He went to her house regularly and talked about plants.

The Gardens needed all the support it could get in the 1980s, and having Bonnie Cone on its side was a benefit. She had important connections and an interest in plants. Most of all, she had a positive “we can do this” attitude.

“One example of her invaluable help came about 1985 when the University took back the money we had made that year on our plant sale,” Dr M remembers. “We had been having sales since 1977, and it was our only reliable source of funds. Suddenly, when the Administration realized we made over $5,000 that year, they said ‘you can’t do that, sell state property (plants we grew) and keep the money, there is no provision for that, it has to go back to the State.’”

This unfortunate development would catch anyone off-guard, but Bonnie came in with her ‘It’s a pretty day’ attitude. “We were stunned; what were we to do now,” Dr. M remembers. “When Bonnie found out (I told her), she contacted her friends Dr. Carlisle and Margery Adams and asked if they could help. They were plant lovers, especially camellias and orchids. They replaced the $5,000 that year as donation, and continued to give annually for the next 20 years.”

These were the kinds of relationships that Bonnie created and nurtured. Dr. M spent many hours with the Adams, helping them with their landscape and to acquire plants on trips to nurseries. He recalls that “without their help in those early years, we would have struggled mightily to make ends meet. The Adams Camellia Walk was dedicated in their honor in the Susie Harwood Garden in 2012.”

It didn’t take long for the University to find an administrative way for the Gardens to keep our plant sale money after Dr. Mellichamp told them they would have to allocate a similar amount to them each year if we were to remain viable. Plant sales got bigger and bigger. By 2014 the Gardens started grossing more than $75,000 a year.

Carlisle and Margery Adams, 1990

Staking His Claim

Dr. Hech and the Susie Harwood Garden

Just because you're not paranoid, doesn't mean they're not out to get you.
—Colin Sautar

The area destined to become Susie Harwood Garden, the garden that Ralph Van Landingham had requested in honor of his mother, was a dense forest in 1976. "The Harwood Garden was not even a gleam in anyone's eye then," says Dr. Mellichamp.

Susie Harwood Garden, ca. 1979

"May the force be with you," was the catchphrase in Star Wars in 1977, and Dr. Hech certainly needed some force to be with him as he began the daunting task of taming a new wild stretch of woods and transforming it into an extraordinary garden.

In 1979, while some students were walking around campus listening to tapes on Sony Walkmans and wearing La Coste polo shirts with alligator icons, Dr. Hech was toiling in the woods on campus and wearing his dirt-encrusted dungarees. He had embarked on the task of creating the Susie Harwood Garden and was clearing the area with characteristic spunk. "He wanted to occupy land," says Dr. M. "Since possession is nine-tenths of the law, he figured that if he cleared the land and planted stuff, no one could take it away." So like the determined UNC Charlotte Forty Niner mascot, Dr. Hech staked his claim.

However, the danger was looming, and not in the form of rival prospectors. This danger was in the form of zealous university officials and architects. Dr. M remembers that sometime around 1980, "They came marching over there, looking at the land with blueprints in their hands to build a student cafeteria right where the Susie Harwood Garden is now. It was going to be an engineering marvel of an award-winning design down in that gully." However, the enthusiastic group was in for a surprise. "They were taken aback by the fact that there was a fenced-in two

Early Susie Harwood Garden, ca. 1985

and a half acre plot with paths and plants, and they knew nothing about it."

So how could the Garden have sprung up without the higher-ups knowing about it? Dr. M says, "The Garden was planted by Dr. Hech on his own. He just went out there and started clearing the land and putting up fences. He didn't ask a soul. He just did it. He would say, 'Well, I started this a while ago, and there was no master plan telling me that I couldn't do it, and no one telling me that I couldn't do it, so I just kept doing it.'" This may sound meek and innocent, but Dr. Hech was more stubborn and determined than meek and innocent. He had a scheme as he plowed ahead. "All the while," says Dr. M, "I think he knew that every square foot that he could get planted was a square foot that he could claim as part of the Garden."

Of course, the powers-that-be were not pleased with this garden development that interfered with their plans for an architectural-marvel-of-a-cafeteria development. Dr. M remembers, "When the Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs, Leo Ells, saw this, he was mad as could be." Dr. Hech asked him, "Don't you like gardens and plants?" and Leo replied, "No. I was a business major." Someone had to step up and defend the Gardens. As a young faculty member and in charge of the Gardens, Dr. M took the lead. "I had to write a letter to Vice Chancellor Ells on behalf of the Biology Department," Dr. M explains, "and I had all the members of the faculty sign it. The letter said that the Gardens are here, that the Gardens have been planted, that they are being utilized by classes. The land is best used as a garden. It'll be

Dr. Heck at Moon Gate

a great thing for the University. We want to keep it as a garden." It worked. "So Leo Ells pulled back any more opposition. He sort of mumbled and walked away."

The cafeteria was built where it is now, down below the gardens. Dr. M says, "They did the right thing by doing it that way. We got to keep the Harwood Garden, small as it was."

"The cafeteria flourished for years, but by 2005 it was abandoned and sits today as an empty building waiting to be demolished. The Harwood Garden, on the other hand, is flourishing and bring joy to people's lives," proudly explains Dr. M.

Having won the battle, Dr. Hech put a fence around his garden. He had staked his claim, and this time, permanently.

Oriental Motif

The Susie Harwood Garden

This world is but a canvas to our imagination.
—Henry David Thoreau

Dr. Hech called his new endeavor "The New Garden" at first, but he knew all along that it would be named the Susie Harwood Garden in honor of Ralph Van Landingham's mother. His will and agreement with the University had stated that, if possible, a garden on campus would be named for his mother. The Susie Harwood Garden stone monument at the entrance came from the Van Landingham home at 2010 The Plaza.

While the Glen was designed to showcase hybrid rhododendrons and natives of the Carolinas, the Harwood Garden would be a garden of exotics. It would feature camellias, fancy azaleas, Japanese maples, foreign hollies, etc., and a few natives like flowering dogwoods, hemlocks, and cultivars of natives.

Dr. Hech planned for the Susie Harwood Garden to be more formal than the Van Landingham Glen, but he didn't want it to be too formal. It would include gravel paths and some beds, but without clipped hedges or fancy gates.

A trip to China helped to spur Dr. Hech's interest

Little Stonehenge

in Asian gardens and to appreciate the beauty and elegance of their native plants. He went to Asia with some European doctors and a garden owner to hike in the mountains of China where they could see rhododendrons. "He wanted to bring seeds back to the U.S.," says his son, Buddy, "but of course you're not allowed to bring back plant material." Dr. Hech was undeterred. "Seeds are small," says Buddy, "so he collected them everywhere they went on the tour."

Now to smuggle them out of the country. "He put the seeds in a flashlight," Buddy explains, "and put the flashlight in his luggage. Customs didn't check the flashlight—he was old, so they didn't think he was bringing opium back from China.

Moon Garden Stele, ca 1985

It was illegal, but Dad made his own rules." The result of the seed-smuggling escapade? Buddy says, "There might be some contraband Chinese rhododendrons growing in the Gardens at UNC Charlotte."

The trip to China also inspired Dr. Hech to include Asian-influenced architectural elements in the Susie Harwood Garden. He built the gazebo by himself, designing as he went along. The wooden gazebo, stone moon gate, and bridges, all highlighted with traditional red accents gave the Garden an oriental flavor.

"Dr. Hech never had a plan, nothing on paper," says Dr. Mellichamp. "He built as he went along." The Moon Garden area was a harsh place: full sun, and terrible soil, but it was Dr. Hech's favorite spot. There he planted dwarf conifers, a special columnar magnolia, and new varieties of crepe myrtles. He supervised the stonework—he hired stone masons to construct the Moon Gate (out of native North Carolina slate) and added the slate rock stele with a Chinese inscription that reads: "Welcome to this beautiful Garden". He called the new garden a semi-formal garden with an oriental motif, not a formal oriental garden. Along the way, Dr. Hech was planting. His daughter, Madeline, remembers, "Mom always complained that he planted such tiny little plants that would take forever to grow, but he just had the patience. He knew what he wanted in the international garden, and the rhododendron garden, so he would plant it even if it was small. I guess some people weren't that impressed with some of them at first, but they eventually did grow."

Imaginative, and interested in using local materials in creative ways, Dr. Hech acquired some granite slabs that were curbs back in the days when many roads in Charlotte were cobblestone and arranged them to build benches. Yeah, "Little Stonehenge," as the quiet spot off the path is named, may not be as monumental and mysterious as the English original, but visitors find it a delightful place to rest.

The rocks from "Little Crowder's Mountain" came from near Dr. Hech's mountain house along the road to Boone where highway construction blasting was creating large interesting boulders. He had Crowder's Construction Company bring them in, and they were arranged to resemble (in miniature) a majestic mountain range within a secluded part of the Garden. He and student Scott Griffith used a block-and-tackle and "come-along" to position and align the huge rocks.
The Susie Harwood Garden was developing into

a place of distinctive style and charm, thanks to Dr. Hech's creativity, passion, and hard work. Nonetheless, an essential element in the plan was missing, namely a strategy for the Garden's future upkeep. Dr. M says, "I don't know how he planned to take care of it. He had fun developing it, without thinking about how it would be taken care of."

A September 1980 article in the (UNC Charlotte) Carolina Journal described Dr. Hech's plans and progress with the new garden. Dr. Hech said that it would probably take four or five years to finish and he was planning to plant the majority of plants that fall. He was in the process of building the "oriental gazebo"—only the basic framework was finished—and it was going to included benches that would provide visitors a resting spot and a commanding view of the Garden.

The gazebo became, and continues to be, a popular stopping point for garden visitors. They can stand back from it and see the Asian influence in its design, and the traditional red trim that accents its roof. They can step up onto the wooden deck that now overlooks a sparkling pond and its small waterfall, mature Japanese maples, and colorful shrubs. Students sit on the benches and find it a quiet place to study, or a restful place to not study. Children's groups sometimes bring sack lunches and have a picnic there.

In 1980, Dr. Hech was probably envisioning that kind of scene as he was building the Gazebo. He told the journalist that he was planning to create a reflecting pool and to construct at least two wooden bridges, "Which will look like something out of a Japanese movie."

And so he did. He built a wooden bridge (with red accent) that spanned the stream and led to the path to the gazebo. Then he rolled up the sleeves and got to work on the more ambitious project—the pond.

Snapping turtles enjoyed living in the Susie Harwood Garden's first pond, but Dr. Hech's ambitious project had some problems. Dr. Mellichamp remembers:

"Dr. Hech dug out a 16 x 26 foot oval and lined it with pool liner, and it didn't hold water well. As it gradually deteriorated, it was really a mudhole—a water moat with a small island in the middle that Dr. Hech called 'Mellichamp Island.' I don't know why he called it that, but I guess I didn't mind. He loved to name areas in the gardens after friends and donors: there was the Mayer Moon Garden, Martha's Corner, Terrell Terrace—it helped to identify a location. It was a good idea. Today we identify areas by the names on the dozen-or-so memorial benches that are located throughout the Glen and Harwood Garden."

The gazebo was well-constructed and the shrubs, trees, and plants were growing. True, that first pond was not a smashing success, but Dr. Hech had come up with a great idea that could be improved upon in the future.

Susie Harwood Garden Gazebo

Dr. Hech at the Moon Gate

Early Moon Garden with Crepe Myrtles, ca. 1990

Whiskey for Tea

Dr. Hech and Elizabeth Lawrence

A friend may well be reckoned the masterpiece of nature.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Dr. Hech regularly visited Elizabeth Lawrence, a professional garden writer, at her home. An accomplished woman, Miss Lawrence (1904-1985) was the first woman to graduate with a degree in Landscape Architecture from North Carolina State University. She moved to Charlotte in 1948 from Raleigh, and lived on Ridgewood Avenue, just a few doors down from what would become Wing Haven Garden. Elizabeth wrote many articles and books about horticulture including *A Southern Garden*, *A Garden of One's Own*, and *Gardens in Winter*.

Elizabeth lived alone with only her maid, and in later years she didn't go out much. "Dr. Hech went over every Thursday for four o'clock tea," says Dr. Mellichamp. "I now know where he went upon leaving class early afternoons when I was a student of his in the 1967-70 time period. Tea was cocktail hour. She always kept a gallon of whiskey because she liked whiskey in the afternoon. Dr. Hech and Elizabeth would sit on her back porch, drink a glass of whiskey and talk about plants."

They were friends who shared ideas and learned from one another. Dr. M says: "I believe he viewed her as his closest friend and compatriot in botany and horticulture as she could speak intelligently on both subjects. He learned a lot about unusual and exotic plants from her, and he taught her about native plants. She wrote about his thoughts on horticulture as they enjoyed a mutual respect that lasted many years."

Many of the first plants (especially groundcovers) in the Susie Harwood Garden came from her garden—lily turf, dwarf mondo, *Vinca minor*, dead nettle, umbrella pine, dwarf boxwoods, Jackson-vine, Alexandrian-laurel (Poet's Laurel she called it) and what Dr. M calls "the horrid weed" *Allium inodorum*. Many of these groundcover plants were rampant spreaders and helped to easily cover the bare soil. Later they had to be removed. Some still lurk about in quiet corners as reminders of their origins.

Though she rarely got out, Dr. Hech kept Miss Lawrence informed on progress in the developing gardens. She was keen to know, and wish she could see them. "I remember Dr. Hech literally carrying her by his side down the hill to the Harwood Garden [in] about 1980" says Dr. M. "She was feeble and couldn't walk on her own. He was a great admirer of her, and she of him. He was loyal to her until the end." In like manner, Dr. M rode Dr. Hech around the Glen during his latest years in one of the electric golf carts. "He would never have been able to maneuver into the interior without such conveyance," Larry says. "He enjoyed it very much, and I know he was proud of the 40 years of development; he indicated he thought I was doing a pretty good job. I might as well have won an Olympic gold medal for that modest admission from him."

Dr. Hech on a Field Trip with Elizabeth Lawrence

Look at Us!

Telling the News

PR is a mix of journalism, psychology, and lawyering—it's an ever-changing and always interesting landscape.
—Ronn Torossian

"I could see early on that the Gardens would be a draw for the public," says Ken Sanford, who was UNC Charlotte's Director of Public Information and Publications from 1965-1994.

Ken graduated from UNC Chapel Hill with both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Journalism. The Chapel Hill campus had a botanical garden, and he says that as a student he always saw people strolling through them. Later, as he saw the UNC Charlotte Gardens take shape, he enjoyed relaxing out there. "I appreciated the Gardens because I grew up in a scenic mountain area," Ken remembers.

Ken accepted the position at what was then Charlotte College when Bonnie Cone needed a public relations person. She was fighting for university status then, and she probably thought that the more publicity the college generated, the better. Charlotte College needed people to see its potential. Ken's work could help transform it from a small college to a fledgling university and, as time went on, to a university with a much larger enrollment and offering new programs and advanced degrees.

Through his years at Charlotte College and UNC Charlotte, Ken saw a lot, experienced a lot, and met a lot of interesting people. This made him uniquely qualified to write the history of the College and University. In his book, Charlotte and UNC Charlotte/ Growing Up Together (published in 1996) he writes about Charlotte College's quest for university status, the early days of UNC Charlotte, and how the University has developed. The book is insightful and often witty.

While he was the Director of Public Information and Publications, Ken reached out to the public to share the intriguing things that were happening at the University. Along the way, many fascinating things were happening at the Botanical Gardens, and the idea was to entice people to stop by and visit. It was fortunate that Ken saw the Gardens, not as just a lot of trees and a glass building, but as a valuable public attraction.

He says, "I remember writing about the rainforest and desert rooms, exotic plants, what Larry and Dr. Hech were doing, and later, Larry's bug-eating plants."

Come now, and see this. Come back, and see more. That was the message in Ken's 1984 University publication article, "Botanical Complex's Functions Include Teaching, Research, and Public Education" in which he interviews Dr. Mellichamp at the McMillan Greenhouse.

In the article he encourages readers to, "imagine the dreariest, dampest, most bone chilling day of winter. Then imagine yourself stepping instantly into a tropical day with huge, colorful, exotic orchids and jungle foliage surrounding you." He entices readers by mentioning what they could find at the Greenhouse then, like the bat flower and rat-tail cactus, and what they could find when the conservatory was finished, like a pond and a Madagascar palm.

He also encouraged the media (especially print media) to visit the Gardens and report their findings to their readers. Many did. Of course The Charlotte Observer published many articles about the Gardens, and so did many out-of-town journalists like those from the Raleigh News and Observer, and those from periodicals like the University City Magazine. They came to check out the latest goings-on, like how the new rainforest was coming along, or to see how much Hurricane

Hugo had smashed up the Glen.

Ken's office sent out news releases about the Gardens. A December 1981 release announced plans for the building of a new "greenhouse-conservatory complex." An April 1984 release announced that the Biology Department, "cordially invites the public and the campus community to a 'Celebration of Gardens."

Ken Sanford

Ken saw first-hand how the publicity was working. In 1982 he wrote a memo to Chancellor Dr. E.K. Fretwell to tell him that he had come out that Sunday to see whether there were visitors in the Van Landingham Glen. He wrote: "The garden was full of people of all ages. I did some informal polling to see how they learned of the Glen. Almost all said they saw the items in the Observer and the News (Charlotte had two daily newspapers in the early days)."

All this sounds easy. Something new happening on campus? Just call John Journalist at the Charlotte Observer and tell him to come over, check it out, and write an article. Problem was, as time went by, the media became less interested in "pleasant" stories. They needed attention-grabbing, headline-worthy stories to capture the public's interest. In his book, Ken explains, "Later, as they became more competitive with each other, they covered the campus more often when there was crime, or an accident or extreme controversy."

The Gardens hasn't generated a lot of shocking stories. Well, unless you want to count what the Venus Fly Traps do to bugs. Nonetheless, the office of Public Information and Publication has done a great deal to encourage the public to visit the Van Landingham Glen, Susie Harwood Garden and the McMillan Greenhouse. As its Director for many years, Ken Sanford deserves much credit. It's fortunate that he enjoyed relaxing in the Gardens.

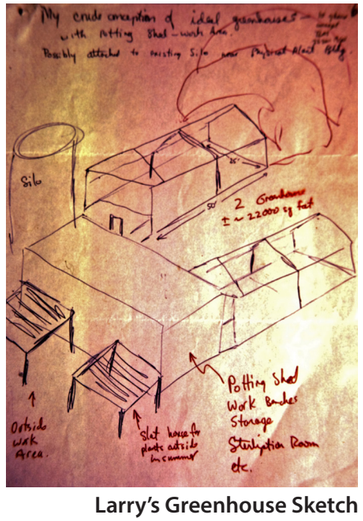
Help! and Help

The New Greenhouse

We are not retreating—we are advancing in a different direction.
—General Douglas MacArthur

It was becoming increasingly evident that the home-made orchid greenhouse had problems. The plants were languishing. In 1980 Dr. Mellichamp told Bonnie Cone that the old greenhouse (constructed in 1972) was no longer adequate. She said that she believed that the McMillans would be willing to fund a new one, so they worked together to make sketches and drawings to lay out a new facility. They discussed the plan with various people, and Dr. Hech agreed that it would be a good idea. So Bonnie talked to the McMillans and, fortunately, they said that they would donate the money over the next few years.

1981 was a busy year—Prince Charles and Lady Diana were getting married, Indiana Jones was searching for the Lost Ark, and ET was visiting earth. Amid all this activity, plans for the new UNC Charlotte Greenhouse were coming



Larry's Greenhouse Sketch

Greenhouse Construction, 1983
(Top-Bottom) March, June, July, August

together. And this new structure was destined to be more than simply a greenhouse for an orchid collection. It was to be an impressive botanical complex.

In December 1981, the UNC Charlotte News Release reported that its estimated cost was $300,000 and would include, "teaching greenhouses, with laboratories and a conservatory." According to the release, "After extensive investigation and planning by Dr. Larry

Greenhouse Complex Dedicated

By HAROLD WARREN
Staff Writer

UNCC's new botanical complex for teaching, academic research and public exhibits teemed with excited people — but perhaps none more thrilled than Dorothy and Tom McMillan.

The complex was dedicated Wednesday and named in honor of the McMillans, who gave the $405,000 to build it.

"I'm so excited and so happy I don't know what to do. It's a dream come true," said Dorothy McMillan, who wore flowers around her head and neck and a corsage of three orchids. The orchids were a variety named for her.

Dr. Thomas M. McMillan, who wore a Dorothy McMillan orchid in his lapel, said he and his wife felt "overwhelmed" by the occasion and hoped the greenhouses and public conservatory would further strengthen "the broadening bond between the town and the gown."

And he added, "Coming from humble soil, we have always had an affinity for things that grow."

The McMillans, who divide time between their Charlotte and Honolulu homes, gave the money — in cash and property — over

See BENEFACTORS Page 3B

Staff Photo By JEEP HUNTER

Dr. Thomas M. McMillan and his wife, Dorothy, framed by orchids at dedication of greenhouses they donated to UNCC.

Tom and Dorothy McMillan Greenhouse , 1983

Mellichamp and his colleagues in the Biology Department, the complex is in the architectural design phase." The department was finally able to hire a professional architect, and the dream was becoming a reality.

All good things take time, and the Greenhouse was no exception. Construction finally began in the summer of 1983. Dr. M remembers that the weather was brutal that year, "It was hot as blazes, 95 degrees every day," but the work went on, and finally that September the new Greenhouse/botanical complex was completed and housing plants. Its final cost was $405,000, funded by the McMillans and the Schoenith Foundation. It was 4,000 square feet of greenhouse growing space, 900 square feet of classroom space, and 900 square feet of laboratory and work space.

The Greenhouse dedication was held on September 7, 1983. The Charlotte Observer reported on the event: "UNCC's new botanical complex for teaching, academic research and public exhibits teemed with excited people—but perhaps none more thrilled than Dorothy and Tom McMillan." Dorothy wore a wreath of flowers around her head and a corsage of orchids for the ceremony. "I'm so excited and so happy I don't know what to do," she said. "It's a dream come true."

Dr. McMillan said that he and his wife felt "overwhelmed" with the occasion and added that, "coming from humble soil, we have always had an affinity for things that grow." Their "humble" investment has really paid off over the years where thousands of students and tens of thousands of visitors have learned about the beauty and mystery of plants from around the world.

(left-right) Thomas McMillan, Larry Mellichamp, Bill Mellichamp (Larry's Dad), and Dorothy McMillan

Ventures Far and Near

Plants from Here to Borneo

The most exciting phrase to hear in science, the one that heralds new discoveries, is not 'Eureka!' (I found it!) but 'That's funny...'
—Isaac Asimov

People who visit the McMillan Greenhouse are fascinated with the plants they have never seen. Many of the plants are tropical, beautiful and unusual (some are downright weird). Some of them have traveled far to get to there.

In December 1983, Dr. Mellichamp journeyed to Borneo, the large island in Southeast Asia that is home to one of the oldest rainforests in the world. While there, he visited Mt. Kinabalu, one of the world's most famous sites for unique tropical plants. He came back to the Greenhouse with more than 100 plants that he had collected in Borneo, including orchids.

These orchids were very different from the hybridized ones that have been bred to be big and showy. They were small, wild, and in an orchid's natural form. These purebreds took their place in the McMillan Greenhouse—little, quiet, and dignified.

One of Dr. M's goals is to have the Greenhouse showcase a variety of flora from all over the world. Through the years he has added many other unusual plants including such beauties as staghorn fern and bat flower.

Whether he is hunting for specific flora in Borneo or in North Carolina, Dr. M has a talent for finding what he's seeking. Audrey Mellichamp says, "Larry has an uncanny knack—he knows plants well enough, and he knows the plants that grow near the plant he's looking for, so if he sees the companion plant, he'll stop and look for his plant, and undoubtedly he'll find it."

Perhaps he developed this skill when he was an undergraduate student and on exploratory road trips with his eagle-eyed mentor, Dr. Hech. Larry wanted to identify plants from a moving car. Audrey remembers his talent for this, saying:

"What flabbergasted me was when we were in the Brevard (NC) area and were going about 50 miles per hour, and he spotted a little green nothing orchid about ten feet off the roadside. It was just part of the grass to me. I didn't see it at all. He has his eyes open and his senses up, and he can find things that other people can't, so he can find the rare plants he's looking for." She says that this characteristic is extraordinary. "Even other botanists don't have that knack."

This skill has greatly benefited the Gardens. Dr. M has added many plants to the Greenhouse that most visitors have never seen, and are unlikely to see in other places they visit. This is much of the McMillan Greenhouse's purpose.

White Bat Flower

A Goatee and a Shovel

Gardens Open House and Honoring Dr. Hech

A man doesn't plant a tree for himself.
He plants it for posterity.
—Alexander Smith

In 1984 the Space Shuttle Discovery went on its maiden voyage, and on the campus of UNC Charlotte, the Gardens were hosting the Celebration of Gardens Open House. The public was officially invited to the Van Landingham Glen, the Susie Harwood Garden, and the McMillan Greenhouse.

The Open House was not only a chance to welcome the public to the Gardens, it was also the perfect opportunity to honor Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner, the man so instrumental in their creation. Although the speakers are not identified in the archived documents, their remarks are recorded.

The first speaker said that it was fortunate that Dr. Hech and his family were there, because it was time to finally honor him adequately. The first speaker went on to say, "The presence of our Gardens and Greenhouse are a testimony to this man's vision, hard work, and friendship with some key people." The speaker recognized the two sides of Dr. Hech: first, that the goatee speaks of the biologist with a Ph.D. from Harvard, professor and former Chair of the University's Biology Department; and second, that the laboring part speaks of a man who is not content to just supervise planting, but bends his back to the task.

The second speaker remarked:

"We honor Herbert Hechenbleikner today because of his hard work, and his ability to inspire others to enhance the beauty of this campus. We honor a man who appreciates the dignity of honest labor and has never hesitated to break a sweat or dirty his hands to accomplish the task at hand. Moreover, we honor him because of his love for learning about the natural world which he implanted in hundreds of students."

Dr. Hech was extremely touched by the occasion and to learn that his gardening efforts had been appreciated. "To say that I was overwhelmed by all the attention and honors given me last Sunday is to state my reaction mildly," he wrote in a letter to Chancellor Fretwell. He added that he would continue to be committed to the Gardens: "Of course, a garden, however well planted, is never finished and, to me, that is one of the great attractions of working with living plants—and appreciative people."

"Hech was a crusty person," says Ken Sanford. "He was tough, he climbed volcanoes. He did what he wanted to do and didn't seem to care what people thought, but he liked it when people showed their appreciation for his work. He beamed on that occasion."

Problems and Proposals

Money

If you can count your money,
you don't have a billion dollars.
—J. Paul Getty

In the summer of 1984 Dr. Mellichamp wrote a letter to Dorothy and Thomas McMillan, then living in Honolulu, to update them on what was happening at the Greenhouse. With enthusiasm he wrote that the April plant sale was their most successful to date, over 600 people had visited the Greenhouse since May 1, and that some of their orchids had won ribbons at an Orchid Show in Greensboro.

Not all was well, however. Although the Greenhouse was an admired success in many ways, it was languishing from lack of care. Dr. M, who was teaching full-time and had just gotten tenure, could not do it alone.

In May 1984 Chairman of the Biology Department, Dr. Roger Trumbore, wrote a letter to Vice Chancellors Ells, Orr, and Werntz explaining the problems: "The plight is simple. We have a greenhouse which cost in excess of $400,000, and we have no professional help to do the 'greenhousing.' A facility that large requires full-time help in addition to Dr. M's constant supervision."

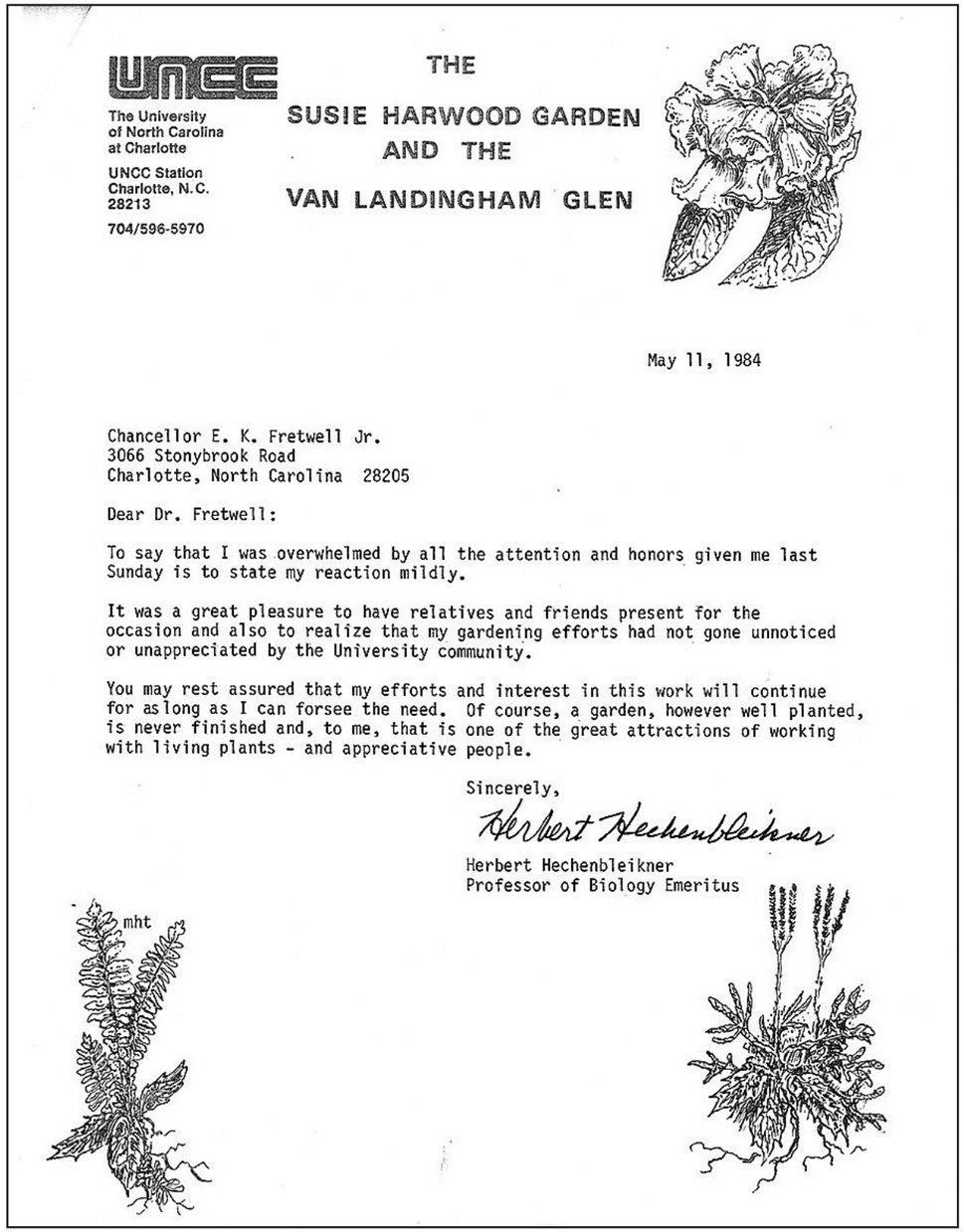
He pointed out that there were not sufficient funds from the endowment for soil supplies, etc. or to hire a greenhouse attendant. "At this point we are desperate," he wrote, and said that he hoped that the McMillans could increase the endowment. They did over the next few years and gave $100,000 in 1989.

The Gardens staff had worked hard in previous years to have plant sales (the first was in 1977). The public was welcome to visit the Greenhouse, look over the plants, ask questions, and purchase what they liked. The events were a great draw, and a way for people to support the Gardens. The sales generated money that the Gardens used for operating costs.

It all went well until 1985 when some powers-that-be heard about the few thousand dollars that the sales were generating, pondered the situation, and decided that the University should take the money.

When they announced this decision to Dr. M, he replied, "That's our operating money. If you take that, you'll have to give us money."

They said, 'We can't do that either.'" Ouch.



UNCC
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
UNCC Station
Charlotte, N.C. 28213
704/596-5970

THE
SUSIE HARWOOD GARDEN
AND THE
VAN LANDINGHAM GLEN

May 11, 1984

Chancellor E. K. Fretwell Jr.
3066 Stonybrook Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28205

Dear Dr. Fretwell:

To say that I was overwhelmed by all the attention and honors given me last Sunday is to state my reaction mildly.

It was a great pleasure to have relatives and friends present for the occasion and also to realize that my gardening efforts had not gone unnoticed or unappreciated by the University community.

You may rest assured that my efforts and interest in this work will continue for as long as I can forsee the need. Of course, a garden, however well planted, is never finished and, to me, that is one of the great attractions of working with living plants - and appreciative people.

Sincerely,

Herbert Hechenbleikner

Herbert Hechenbleikner
Professor of Biology Emeritus

mht

Dr Hech's letter to Chancellor Fretwell ,1984

An Imaginative Little Girl

Suzanne the Artist

There is a garden in every childhood,
an enchanted place where colors are brighter,
the air is softer, and the morning more
fragrant than ever again.
—Elizabeth Lawrence

By this time Audrey and Dr. Mellichamp's daughter, Suzanne, was part of the team. "When Suzy came along our partnership became a family affair," Audrey says. "One of my fondest memories is when she was a baby, Larry would put her in the front belly pack, and water plants in the Greenhouse. I'm sure that she got sprayed, too, but she didn't seem to mind." Suzanne spent many hours in the Gardens and Greenhouse through the years. "She grew up there," says Audrey, "walking in the creek, climbing on the rocks, playing with the plastic pots, helping Daddy water."

Dr. M Watering Plants with Daughter Suzanne, ca. 1988

Suzanne ca. 1991

Suzanne got to share the fun of plants with her friends, too. "She had birthday parties there so the kids could learn about plants. They were fascinated—potting up things, seeing the pitcher plants."

Although the Gardens and Greenhouse duties seemed overwhelming at times, the Mellichamp family stuck together. "It was a demanding job early on, because Larry had very little help, and he was teaching more classes," Audrey says. "He was always there at night and on the weekends, so I would often pack up supper and carry it out hot to the Greenhouse with Suzy. We would eat dinner in the classroom, or if it was a nice day, we would take it out to the gazebo, just to be with Daddy."

Just as Dr. M had gone on road trip adventures with Dr. Hech, Audrey and Suzanne went along on field trips and conferences with Dr. M all over the Southeast. A botanist naturally keeps an eye out for interesting flora along the way. Audrey remembers that, "We were going to a conference when Suzy was maybe in early elementary, and we were always stopping so Daddy could get out

of the car to look at a plant in the meadow or wetland. Suzy and I would stay in the car."
Of course, sitting and waiting in a car while a parent wanders off into the wild is not most kids' idea of fun. Dr. M, however, came up with a creative way to keep his young daughter occupied. According to Audrey, "Larry would give her a crazy little scenario, and ask her to make a cartoon to illustrate it. She undoubtedly picked up on everything he said and elaborated on it. One time, when we were up in New Hampshire, he asked her to draw a moose walking on Mount Washington." Suzanne added some artistic imagination to the task. "She drew a moose standing upright, carrying a walking stick and rocks to delineate a trail."

Suzanne was even more imaginative another time when she, and her mom and dad, were traveling in Mississippi. On that trip her illustration revealed how she interpreted her dad's zeal for plant-hunting. Audrey says, "We stopped by a barbed wire fence with a meadow of pitcher plants. Larry didn't prompt her for anything to draw, but when he came back, we saw that she had drawn Daddy with his pants ripped, up in a tree, and holding a group of pitcher plant leaves, with a bull underneath him! We don't know if the bull got him, or if the barbed wire fence got him."

"She perceived the potential of the situation," says Audrey. "I can envision that happening. That's what was so charming and hilarious about the situation. We saved all her drawings. Most of her drawings were *so* funny—we would all just laugh!"

Oftentimes children absorb more, and are more impressed by experiences than adults realize. This is likely true of many of the kids who spend time at the Gardens and Greenhouse.
"It tickled us the most when Suzy did her senior art exhibit in clay at Queens University in Charlotte," Audrey remembers. "She used natural textures like the scales of a fish, or a horned lizard in relief, a beehive and a mushrooms—an amazing variety of things that she had thought of to put textures on her pots. That was an exciting moment for Larry and me, to see that she remembered what she saw" she says, referring to the time Suzanne spent in the Greenhouse, Gardens, and on field trips. "She might not have enjoyed the moment, or thought much of the moment, but it lasted in her psyche."

Suzanne with Chameleon in Madagascar, 2015

Planting In and Kicking Out

Developing the Outdoor Gardens

Round up the usual suspects.
—Casablanca

Scott Griffith was studying Horticulture at Central Piedmont Community College when he worked with Dr. Hech in the Outdoor Gardens in the mid-1980s.

It was hard work. He says that during much of the four years he worked there, he was the only full-time employee in the Outdoor Gardens. "Only a couple of people were working in the Glen at the time. My dad helped out for a short time." Jan Truitt was working part-time and would become the Outdoor Manager after Scott left.

Scott says that when he started, the gazebo, bridges paths and some plants were there in the Susie Harwood Garden, but many more plants and trees were needed. "Most of the azaleas and conifers I planted over that four-year period. They were very small—one to three gallon. That first section—I planted all those."

"The Glen was full of rhododendrons and wildflowers, so that was more maintenance. We deadheaded the rhododendrons—picked flowers by hand to make them bloom again." Glen upkeep also included working to eradicate invasive plants. Dr. Hech was all too familiar with that battle—he had been fighting the noxious weeds since day one. Scott says, "I pulled so much honeysuckle that by the end of summer the pile would be as high as my head. Wheelbarrow after wheelbarrow.

"We never used Roundup. And we're talking about five acres." That weed killer would prove to be a lively source of disagreement through the years.
Alas, noxious weeds weren't all that had to be removed in the Outdoor Gardens. Sex in the Gardens apparently wasn't always limited to the birds and the bees. Some students found the nice flat area next to the Glen's log cabin a romantic spot to pitch a tent. Scott remembers, "I'd come in the back gate and find a pup tent in the Glen and a guy and a girl inside hung over. I'd wake them up and say, 'hey, y'all have to pack up and get out of here.'

One couple, however, were not easy to rouse. "I couldn't wake them up. I guess they were too drunk. So I got Dr. Hech, and said, 'There's a tent over there'. He made no bones about it. He opened up that tent and started kicking them."

Pollinator style rendezvous—okay. Pup tent style rendezvous—not okay.

The Glen's stone bridges were already constructed when Scott came, but the creek needed structure. Scott pulled rocks out of the water, loaded them into a wheelbarrow and lined them against the creek's edges. The sides were shored up when Scott mortared the rocks in place.

Dr. Hech was, of course, no longer young (he turned 70 in 1979), but Scott says that he would come to the Gardens around nine o'clock and spend several hours working. Scott clearly remembers Dr. Hech's mode of transportation. "He had a tan Volkswagen Rabbit—a diesel. You could smell it coming. There weren't many of them around then."

"Many times we'd drive that Rabbit up to Grandfather Mountain, near where he had a place." There they would dig up plants to bring back to the Gardens. "We'd load up the Rabbit with plants, and come back with plants hanging out the windows."

Scott says that he learned a lot about wildflowers and native plants while working with Dr. Hech, not only on their mountain journeys, but on local trips, as well. “We went over to Dr. Kellam’s house on Carmel Road to do work in his garden, and to Susie Harwood’s house [this was the Van Landingham Estate at 2010 The Plaza].”

What he learned about plants and horticulture during his years at the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens helped Scott in his future venture. In 1984 he bought a truck and moved on to start his own landscaping business. He now owns and operates Oak Trail Nursery. Scott continues to enjoy being outdoors, and he says, “I’m an

Scott Griffith and his Father, 1982

A Naturalist’s View

A New Outdoor Gardener

The question is not what you look at,
but what you see.
—Henry David Thoreau

Dr. Hech had created the Van Landingham Glen and the Susie Harwood Garden, but as Dr. Mellichamp pointed out, with no real plan on how they would be maintained in the future. Dr. Hech was still working in the Gardens in the mid-1980s, and did so until 1990, but he couldn’t do it alone or forever. The Botanical Gardens needed someone who was knowledgeable and hard working to manage the Outdoor Gardens. Jan Truitt was the one.

Jan stepped in as Gardens Manager in 1983. She had earned a B.S. in Biology at UNC Charlotte and says that she had become very familiar with the Outdoor Gardens because back then (before the emphasis turned to medical biology) the Biology

Jan Truitt

department used the Gardens a lot to help students learn about horticulture.
Although Jan worked in both the Van Landingham Glen and the Susie Harwood Garden, she was especially enthusiastic about the Glen. “The Glen is the reason I started here,” she says. “The Harwood Garden is pretty, but the Glen really intrigued me.” She was raised in the mountains, so she appreciates the native plants and rhododendrons. “I’m a real native plants person and a real North Carolina nature person,” she says. “I love having our whole state exhibited in the Glen—mountains, Piedmont, coast—with examples of plants that you can see without having to go to the mountains or coast.”

University staff would tell her how much they enjoyed relaxing in the Gardens to escape everything when they came down to eat their lunch or walk the trails. Jan understood. As a naturalist, she loved being out there too, enjoying “being outside every day and being able to plant stuff, and take care of it and watch it grow.”

The Glen was meant to showcase rhododendrons, and those colorful shrubs are still a main attraction. Many visitors asked Jan about them. She was familiar with them because not only did she care for them, she knew the man who had helped bring them in. “I knew [Dr. Donald] Kellam well,” Jan says. “He was fun and knowledgeable about rhododendrons.”

Some of her favorite plants are the wildflowers (especially in spring) and ferns. She says that although many visitors notice the ferns, they might not recognize the differences between them. “You can find quite a variety if you know what you’re looking for—maidenhair fern, large wood ferns, cinnamon ferns.”

Jan sometimes gave tours and led hikes through the Glen. They were chances to show off some of her favorite shrubs, wildflowers, ferns and trees as they followed the rustic trails and crossed the stream on the stone foot bridges. In the spring they could see wildflowers such as trillium, little sweet Betsy and spiderwort.

As a field biologist, Jan enjoyed studying the garden animals. She recorded other animal sightings, too. “Before Hurricane Hugo we had tanagers up in the tall poplar trees, and a couple of herons that had stopped while they were traveling through. When I found anything unusual like that I recorded it.” She saw many garden critters while working during the daytime including water snakes sunning themselves on the pond’s island moat. There was also plenty of evidence of the nocturnal garden denizens: she heard owls, saw raccoon tracks, and noticed where elusive rabbits had nibbled on plants.

“It’s like an oasis,” Jan once told a journalist about the Glen. “It’s constantly changing. It’s a fun place to work.”

Critters

Rabbits? and Turtles

Bugs Bunny: What's up, Doc?
Elmer Fudd: Be vewy vewy quiet.
I'm hunting wabbits.
—The Loony Tunes

Can't have a garden without critters. Feathered, furry, fuzzy, flaky or flat, whether gardeners' friends and foes, many creatures call gardens home. Jan Truitt remembers times when animals have added spice to days spent around the plants and trees. "The kids that worked with me in the Gardens—I called them my 'garden kids' and I'm still in touch with some of them—were so much fun. We called Dr. M 'Elmer Fudd' because he would try to catch rabbits that were trying to eat things in the Gardens." Those "wascally wabbits" were apparently too wily for him. "He would get so mad, just like Elmer Fudd. He trapped some possums, but never caught rabbits."

By the way, Dr. M disputes the whole Fudd tale. He asks, "Why would I have been trying to catch rabbits?" He admits to trapping other critters like opossums but denies ever earning the name Elmer Fudd.

Whether Dr. M hunted rabbits or not, other four-legged garden creatures were not quite as swift as the rabbits, so they were a bit easier to catch. "There were turtles out there," Jan says, "and we would do turtle studies and mark the turtles so we could keep records. Box turtles have hard shells with little notches on the edges called scutes. We'd hold the turtle, count the scutes, and then use a drill with an itty bitty bit to make a hole in one of the scutes."

The technique was simple and efficient, but also rather impersonal, so the Garden staff made an effort to respect each turtle's unique identity and personality, "We named the turtles—Dr. Hech, Dr. M, and some after other members of the Biology Department," Jan says.

Much of the information wasn't on computers yet, so they wrote all the turtle details on index cards: the turtle's name, where it was marked, and when and where it was found. Some they rediscovered for many years. If they found a hapless turtle in the road, they put it in the Glen where it could roam and swim in a safe turtle home, bothered only occasionally by its nosey human rescuers.
Jan adds, "Dr. M was the best boss. We got along so well. He and Audrey are two of my favorite people in the whole world." She praises Dr. M: "It wasn't easy taking over, he's had his hands full, and he's done a great job."

Myrtle Warbler on Myrica cerifera

Box Turtle in Glen, ca. 1995

A Finer Understanding

Hech and Fretwell Talk

Appreciation is a wonderful thing; it makes what is excellent belong to us as well.
—Voltaire

Although the University administration showed support for the Gardens as the years went by, the early days were a struggle. Ken Sanford says that things came to a head toward the end of Chancellor Dr. E. K. Fretwell's tenure in the late 1980s. "Dr. Hech had clashed with Vice Chancellor Leo Ells [of finance] over plans for the Gardens, and what he perceived as a shortfall of support and funds for the Gardens."

Dr. Leo Ells was the vice chancellor for business affairs and a retired Army lieutenant colonel. It was he who had marched down the hill with architects carrying blueprints to build a marvelous new cafeteria on the land where Dr. Hech had started the Susie Harwood Garden. Dr. Mellichamp then had stepped up, rallied the Biology Dept. to defend the Gardens, and the battle was won.

One battle, however, doesn't always win the war. The Gardens needed continued University support, and that included support from Business Affairs. Dr. Hech wanted Chancellor Fretwell to step up.

Ken says, "Dr. Hech believed that Dr. Fretwell was not intervening like he felt he should."

The problem, presumably, was that at that time the Gardens was not a high priority. Chancellor Fretwell had other concerns—like state funding.

While state funding for the entire university was extremely important, Dr. Hech didn't want the Gardens to be pushed aside. And he apparently was taking the snub personally. Ken says, "Dr. Hech had told me he was going to give his money to Belmont Abbey as a result of lack of support from the UNC Charlotte administration."

An opportunity to talk it out came when Dr. Hech invited Dr. Fretwell to spend a leisurely weekend with him and his wife at their mountain home. Ken says that a problem then arose. "Dr. Fretwell was not enthusiastic. I then called the chancellor and told him the importance of hearing Dr. Hech out. I told him that Dr. Hech had some money that he planned to give to the University, but that he would change his plans and give it to Belmont Abbey, which had shown appreciation for what he had done for that college."

Chancellor Fretwell then agreed to go to Dr. Hech's mountain place, and the two apparently came to a better understanding. "After the weekend at the cabin, Hech began to get more support for maintenance and staff," Ken says. "Things went a bit smoother after that."

Part Three
1986-1995

Hurricane Hugo Hits
A Pile of Stately Logs

When all is said and done,
the weather and love are
the two elements about which
one can never be sure.
- Alice Hoffman

The wind blew. Hard. Very hard.

On September 22, 1989 the ferocious Hurricane Hugo blew in from the coast and hit the Charlotte area with destructive vengeance. It blew down more than half of the trees in the Susie Harwood Garden. Huge trees came down, including enormous tulip poplars. 125 trees lay on the ground like piled up matchsticks. The covered bridge that Dr. Hech had built was destroyed, but miraculously his gazebo, standing strong and defiant, was not damaged.

"What we need is an Indian elephant trained to carry logs, or some horses and someone who knows how to use them," Dr. Mellichamp told the Charlotte Observer as he stood and looked at what he called, "a pile of stately logs."

Dr. Hech, however, saw an upside to the destruction of so many large trees. Harland Jackson, who had begun volunteering a few months after the storm, says that he heard that when Dr. Hech surveyed the damage his reaction was surprising. He recalls:

"To many people's amazement, Dr. Hech looked around and said 'Wonderful! Now we've got some light in this place!' He thought it was a blessing. Here he had developed this garden, but he was glad to see some of the big trees down to let in more sunlight. New plants could be brought in, and many plants prospered because the big trees were down."

Dr. M also remembers that Dr. Hech was not flustered about the damage or even about the daunting task of removing the mess. "Dr. Hech came and said, 'Oh well, we'll start cleaning up.' Then he calmly picked up a chainsaw."

Of course the storm had also wreaked havoc in the Van Landingham Glen, knocking down many big, top-heavy trees like tall poplars, hickories, and pines. Although the increased sunlight would be a boon for the Susie Harwood Garden's plants, Dr. M told the Charlotte Observer that he was concerned for the Glen because it had lost its dense canopy that sheltered a vast collection of

Damage from Hurricane Hugo

Some Stately Logs left from Hurricane Hugo

native wildflowers, rhododendrons, and ferns that require some shade. "The rhododendrons won't like the full sunlight. We will have to water more. They will grow again, but there will be a noticeable difference this coming spring," he said.

Whether the storm's destruction was ultimately a help or a hindrance, it had left a hefty mess. "It was awful," Jan Truitt says about seeing the damage. "It was like a twister went up the creek." Why not just drive in some serious, heavy duty equipment? The tangled mess of logs made the paths impassable. Besides, they didn't have any serious, heavy duty equipment, or even many people to tackle the overwhelming job. Dr. Hech, Dr. Mellichamp, the Gardens small staff—one full-time Gardener (Jan Truitt and her husband), one part-time Greenhouse Manager (Sandy Lester), and one five-hour-a-week part-timer (Randy Salter) needed all the help they could get. They had to do a lot of work before the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) could even come in to clear the larger things.

No elephants or horses showed up, but help did come. In December, over 50 volunteers pitched in during the "Hugo Helper Project." It was a party of sorts for people who were willing to put in many labor hours hauling brush, chipping debris, cutting up fallen trees and splitting wood. Their work was difficult and invaluable, and as well as being hard workers, they were good sports who had fun. The felled forest festivities were complete with lunch, t-shirts and candy bars! Dr. Patricia Duncan-Grady, a botanist and botanical garden activist at Central Piedmont Community College, helped organize the teams of helpers.

They started clearing the Susie Harwood Garden first because it had paths. Armed with chainsaws, they began cutting up the trees, limb by limb. This was not only hard work, it was dangerous. Jan says, "The wind twisted the trees, so when you sawed off a limb, you had to jump out of the way so it didn't land on you. We had to be careful because when you're cutting, stuff will snap back at you."

4 MECKLENBURG NEIGHBORS Wednesday, October 25, 1989 ★★★

UNCC Glen: Acclaimed Garden Now A Pile Of 'Stately Logs'

By PAT BORDEN GUBBINS
Staff Writer

The day after the hurricane, Dr. Larry Mellichamp of UNC Charlotte's biology department went to look at the damage in the Van Landingham Glen and Susie Harwood Garden.

The heavily wooded glen is reknowned throughout the Southeast for its rhododendron collection and collection of native plants. The Susie Harwood Garden was known for its oriental motif and stand of stately trees — poplars, oaks and hickories.

"Now it's a collection of stately logs," said Mellichamp, director of the UNCC Botanical Gardens. "I just sighed and turned away."

The gardens, established in 1966 and normally open year-round to about 5,000 visitors a year, are closed until spring. Mellichamp and fellow academician and plant-lover David Royster hope to restore some order by then.

They have a huge task before them. They estimate at least 100 trees are down or badly leaning. About three dozen of them are very large trees. Trunks of massive poplars and oaks lie in a formidable tangle in the 3-acre Harwood garden. The woodland trails through the more heavily forested, 7-acre glen are impassable.

"The university is not going to be able to help us, so we'll have to handle this ourselves," Mellichamp said.

"We have a small staff — one full-time gardener, Jan Truitt, and our greenhouse manager, Sandy Lester, who is part-time. And another who is really part-time, five hours a week, Randy Salter — and that's it."

Retired biology professor Dr. Truitt and Lester have been steadily chipping away at the monumental task of clearing the gardens. Royster is organizing volunteer groups of students and others to cut up the trunks and clear away the debris.

He was expecting help from about 20 volunteers, members of the Tri Beta biology club and the Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity, last weekend.

And next Saturday, members of the Charlotte Botanical Garden Society have promised to lend a hand — along with a few chain saws. But some of the damage is high in the trees, and Mellichamp will have to hire professional arborists to do that work.

"What we need is an Indian elephant trained to carry logs, or some horses and someone who knows how to use them," Mellichamp said. "You can't get heavy equipment back in here."

Although Mellichamp is sorry to lose the trees, he is excited about the possibilities the additional sunlight will bring to the gardens.

"We would never have done it on our own," he said, surveying the rearranged landscape in the Susie Harwood Garden, which has exotic and ornamental plants from around the world. "But I couldn't be more pleased with the potential given us with this extra light."

He is not as happy for the glen, which lost its dense canopy that sheltered a vast collection of native wildflowers, rhododendrons and 50 varieties of ferns.

"The rhododendrons won't like the full sunlight. We will have to water more. They will grow back, but there will be a noticeable difference this coming spring," he said.

TOM FRANKLIN/Staff

Dr. Larry Mellichamp looks at the damage at the Van Landingham Glen and Susie Harwood Garden at UNC Charlotte. Volunteers are needed to help clean the 7-acre glen, where at least 100 trees are down or badly leaning.

Herbert Hechenbleikner is normally a daily helper in the gardens. When Hechenbleikner recovers from a foot operation, he'll be back helping with the cleanup job, Mellichamp said.

Want To Help?

Donations may be made to UNCC Botanical Gardens and mailed to Dr. Larry Mellichamp, Biology Department, UNCC, Charlotte, N.C. 28223. To volunteer, call Mellichamp at 547-4055 during the day or go to the gardens on fair-weather Saturdays.

Charlotte Observer 1989 Newspaper

Age didn't stop Dr. Hech (he was 80) from getting out there and wrestling with the wreckage, but Jan was often leery of his methods. "Hech would tell you to do something," she remembers, "and it wasn't always the safest way to do it. I thought 'He's going to get me killed.' He was working as hard as anyone else. He wasn't afraid of anything."

They revved up a John Deere Gator. "Now they have golf carts," says Jan, "but then we had the 'green dragon'—that's what Dr. Hech called it—it was a John Deere motorcycle thing with a bed." They loaded up the back, and began hauling away the wood. Load, after load, after load. This was no clean-up-the-backyard project. "In the meantime," says Jan, "the rain came."

Then a miracle happened. FEMA stepped in and offered to pay for 75% of the cleanup costs for two weeks after the storm. That was amazing because the $18,414 totaled more than the Garden's annual budget. With much of the smaller limbs and debris moved away, the big lumber guys could come in to remove and cut the larger things.

"I watched them like a hawk," Jan says, about the FEMA workers. She was worried because when you're driving industrial size vehicles and equipment through a garden, as well as cutting down trees and limbs, you can do a lot of damage to lower plants like ferns, shrubs, and small trees. All the same, Jan did appreciate their lumberjack-like feats. "It was amazing to watch them—way up in the trees swinging chainsaws."

It took two years to clean up the Glen, and even after all that time there are still stumps that sit stubbornly in the woodland garden to remind workers and visitors alike that storms come and go, but stumps stay a while.

The New Rainforest

Tropical Additions

The gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing knowledge.
—Albert Einstein

What do you do when someone hands you $100,000? Create a rainforest. The McMillan's large donation in the late 1980s enabled the Gardens to create a tropical oasis in the Greenhouse.

The Charlotte Observer paid a visit in August 1988 to check out the new goings-on. Their article, "Fake Rocks, Real Plants to Create Lush Rainforest at UNCC" reported the progress on the on the 25 x 30 x 20 foot room. That May, workers had begun plumbing, electrical work, installing drainage systems and making "rocks."

Not real rocks, because as Dr. Mellichamp explained, "It would be hard to find and manipulate rocks that weigh five tons to fit in the room." The rocks would be made of huge pieces of plastic foam, covered with screen wire, fiber-glass and a thin coat of cement to make them feel real. On the pseudo-rocks would grow epiphytes, plants that are happy without soil and happy to live with other rainforest flora and fauna.

John MacKay Constructing Rocks, 1988

Museum designer John Mackay, who later became director of Charlotte's Discovery Place, created the ancient-looking "rocks" and small stream in the conservatory. The pump for the stream has been running continuously and almost flawlessly since he turned it on in circa 1991. Most people would say the "rocks" are real. The following March, Dr. M told the Raleigh News and Observer that he wanted the conservatory to simulate a New World tropical forest. "Right now it looks like a florist's shop with all these colorful plants [begonias, bromeliads, poinsettias] sitting around in pots," he said. But he imagined what this small, 25 x 20 foot room could become—a dense and dramatic rainforest. He said, "I look forward to the day when we can't see the ceiling or the walls."

Progress was being made in the Greenhouse Conservatory. It had rocks, a stream, temperature and moisture control, and some plants. One element was missing. Can't have a rainforest without trees. The room needed a huge tree—large enough to host many epiphytes, including orchids, but installing the trunk of a real tree was out of the question. It would be impossible to bring in something that big and heavy. The solution: build an artificial tree.
Johnathan Ertelt, a biologist who was soon to be hired as the Greenhouse Supervisor, began building an artificial tree out of pieces of cork bark covering a frame of iron reinforcement bars and plastic foam. It is huge. The base diameter is about three feet, it stands over fifteen feet tall, and has six branches up to eight feet long.
In a 1988 newsletter article Jonathan said:

"Currently we have over three hundred plants growing on the ground in the conservatory: if we want to match that with as many epiphytes, it will take a lot of tree space. While we may not reach the goal of 50% epiphytes, any visitor who encounters our conservatory giant will find it difficult to forget that many plants grow on trees."

In the 1989/1990 Annual Report, Dr. M reported: "The construction of an artificial cork tree in the Rain Forest Conservatory was begun by Jonathan Ertelt (Greenhouse Supervisor) with assistance from a student worker. Completion of the 15 x 3 foot diameter tree with several branches is expected in November, 1990. Its primary purpose is to support tropical epiphytic plants." By that November, 80 species in twelve families were growing on the tree.

The Rainforest Conservatory has been a success. Over the years many plants have been added and have thrived. Visitors have looked overhead and seen bamboo (fast growing) and philodendron (huge leaves) reaching for the ceiling; they have marveled at the strangeness of Dutchman's pipe, bat flower, and lobster claws; and they have enjoyed the colors of pink quill and goldfish flower. They have stepped over the stream and seen goldfish swimming below.

They have asked tour guides and staff: "Is that a real tree?" "How do those plants live by just holding on the tree?" "Are those orchids?" Many visitors say that the Rainforest Conservatory is their favorite room in the Greenhouse.

Cork Tree Construction, Johnathan Ertelt, 1991

Conservatory Plants with Larry and Sandra

Conservatory Hardscape

Welcome to the Computer Age

Harland Jackson

I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.
—Thomas Watson, Chairman of IBM, 1943

Harland Jackson came in 1990 to volunteer in the Outdoor Gardens, and ultimately to make a huge difference. He was a mathematician and computer scientist, with a B.S. in Math from the University of New Hampshire who had worked for Honeywell for 27 years and then retired to Charlotte.

Jan Truitt remembers how glad she was when he started: "He showed up one day and was ready to work right away." Then even more good news: he could work two days a week. Help had arrived. Not only was Harland enthusiastic about rolling up his sleeves and getting dirty, as a northerner he was also keen on learning about gardening in the south—the plants, soil and, of course, the heat.

"I saw that there was much work to do," he says. Work indeed—not only was there still some mess from Hurricane Hugo's havoc, but to Harland's disappointment, few plants in the Outdoor Gardens were labeled. What plant information there was had been tucked away on old-fashioned card files.

Talk about good fortune—the Gardens now had a man who appreciated plants, thrived on working outdoors, had a keen and methodical mind, and had computer skills to record and organize data. If that weren't enough, his wife, Kae, had the skills to help.

With a determination that Dr. Hech would have appreciated, Harland tackled the daunting task of moving the Gardens archaic plant identification system into the computer age. He set out to develop a plant database. He submitted a meticulous report in January 1995 that explained the project's purpose and progress: "When I started work at UNCC, one of my primary jobs was to improve the Gardens documentation. We had many unlabeled and unknown plants in both the Harwood Garden and the Glen. I could not see how we could claim to be a Botanical Garden, with all that the title implies, without better plant records."

He and Kae wrote the software program for the new database, and that was only the beginning. Harland had to find ways to identify and learn botanical names for all the plants, and to determine the locations of several thousand rhododendrons and other plants. In the report he explained that he went out and made a rough sketch of each area, went back to the computer and drew outlines of the map onto a spreadsheet, returned to the garden to place plant and tree names into the spreadsheet's cells, returned to the computer to update the Plants Database, and so on. Kae also documented plants in the Susie Harwood Garden.

True, Dr. Hech might not have chosen to work patiently through the processes of individual identification, meticulous mapping, and computer data entry, but it's possible that he would have gotten a kick out of the results.

Battles and Friendship

Harland and Jan

I don't have to agree with you to like you or respect you.
—Anthony Bourdain

Harland Jackson is a complex man. Not only is he resourceful, persistent, computer savvy and generous (he and his wife, Kae, have donated generously to the Gardens for many years), he's also sneaky. In his early years he worked in the Outdoor Gardens alongside Jan Truitt, then the Gardens Manager. He remembers that, "Jan got nervous when I was alone out there. My goal was to get rid of poison ivy and other plants that were running over the garden, but she couldn't have cared less about that—she was interested in keeping the garden in its natural state."
The problem wasn't that Jan was fond of poison ivy and invasive plants, but rather that she didn't approve of Harland's weapon against them. "I was using Roundup," he admits. "Of course it's non-selective—it will kill anything, but I was careful, very careful. I didn't use a sprayer—I used a small spray bottle and sprayed just the leaves." How did he get away with it? Well, when the gardener's away, the volunteer will play (or in this case, will use the Roundup). In other words, he was sneaky. He admits, "I did it when she wasn't there."

Harland and his New Mule, 2007

Truth is, Jan and Harland had very different images of an ideal garden. She is particularly fond of wildflowers and ferns.

Jan says, "Harland didn't know wildflowers and wanted everything cut down. So I spent more time in the Glen. He wanted the Glen to be a garden, but I wanted it to be more of a natural area. I told him, 'When I'm gone you can do whatever you want'".

Despite their differing views of what a garden should be, Jan and Harland share a mutual respect. Jan says, "Harland's a wonderful man. I love him dearly."

Harland points out that he's been there for over twenty years and there's still poison ivy out there. The battle continues.


Harland Jackson, 1993

Perils and Persuasion
Money Matters

A nickel ain't worth a dime anymore.
—Yogi Berra

Money comes and money goes. When more goes out than comes in, you're in trouble. When you have money, but not enough for the immediate future, things aren't so great either. Dr. Mellichamp has faced these problems many times while trying to keep the Gardens afloat. His position at the Botanical Gardens has involved more than being a botanist, professor, and manager, because none of those roles could be possible without adequate funds.
In 1990 the U.S. was heading into a recession. At the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens finances were, as usual, an issue. In the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens 1990/1991 Annual Report, Dr. M reported good news and bad news in the form of strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths: dedicated, hardworking staff; substantial financial base; cooperative campus officials; exceptional natural setting; physical facilities; generous community members.

Weaknesses: Outdoor Gardens seriously understaffed; Gardens not widely known in the community and region; limited funds for new developments and activities.

So the bottom line was: the Gardens had money and more coming in, but needed much more to move forward with hiring staff, outreach, and new developments. That's the peril, but it's also where the art of persuasion comes in.

"Larry is a good salesman," says Dr. Matthews. "He has a product to be proud of and to sell. He works hard to find commitments for financial support. We have to think: how can we sell ourselves so the University doesn't pull the rug out from under us? Larry knew that he had to establish the Gardens as an independent entity, and this has allowed him to build his own world."

Dr. M made that clear in the Annual Report: "The Gardens have been virtually self-supporting since their inception, with the exception of utilities and routine maintenance, which are covered by the Physical Plant."

Autonomy is not, however, always easy to attain or maintain. Dr. Matthews says, "To do this, you have to become self-sufficient and build endowments." In the report Dr. M also lists the sources of the Gardens funds: the Van Landingham Trust, the McMillan Greenhouse Endowment, the annual plant sale, and private contributions.

"Larry is good at letting the chancellors and public know that the Gardens are an integral part of the University," says Dr. Matthews. "He knew that he wouldn't get financial support from the Biology Department, so he went directly to the Dean. It's less contentious to sell yourself to the administration."

And as Dr. M listed as one of the strengths—cooperative campus officials—the administration was acknowledging the value of the Gardens. Many changes were set in motion at UNC Charlotte when Dr. James Woodward became the University Chancellor in 1989. Dr. M says this was the beginning of a pivotal time, when the University was becoming more supportive of the Gardens.

Happy Happenings
Early 1990s

Most folks are as happy as they make up their minds to be.
—Abraham Lincoln

Yes, it's true, not everything was happy-go-lucky in the early 1990s; after all, Arnold Schwarzenegger's robot was certainly not spreading sunshine in *Terminator II Judgment Day* (hasta la vista, baby).

Folks at the Gardens, however, had much to be cheerful about. The first issues of the Gardens Associates Newsletter UNCC Botanical Gardens were mailed to friends of the Gardens, highlighting happenings.

"On May 1, 1991, in the midst of one of the finest showings of rhododendron blooms ever," the newsletter announced, "the UNCC Botanical Gardens celebrated the 25th anniversary of its founding."

Over 60 people attended the celebration and Dr. Mellichamp recounted the Gardens history and development, starting with Dr. Hech's breaking ground to start the Glen. UNC Charlotte founder Bonnie Cone spoke, as well as acting Chancellor James Woodward.

(left-right) Josette Arvey, Martha, Dr. Hech, and Dr. Mellichamp with Portrait, 1991

An official portrait of Dr. Hech was unveiled "in honor of Dr. Hech, and in recognition of his hard work and vision for the Gardens. The 18 x 24 inch watercolor was painted by renowned wildlife artist Josette Gourley Arvey of Charlotte." The portrait, which is currently the frontpiece of this history, depicts Dr. Hech in the Glen surrounded by his favorite plants. It hangs in the McMillan Greenhouse.

The spring 1992 edition of the newsletter included an enthusiastic report on developments in the Conservatory: "The increasing collection of tropical plants in the Rainforest Conservatory is flourishing. Many of the more than 400 species have been flowering, some for the first time. We even have fog! And eventually we will have frogs!"

"Last Saturday a remarkable thing happened," Dr. M wrote in a June 1992 memo to University administrators. He explained that it all started one afternoon when a reporter from the Charlotte Observer called him saying that she was planning to write an article about what readers could do on a rainy Saturday, and that maybe it could feature the Greenhouse.

Dr. M told her that due to lack of staff, the Greenhouse was usually closed on the weekends, but that if she wrote an article, he could open that Saturday from 10:00-2:00 so people could see the unique collection of carnivorous plants and the rainforest.

Well, the article appeared, photos and all, and it must have been enticing. Dr. M said in the memo:

"Come Saturday morning, I arrived at the

greenhouse about 9:30, it was my day to water anyway, and I was all alone. As people started arriving, I thought, 'It will be nice to have a few visitors to casually show around.' [...]

"At 11:00 I had to call Jonathan Ertelt, Greenhouse Supervisor, for help. By the time the crowds left at 2, we estimated that 500 people had come to see the McMillan Greenhouse, the vast majority of whom had never been out here before. We talked continuously and gave out lots of brochures.

"To me, this was a very special event. It showed that the public is really interested in coming to see what we might have to offer. Every visitor was amazed at what he saw; they had no idea that UNC Charlotte had such interesting facilities. I was very proud of this."

In the memo Dr. M explained, "My reason for writing this is to ask that each of you be aware of the growing potential for the public to respond to such events on campus." He also wrote that he wanted the Gardens to draw more and more visitors: "I would like to think of additional ways to receive special funding to foster such particulars as additional signs and labels, brochures, and trail guides, and providing staff for the McMillan Greenhouse to be open regularly on weekends."

He also requested more than just money ideas. "I would also hope that you would each continue to speak highly of the value of the Gardens when talking with other community and business leaders."

Jonathan Ertelt with Kids Tour

A Friend and Expert

Dr. Kellam

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy. They are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.
—Marcel Proust

In May 1992, orthopedic surgeon and rhododendron grower, Donald Kellam, Jr., died at age 60. He had become an expert in the plants after co-founding the Piedmont Rhododendron Society with Dr. Hech and Charles Dewey, and had continued to be active in the Gardens for many years.

Dr. Donald S. Kellam

"As a grower of rhododendrons in the Charlotte area, he had no peer," says Harland Jackson. "He once told me that his collection included every hybrid rhododendron that Charles O. Dexter had hybridized (at least every one that was any good). The Dexter hybrids were widely considered to be superior, and Don Kellam recognized this."

"He always welcomed visitors to his garden," Dr. M said at Dr. Kellam's memorial service, "and was willing to share plants with those who were interested in growing them. He firmly believed that interacting with people was the prime reward for growing them."

Dr. Kellam had made arrangements for over forty of his choicest rhododendrons—blooming size Dexter hybrids—to be moved from his property to the Van Landingham Glen. Dr. M wrote in the Gardens Associates Newsletter of Dr. Kellam's donation: "Yearly spring blooms will be a fitting memorial to a wonderful man who did much to improve our lives."

"He was a very generous man," says Harland Jackson, "whose contributions to the Glen were recognized by the Rhododendron Society with the dedication of an area in the Glen marked with a sign and known as the 'Kellam Area.'" The main path from one end of the Glen to the other that parallels Mary Alexander Road is known as the 'Kellam Trail.'

No Time for Monsters

Busy in the Greenhouse

My momma always said that
life is like a box of chocolates.
You never know what you're gonna get.
—Forrest Gump

Dinosaurs were running wild in the 1993 movie Jurassic Park, as viewers in cargo pants gasped in horror as the monsters chased and chomped on characters.

Meanwhile, back at the McMillan Greenhouse, Greenhouse Manager Sandy Lester was busy. "What do I do all day? No day is typical," she wrote in the autumn 1993 Gardens Newsletter. "Each day brings new problems and headaches, but also brings new challenges and rewards."

One of the headaches she may have been referring to was the hail storm that had hit that June. It pelted the Greenhouse with golf ball size hailstones for five minutes, breaking 108 panes of glass and leaving an incredible mess. Some plants were also damaged and the rest were left vulnerable. Sandy and other staff members had to work hard and fast to clean up glass, replace panes and save the plants that had apparently dodged the ice bullets.

Greenhouse Hail Damage, June 1993

Sandy also mentions challenges. Plants are like pets—they need water, food, patience, a cozy home, and someone to keep off the bugs. Pets, however do not need to be pruned or repotted. So plant caretakers stay busy by watering; fertilizing; pruning; repotting; struggling with frustration; applying insecticides; and controlling temperatures, sunlight, and humidity. Those are challenges.
Headaches, problems, and challenges, yes, but Sandy also mentions rewards. "One of the best aspects of the job is working with such a diverse

Sandra Lester

and interesting plant collection—from abutilons to zygopetalums." Another reward—telling people about the plants: "A big aspect of my job is answering questions from visitors, students, and people on the phone."

In the article she encourages Greenhouse visitors to stop and talk when they see her working, saying: "We always enjoy meeting our visitors and getting their input and ideas."

Appreciating the variety of plants and sharing plant ideas with others are apparently what makes all the plant care worthwhile.

Welcome Butterflies and Hummingbirds

Busy as bees

A flash of harmless lightning,
A mist of rainbow dyes,
The burnished sunbeams brightening,
From flower to flower he flies.
—John Banister Tabb

In the late 1990s Harry Potter, the adolescent wizard of fiction, was casting spells on kids—young and not-so-young. Truth is, though, enchantment can be discovered beyond pages of books. Butterflies and hummingbirds cast delicate spells of their own, and in the 1990s more and more people were interested in attracting their gentle magic. These gardeners wanted to learn more about how to encourage creatures that fly and flitter.

Dr. Mellichamp and Ted Caudle, head of the Charlotte Horticultural Society, were discussing gardening trends—what was currently intriguing plant lovers? The idea of "wildlife gardening" was taking hold, so the two came up with the idea of adding a butterfly/hummingbird garden to the Susie Harwood Garden.

Creating an oasis to attract these small and delicate creatures is not small and delicate work. Members of the Horticultural Society formed committees and lent hands. Meredith Hebden, Harland Jackson, Dr. M, and others did groundwork, and Horticulture Society member, Larry Gus, designed what would become the Garden's focal point: a wooden arbor with roof slat ends shaped like the wings of a butterfly.

Then it was time to plant the attractors, which are plants that would draw and nurture flying creatures by providing food sources for caterpillars, butterflies, hummingbirds and beneficial insects, and thereby would attract curious visitors. Included were verbena, phlox, honeysuckle, azaleas, lilies, butterfly bush, and cross vine.

Visitors can walk through the Moon Gate, continue through the elegant Asian Garden, and turn to their left to discover another kind of elegance. A graceful ruby-throated hummingbird hovers near a cross vine flower. A lovely monarch butterfly lands on a butterfly bush. The Butterfly/Hummingbird Garden is enchanting.

Budding Botanists at the Pavillion

Butterfly Pavillion ca 2007

Busy and Growing

1993-1995 Activities

I like living. I have sometimes been wildly, despairingly miserable, racked with sorrow, but through it all I still know quite certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing.
—Agatha Christie

A look back at some of the Garden activities reported in newsletters, quarterlies, and articles of the mid-1990s give a glimpse of some of the work needed to keep the Gardens running, and of activities that led to further developments.

Butterfly Garden

Dr. Mellichamp wrote a short article called "A Flutter and a Hum" highlighting the progress in the Butterfly/Hummingbird Garden in the Susie Harwood Garden: "We have doubled the size since last year with more annuals and perennials appropriate to the theme.

Buckeye Butterfly

Throughout the summer there will be a constantly changing procession of colorful and fragrant flowers to lure the wary guests to visit."

Hail

Hail in a June 1993 storm pelted the Greenhouse and caused major damage. Staff had to repair or replace 105 panes of glass.

Cactus Room

Staff were preparing to plant in the Cactus

Desert Room, ca 2011

Room. This section of the Greenhouse would include many weird looking cacti and succulents like tarantula cactus, living stones, and starfish flower. Paula Gross would tell visitors that the strange and whimsical plants remind her of things in a Dr. Seuss book.

Planting Rhododendrons

Dr. M reported in 1993 that Jan Truitt and volunteers from the Piedmont Rhododendron Society had been planting many rhododendrons:

> "We have been moving a large and priceless collection of blooming-size rhododendrons into the Van Landingham Glen. These plants were assembled over a period of twenty years by the late Donald S. Kellam Jr. of Charlotte who made arrangements for them to be donated to the Glen. Gardens Manager Jan Truitt and her crew of student workers have laboriously moved over one hundred plants, one pick-up truckload at a time, from the Kellam estate on Carmel Road. Most of the Kellam Collection is along the path just inside the main entrance. This area will serve as a fitting memorial to a generous man who loved people and plants."

Rainforest: In the autumn 1993 issue of the Garden's Quarterly, Jonathan Ertelt proudly reported: "Growth in the greenhouse continues; there are over 400 plants in the rainforest simulation and over two dozen tropical frogs." The tiny bright orange-red hoppers/climbers had come over from Costa Rica, and apparently were thriving in their new greenhouse pad.
By 1994 the Rainforest was really getting lively. "Visit our Wet and Wild Conservatory!" Jonathan wrote and included a Poison Frog Update! "Exciting happenings in the conservatory! Two of our 'poison dart' frogs bred, and healthy young frogs have metamorphosed!" He reported that they were keeping down the ant population, and that visitors were enjoying watching them and hearing their singing call.

Events

Events included Charlotte Bonsai Society meetings, a Piedmont Rhododendron Club Plant Auction, North Carolina Piedmont Orchid Society meetings, and a whole lot more.

Outdoor Gardens

Fall issues of the Gardens Associate Newsletter reported that in the Outdoor Gardens Jan Truitt was busy with routine tasks and supervising student workers and volunteers, who were mulching, watering, and weeding.

Fall Open House

Everyone was invited to the Fall Open House

Rainforest Conservatory

and Mini Plant Sale where they could have a family scavenger hunt to find unusual plants like the Venus flytraps in the courtyard, tropical pitcher plants (aka monkey cups) in the Orchid Room, and the Dutchman's pipevine in the Conservatory.

Water Gardens

In 1993 staff set up four tanks outside the

Papyrus Growing in Water Tank

Greenhouse for water gardens. The Garden Quarterly announced: "The gift of several large brass planters has enabled us to start exploring water gardening with colorful water lilies, lotus, flamboyantly tasseled Egyptian papyrus, fuzzy cattails, tall bull rush, floating water lettuce, purple-flowered pickerel-rush, and spongy water mimosa."

Children

"What do children come to see?" Dr. Mellichamp answers, "Plants that move!" He mentioned the favorites: the snapping, bug-eating Venus fly trap and the sensitive mimosa. He explains why young visitors get tickled by touching the mimosa plant: "the series of paired leaflets close up like two rows of toy soldiers falling one-by-one against each other." Bug eaters and toy soldiers—no wonder kids like the Greenhouse.

Kids Buy at Plant Sale

Plant Sale

A Spring 1995 Gardens Associates Newsletter announced: "Annual Plant Sale and Open House. All proceeds go to Gardens operations. [The Gardens could now keep the money!] Featuring: annual bedding plants, perennials, shrubs, native wild flowers, unusual house plants, pitcher plants, and aquatic plants. We specialize in hard-to-find plants and new and different varieties."

Winter Garden

Inspired by Elizabeth Lawrence's book, *Gardens in Winter*, Dr. M had begun planting a significant number of winter interest plants in the Susie Harwood Garden. Then, in March 1995, the famous gardener and writer Peter Loewer visited the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens from his home in Asheville. He suggested to Dr. M that the two collaborate on a book about winter gardens.

Peter would write the text and Larry would take the photos. *The Winter Garden* was published in 1997 and highlights many of the winter interest plants (450 plants are mentioned) including winter-hazel, coral bark maple, winter-berry holly, winter-sweet, and Lenten rose, which all have interesting features like bark, berries, blooms, boughs, and bouquet (the book chapter subjects). These would become focal points for winter tours starting in 2003.

Winter Garden Tour

Orchids

In the Greenhouse Sandra Lester was busy with the newly enlarged orchid collection, which included repotting and relocating to find the proper niche. "We had fantastic blooms all summer and there seems to be no end to the succession of new flowers," a newsletter article reported.

Chinese Paper Plant, Winter Blooming Shrub

Orchids in Greenhouse

Part Four
1996-2005

A Car Chase and a Red Tape Welcome

A Fine Way to Treat a New Hire

If everything seems under control,
you're not going fast enough.
—Mario Andretti

The Botanical Gardens Assistant Director, Paula Gross, started in 1998. She received a Master's degree in Horticulture from the University of Georgia. Paula says that she chose to major in Horticulture instead of Botany because she didn't want to spend a lot of time in a lab, and she didn't want to pursue a Ph.D. because she didn't want to be a researcher or a professor. "I love gardening," she explains, and an MS in Horticulture allowed her to indulge that love.

Paula Gross

Paula says that because she's not "over the top" about any one specific type of plant, her greatest strength is not necessarily curation, although her plant knowledge runs deep. She explains that she is "more interested in public relations, answering questions, and interpreting."

She didn't want to be confined in a classroom, lab, or specific plant area. She wanted to reach out to people. She says that she applied for the job at the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens because it was supposed to be half botanical gardens, half teaching. It sounded like a good mix, and the interview apparently went well. But then things got interesting.

"When I was interviewing for this job, Dr. M was driving me back to my hotel and we were sideswiped by a drunk driver."

So Dr. M carefully and slowly pulled over to the side and telephoned the local police department, right? Nope.

"Dr. M sped up to catch him!" Paula says. "He was going to get the guy!" Who says Ph.D. botanists aren't fighters?

Paula, however, had a different idea. "I said, 'No we should just pull over.'"

Dr. M finally relented and stopped. Shucks.

"The cops came," says Paula, "and the whole thing took about an hour and a half. Later I found out that Dr. M had been in several accidents (presumably not his fault), and that's why he was so mad about the guy.

"The crazy thing is," Paula says, "I still came here. You would think that that experience could have been a bad omen—'Don't take this job.'" Omen or not, Paula was undeterred. "Dr. M may not even

remember it, but I honestly think that he was impressed that I was not scared off by that."

Ah, the boundless bother of bewildering bureaucracy. Paula soon discovered that a

sideswipe/car chase was tame compared to the trauma of running into University red tape.

"When I started here I got an office," Paula remembers, "but it had a broken down chair. Dr. M said, 'We've got to get you a new chair.' I guess he wanted to make sure that I was all set up.

> "So I went to a place like Office Max and bought a chair. Then I marched over to the Biology Department finance office. I told the woman, 'I bought a chair,' handed her my receipt and said, 'and I need to be reimbursed.' She said, 'What? You bought a chair?' Her head spun and steam came out of her ears. She said, 'You can't just go out and get a chair. You have to go through the right channels….'"

That experience didn't get Paula down either; in fact, she's mastered the University red tape game. "Since then I've learned the importance of knowing what people to go to for what and being friends with people who can help me, and that has served me well."

It apparently takes a lot to intimidate a determined horticulturalist.

Eloquent Enthusiasm

Getting the Job Done

Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work.
—Aristotle

At first Paula's work was more in the Biology Department than in the Gardens and Greenhouse. For the Gardens she wrote the newsletters, gave tours, and helped with plant sales. As time went on she became more and more involved in the Greenhouse and Gardens activities and progress, both as a manager and a team member.
Paula appreciates how well the staff care about their work. "Although we help each other," she says, "everyone has their own domain. This place is as good as it is because everyone takes

Paula and Carla Vitez, 2012

responsibility for their own sphere."
Each person must be a self-starter and be independent, and still be able to come together at times. "And that's a lot to ask for," she says.
The cool composure that impressed Dr. Mellichamp after the mad cap car chase has also served Paula well now that she is the Gardens Assistant Director. She says that when "minor tragedies" occur, she tends to stay calm and measured. "I have joked," she says, "that if we were the Mafia here, I'd be the consigliere, the council where the boss comes when problems come up [who gives disinterested advice]. And when people become mad or hot-headed, they can consult the one with the calm personality."

Meredith Hebden, Van Landingham Glen Manager, agrees that Paula's calm demeanor is a major benefit, saying that "Paula juggles people, problems, schedules and deadlines, and wrangles Dr. M."

Despite Paula's "consigliere" temperament, she occasionally needs a refuge where she can escape pressures. "When I have been really upset for some reason, personal or professional," she explains, "I've gone out to the Glen. It's where I can go when I'm stressed out."

Whether they are seeking solace from the cares of life, or simply exploring the woods, many people enjoy wandering in the Glen. And wandering is the appropriate word, because it's easy to become "turned around" while sauntering on the rustic paths. Paula can relate to visitors' confusion, relating that, "for the longest time I had no idea where I was in the Van Landingham Glen, so to this day I understand when people say that they get lost in there."

Much of Paula's job is to bring more people to the Gardens. As well as giving tours, she coordinates media promotions, maintains the Gardens web page, creates brochures, and plans conferences. She also likes writing about plants and taking photos of plants. "Even though it takes concentration in a busy day," she explains, "I'm happy to have taken the time to write about and take pictures of plants."

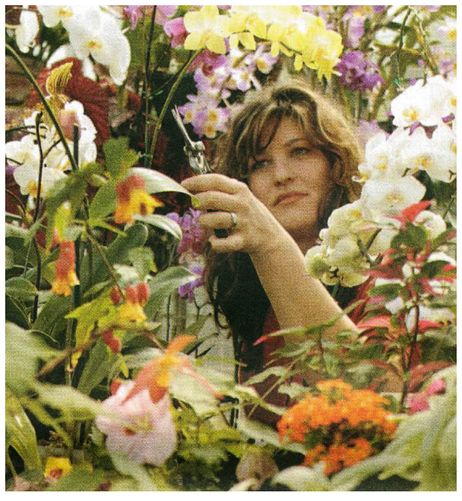
She has a lively enthusiasm about her job. "I like the variety, always different, always changing. I like to see people happy about the plants—I love it when a staff member gets excited about something, and I love it when a visitor gets excited about something. I like the interface between people and plants. I'm excited to come to work."

Appreciating Beauty
Finding New Plants

Look at everything as though you were seeing it for the first or last time.
—Betty Smith

Paula Gross remembers some of her earliest impressions of the Gardens:

> "The first thing that made an impression on me about the Greenhouse was when I walked into the Orchid Room and smelled the blooming cattleyas. My dad raised orchids in Florida, and although I was only seven years old when we moved from there, I have early sensory memories of the smell of those cattleyas. When I walked in the orchid room, it was very powerful for me."



Paula with Orchids

She was also impressed by the large variety of plants thriving in the Greenhouse. "I could tell that the people who work here really care about the plants. I knew this was a good place to be!" Paula sometimes encounters new finds while walking in the Susie Harwood Garden. "I'm always discovering new plants out there," she says. "I'll think that I know everything out there, and then I'll walk with Dr. M and he'll point out something, and then I'll learn about that plant. I'm always seeing something different in the Harwood Garden."

She especially appreciates the little plants. "I like small things. At any moment I'll have a different pet plant that intrigues me—Hepatica (liverleaf)—a little spring flower that doesn't last long, threadleaf St. John's wort and bluets. In graduate school an exchange student who worked with me one summer said, 'You're the biggest girl who likes the smallest things.'"

Sometimes the little things, like the scent of cattleyas or the appearance of a tiny bluet, are the big things.

Bugs for Brunch
Breeding Pitcher Plants

Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right.
—Henry Ford

They are plant monsters. Pitcher plants use their modified leaves to attract, catch, digest, and absorb nutrients from insects and other small arthropods. Dr. Mellichamp describes how carnivorous plants do their dastardly dining in a Master Gardeners article titled *Bog Gardening with Carnivorous Plants*: "The victims are variously drowned, squeezed to death, chopped to pieces or smothered in glop in odd-looking leaves…"

This sounds disgusting and ugly, but the plants are actually fascinating and attractive. Many people find them intriguing, including Dr. M, who is an expert in carnivorous plants. In the early 1980s, Dr. M and Rob Garner, then a curator at North Carolina Botanical Gardens, began crossbreeding *Sarracenias* to create hybrid pitcher plants.

Paula Gross explained Dr. M's process to the Salisbury Post: "He pollinates the plants with a Q-tip in the spring and labels everything. Then after the plants flower, he collects seed in late-summer and sows it." Two hybrids had been tissue cultured: *Dixie Lace* and *Flies Demise*. They are the first named pitcher plant hybrids in the world to be tissue cultured. Larry and Rob worked for fifteen years and released about three dozen named cultivars with such fanciful names as *Ladies-in-Waiting* and *Mardi Gras*. Around 1992 they released the Little Bug series with

Larry with Sarracenia Hybrids, 2003

Doodle Bug, *June Bug*, *Lady Bug*, *Love Bug*, and *Red Bug*. *Red Bug* was the first patented pitcher plant hybrid.
The hybrid pitcher plants are colorful and pretty. Some are also cute. *Dixie Lace* is eight to ten inches tall and maroon with dark veins on a creamy yellow background. Their hoods are wavy and hang above the mouth of the pitcher. *Ladies-in-Waiting* is a bit taller and are light green and maroon with white spots and upright hoods with intricately fluted edges. *Lady Bug* is just as pretty, but smaller and more against the ground.

The purpose of their project, however, was not simply to breed pretty plants. Dr. M and Rob wanted to address a serious problem—the loss of pitcher plants in their diminishing wetland habitats.

In an article for Lawn and Garden Retailer titled "Bog Gardening with Carnivorous Plants," Dr. M told how the project started:

> "A friend of mine, the late Rob Gardner, and I began a breeding program in 1980 to create unusual, new colorful dwarf pitcher plant hybrid for the horticultural trade and to call attention to the plight of all carnivorous plants and their disappearing wetland habitats. It was after we witnessed hundreds acres of pitcher plants being destroyed by habitat drainage in southeastern North Carolina in 1977."

And the problem isn't just that the wetlands are diminishing. People have been going out into existing private and public lands to find pitcher plants. They dig them up and take them home to keep, or sell them.

Rob Garner wrote an article titled "Sassy Sarracenias" for Carolina Gardener Magazine. An excerpt reads:

> "Many plant populations have been seriously depleted or even completely destroyed by collectors who were illegally digging up thousands of pitcher plants. Our reasoning behind breeding these new hybrid pitcher plants was to create an interest in horticulturally superior pitcher plants, and, in so doing, divert some of the demand for wild collected pitcher plants."

Pitcher plant collectors don't have to trudge through mucky bogs to illegally dig up the endangered plants. These are pretty, charming, and every bit as intriguing as the wild ones. No shovel is needed.
Greenhouse visitors can see many of these colorful and beautifully shaped pitcher plant hybrids growing in the courtyard. They thrive in the raised bog beds where the conditions replicate that of wetlands. All of Larry's and Rob's hybrid pitcher plants grow amid other carnivorous plants—the famed Venus flytrap, rosette sundews, and thread-leaf sundews. They all live side-by-side like bug-biting buddies. Naïve bugs and insects fly and crawl around them and end up drowned, trapped, or stuck.

Pitcher plant research and breeding is just one example of how the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens has led to progress in the studies of plants and habitats.

"Larry has gained respect in the academic and professional worlds," says Dr. Matthews. "He saw a gradual movement from just planting plants, and more into research. This has led to his work in studying and becoming an expert in carnivorous plants—pitcher plants and Venus fly traps. Larry has raised the level of the Gardens as a research tool."

Rob Gardner

Larry and Rob Rescuing Pitcher Plants

Children with Hybrid Sarracenia Pitcher Plants

Preserving Plants and Nature

Herbarium and a Nature Preserve

When you come to a fork in the road, take it.
—Yogi Berra

The UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens has been the catalyst for many types of research. Plant preservation for botanical study is one of them. As a biology professor, Dr. James Matthews was interested in this line of research, so in the mid-1960s when he came to UNC Charlotte as a young biology faculty member, he created a herbarium on the UNC Charlotte campus. At that point Dr. Hech was just laying the groundwork for the Gardens, but as the Gardens developed, so did the Herbarium.

Plant preservation involves many steps. Dr. Matthews was in charge of the processes in which specimens of wild-collected plants (maple leaves, thistle, sedge, aster e.g.) are pressed, slowly dried, and then mounted on sheets of archival acid free paper. The specimens are arranged and stored in cabinets in precisely controlled conditions. Curators record the plant's taxonomy (names), where it was found (location and habitat), when it was collected, and by whom. What's amazing is that plant specimens that have been properly prepared and maintained can remain in good condition for more than 200 years. Herbarium specimens represent the scientific documentation that a plant species grows in a certain area. It is standard practice for botanists around the world to collect plants and put them in a herbarium. There the specimens can be studied, sent to specialists, and used as the scientific basis to write books about the flora of a region. They are like a library of plant data, or a museum of specimens to be studied.

Of course plant preservation begins with collecting plants. Dr. Mellichamp gathered wildflowers in Michigan for the herbarium, and Dr. Matthews went on many plant gathering excursions. He and Dr. Hech traveled together on many plant collecting field trips from the mountains to the coastal plains. Although the two were never close friends, they were amiable colleagues. "Hech respected me and we got along well," says Dr. Matthews.

The two scientists were both looking for plant specimens, but they had very different aims. Dr. Hech was collecting plants to plant and keep alive

Herbarium Cabinet

in the outdoor Botanical Gardens. Dr. Matthews, on the other hand, was collecting plants to dry and preserve for the herbarium inside the Biology building.
"Hech was interested in living plants," says Dr. Matthews. "He used to tell me, 'You're only interested in dead plants.'"

Dr. James F. Matthews

When he wasn't hunting flora with Dr. Hech, Dr. Matthews sometimes took biology students on plant collection trips. While with him, his students collected many of the herbarium's specimens in Mecklenburg and nearby counties, and then started traveling across the state in the early 1970s.

As reported in an article of The Nature Conservatory, a student of both Dr. Matthews and Dr. M tells of his days as a biology student at UNC Charlotte. Dr. Johnny Randall, now the Assistant Director for Conservation at the North Carolina Botanical Gardens in Chapel Hill, says: "It [UNC Charlotte in the early 1980's] was really a hot bed of undergraduate enthusiasm. The undergrads would hang out in the Herbarium. You never find undergrads hanging out in the herbarium; that's where grad students normally hang out. It was because of this inspiring group of professors."

The UNC Charlotte Herbarium was where plants gathered by biology and students and their professors could be preserved, cataloged and stored. It was a valuable source for plant study. However, there was a problem. "The University didn't want to keep the Herbarium because it didn't bring in money," says Dr. Matthews, "so when the new biology building was built [in 2005] there was no room for the collection." The dilemma was what to do with the 40,000 valuable herbarium specimens we had collected over the years.

Changes can create opportunities. Dr. Matthews had friends in Charlotte's Mecklenburg County's Parks and Recreation department, so he contacted some people, and within a week they moved the collection to the Reedy Creek Park facility. The herbarium specimens had to be held in storage for two years (good thing they were already dead) before funds were available to build the addition that now houses the collection. Now the Herbarium collection has its own home—The James F. Matthews Center for

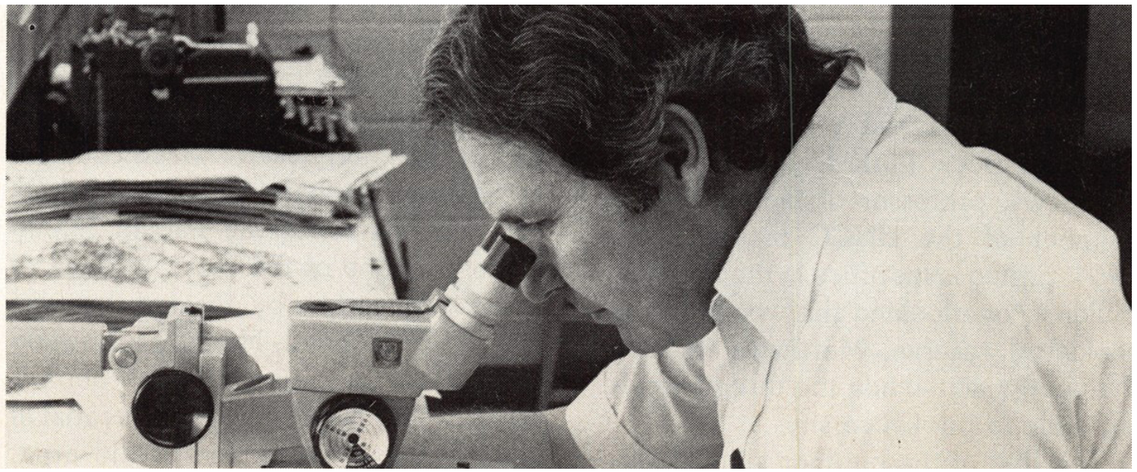
Herbarium Specimen of Goat's-Beard

Biodiversity Studies at the Reedy Creek Nature Center. The collection has grown to over 50,000 preserved plant specimens. They are available for the study of plant taxonomy, study of geographic distributions and changes in vegetation (in some cases, plants become extinct in one area, or may become extinct altogether). Researchers, botanists, horticulturalists, and others can access the collection, and specimens can be loaned to other herbaria around the country.

Dr. Matthews has branched out into land conservation and park development. He and Dr. M were instrumental in the creation of Reedy Creek Nature Preserve. The Grier family owned the land, and Dr. Matthews encouraged the county to buy it for a preserve/ park about 1981. Now Reedy Creek Nature Preserve protects 737 acres of natural, forested habitat, small lakes, forests, fields, streams and wildlife. It includes a Nature Center and the Dr. James F. Matthews Center for Biodiversity Studies.

Dr. Matthews was awarded the Governor's Award for Excellence in 1994 for his work with the state's Natural Heritage Program.

The Herbarium was started on the UNC Charlotte campus, and the University continues to benefit from it. Both Dr. Matthews and Dr. M have used it and the Nature Preserve as field trip sites for students as they study plants—both preserved and live.



Dr. Jim Matthews in Herbarium

Check Out This Place!

Visitors from Near and Far

Coolsville!
—Young visitor describing the
Gardens and Greenhouse

There is a sign-in sheet just inside the Greenhouse entrance. It is there in the hopes that thoughtful visitors will not only sign their names and note where they are from, but alsowrite their impressions of the Gardens at the end of their visit. The comments are overwhelmingly positive: "Beautiful." "We'll be back." "Fascinating variety of plants." "Great place to take photos." Staff really appreciate these remarks.

What's particularly interesting is when people mention—in person or on paper—where they're from. Many say that they have lived in the Charlotte area for years; some even grew up in the area, but had never visited the Gardens. Others are from out of town—California, Minnesota, Alabama, etc. (people from all 50 states have visited). Some are visiting family, or found the Gardens listed as a Charlotte attraction. Still others are visiting Charlotte from over 20 other countries: France, Germany, Japan, South Africa, all over the world. It's incredible.

Nowadays cell phones are almost considered body parts, so it's easy for visitors to stroll around, hold up their phone and take a picture of anything they find interesting. Then there are the "real" photographers. They come with "real" cameras and tripods, and ask how late the Gardens is open.

Orchid collectors—some more successful than others—like to check out the orchid room that showcases moth orchids, lady slippers, dancing ladies, boat orchids, corsage orchids and more delightful specimens. As John Denti, Greenhouse Curator, waters the plants, someone will say, "My

Cymbidium Orchids

mother gave me a cymbidium last year, and it had beautiful blooms. It won't bloom again—it just sits there. What should I do?" John shares his expertise about watering, repotting, feeding, sunlight and other orchid care issues. When the situation has sounded hopeless, he has recommended that he or she simply throw the orchid away and buy a new one.

Love-In-A-Puff Seed Pods

Even beyond the Orchid Room, the Gardens can be romantic. "One couple told me that they got engaged there," Jan Truitt remembers of when she worked in the Gardens. Kids like surprises, so Dr. Mellichamp hands them "love puffs" from the balloon vine and tells them to rip them open to

find the love inside—heart shaped seeds. The fact is, the Gardens bring people to the UNC Charlotte campus. No matter if they come and ask questions, take photos, become engaged, discover something new, or just walk around, people seem to get a kick out of visiting the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens.

"I've always been proud that the Gardens has the highest number of visitors after the Athletic Department," says Dr. Matthews. "Many people come to the Gardens who wouldn't otherwise visit the University. That's part of the University's mission."

People are drawn to "Coolsville."

Tom and Shan Nassar of Carolina Orchids, ca 2008

Guiding Discoverers

Tours

There's a bug down there!
—Visitor looking inside a pitcher plant

Some tour groups require a plant expert—a botanist or horticulturist—to lead their tour. These groups can be made up of science majors, professional landscapers, researchers, etc. They need to learn about the Gardens flora from a scientific point of view. They learn about plant taxonomy, biological and soil chemistry, habitat, and whole lot more. Latin terms included. That's when Paula Gross or Dr. Mellichamp step up and take the lead.

Dr. Hech by Bridge in Susie Harwood Garden, ca. 1985

Most groups, however, don't necessarily need a plant expert to show them around.

Ken Sanford gave tours in the early seventies. He had learned a great deal about the Gardens over the years, but he was a P.R. expert, not a plant expert. He remembers taking VIP types, like the members of the Board of Governors, on tours of the Gardens. They were in for a surprise when they saw who was toiling in the Gardens. Ken says, "When they came across Dr. Hech, I would have to explain who that was and why he was doing grunt work."

In his book, Ken tells of another visitor's reaction when they saw Dr. Hech: "A visiting reporter came to the campus one day, and spotting Dr. Hech grubbing in a flowerbed, remarked, 'I'll be damned. That's the first workman I ever saw with a goatee.'"

Years later, when a local garden club arrived at the Greenhouse for a tour of the Outdoor Gardens, they were greeted by a volunteer guide. She looked timidly at the group of intelligent looking middle-aged women and said, "I'm a little intimidated about giving a garden club a tour. You probably know more about some of the plants than I do." They all smiled, and many laughed. "Oh, don't worry," said one woman. "We don't know a lot about plants. We just like to get together for lunch and talk!"

Of course many of them did know a lot about plants—some more than others, but they weren't there to learn how to distinguish a *Chionanthus retusus* from a *Chionanthus virginicus* or to learn what soil pH is optimal to grow an oak leaf hydrangea.

They were there to discover the Gardens most intriguing features—like the Moon Gate that Dr. Hech built after a trip to Asia, and the gnarly Harry Lauder's walking stick that was named after a comedian's prop. They wanted to listen, but they also wanted to mention what color azalea flowers are their favorites.

At the end of the tour the women said things like: "Thank you, we had a wonderful time." "I am going to come back and bring my husband." A woman stepped forward and handed the guide the required tour fee and a little extra for a donation to the Gardens. Then the garden club ladies were ready to go. Time for lunch and talk. School groups can be daunting. When a class of twenty-eight energetic seven-year-olds and four slightly nervous chaperones is divided between two tour groups, each guide has fourteen energetic seven-year-olds and two slightly nervous chaperones. That's a lot of people to lead around Greenhouse rooms and Outdoor Gardens. But it's worth it.

Tour Group in Glen

Children are especially fascinated with the bug eating plants. Venus fly traps are a favorite, and they ask: "What happens if you stick your finger inside?" They crouch down and peer inside the pitcher plants and exclaim: "There's a bug down there!"

In the Orchid Room they try to decide if they agree that the moth orchids really look like moths. In the Desert Room they giggle when they touch the "baby toes" and reach out to touch the

cactus with the “Do Not Touch” sign.

Youngsters get a kick out of many aspects of the Greenhouse and Gardens. “Children surprise you,” Paula Gross says. “I like their spirit. They’re interested in everything, not just plants. They think it’s funny when the mist beads up in their hair or the exhaust fans suck on their clothes instead of blowing air out on them.”

Scott Griffith gave Garden tours, many in the Van Landingham Glen where he could show off the spring blooming rhododendrons. “When everything was blooming, it was really something to see. I knew all the names of the different varieties—about a hundred rhododendrons and azaleas, just by looking at the leaves.”

He says that one Glen tour was particularly memorable. “I’ve never forgotten one of them. There were about fifteen to twenty garden club ladies in their fifties and sixties. I was in my mid-twenties. We walked halfway up the creek, and at the bottom, one of the ladies asked the name of a rhododendron. I said that it was ‘Blue Peter.’ That’s what it was called. One of the ladies started laughing, and they all giggled.”

Middle-aged women will be middle-aged women. And when a group of them get together….well…

Scott says, “I mean, I was in my twenties, so I was really embarrassed. If I had known, I would have come up with a different name.”

“Then we got up to the other end, and another lady asked what variety the pink one was, and I said it was called ‘Scintillation’. She said, ‘Oh, thank goodness!’ and they all busted out laughing again.”

“They thought it was so funny, but I didn’t at the time.”

He says, “at the time,” but now, as the years have gone by, he laughs and says it’s one of his favorite stories. Good thing he didn’t come up with a different name for ‘Blue Peter.’

Tours are an important part of what the Gardens has to offer. Whether they are researchers who study plant taxonomy, VIPs, Garden Club members who enjoy a garden stroll before lunch or kids who notice the goofiest things, everyone can enjoy a Gardens tour.

Lost in the Woods

Children’s Programs

Fun is good.
—Dr. Seuss

Nature, exploration, and fun add up to an excellent mix for kids. Add some dirty stuff, glue, and markers, and things get even better. With that in mind, the Botanical Gardens offers children programs on Sunday afternoons—usually about once a month. It takes a special type of guide to encourage and know when to step back and let the kids discover and make their own connections. I had great fun being a story guide and developing a story for the Glen.

In one Sunday program the kids, along with a mom, dad, or other adult friend, gathered in the Greenhouse’s classroom, got a bag, and walked outside and down to the Van Landingham Glen.

Yeah, even down in the Glen they could hear the campus traffic going by—it’s not the wilderness—but it is “the woods” and it’s right outside.

The children sat on big logs near the rustic cabin that Dr. Hech built many years ago. “What’s inside the cabin?” they asked. They pulled open the wooden door and peeked inside. Of course there’s not much in there, just a few logs and what not scraps, but it got the kids thinking.

Story time. The kids helped to make up a tale of a little boy and girl who have been lost in the woods, and then make a home in the cabin. “How do they find water?” “A stream!” “What do they eat?” “Berries!” “Nuts!” “How do they stay warm?” “Use sticks for a campfire!”

Hike time. They hiked on the trails surrounded by plants, trees, and shrubs that Meredith Hebden and Harland Jackson tend. They walked over the stone bridge, alongside the stream, and passed through the occasional open areas where sun streams through the trees. Along the way, they gathered what they found on the paths—big leaves, little leaves, stones, acorns, and twigs—and put them in their bags. Funny thing is, the parents had as much fun exploring and hunting for stuff as the kids did.

The paths in the Glen are twisty-turny, so it’s easy to get lost. But when everyone found their way back to the cabin, they could see the gate that leads out of the Glen.

Back in the classroom, the kids poured out their nature treasures, grabbed glue bottles and pieces of cardboard, and made a collage and a jolly fun

Children’s Activities

mess. They said stuff like: “This is fun!” “I like the woods!” “Mom, can I have the glue back?”

One program focused on carnivorous plants. The kids explored the bog area in the Greenhouse courtyard and examined the pitcher plants that Dr. Mellichamp had bred and given whimsical names. Each child had a colorful magnifying glass so they could peer inside *Doodle Bug* and *Lady Bug* to see the pitchers’ poison elixir, and perhaps see a bug inside that didn’t have such a charming name, and that was past the point of caring. They also aimed their magnifying glasses at the Venus flytraps to inspect the “teeth” on the plants’ magically snapping leaves.

Another program’s theme was butterflies. Before their outdoor excursion, the kids and adults met in the classroom and discussed the winged insects. Craft time. Each child got a butterfly mask to decorate. Of course the only thing better than glue is a bunch of markers and something to color. When they were finished expressing their creativity, they donned their masks, and were instantly transformed into butterflies. They had simply skipped the cocoon stage.

Time to go outside and see the real things. Peering through their mask’s eyeholes, they walked down to the Susie Harwood Garden that Connie Byrne tended. They stopped at the pond, saying, “I see a fish!” and “There’s another one!” Then they walked on the stone paths through the Asian Garden that Teri Edwards had suggested, and to the Butterfly Garden that Dr. M and Ted Caudle had decided to create. There the children could watch the flittering, flying creatures in their own habitats as they alit on coneflowers, butterfly weed, and other delicious varieties.

In another children’s program the kids explored in and around the Greenhouse to find plants that make tasty edibles, like chocolate and bananas. In a Fall program they found out why leaves change colors and how they put on their autumn “costumes.” In the spirit of Halloween, the kids created their own masks from natural materials, and made a rhododendron stick wand.

Kathy Zimmerman, a special education and art teacher began volunteering with the gardens when her husband Martin was the campus planner. Her experience and enthusiasm was not only useful in the garden, but in growing the children's programs as well. Kathy is not the only volunteer who has led children's tours and became more involved with the gardens - Esther Carrasco, Mae Lin Plummer, and Sue Richards were all drawn in by the joy of kids in nature.

Every program is different—different themes, different leaders, different groups—but the goals are the same: to encourage children and their parents to have fun in nature activities, and to get them thinking, “Hey, let’s come back sometime and check out the rest of this place!”

Children in Butterfly Pergola

Family, Flora and Fate

Dr. Mellichamp’s Destiny

Nature makes the whole world kin.
—William Shakespeare

Dr. Mellichamp was surprised to learn that he was not the first Mellichamp to enthusiastically study carnivorous plants. In the late 1880s, a distant relative collected pitcher plant specimens and conducted experiments on them. Audrey Mellichamp says, “Dr. Joseph Mellichamp, a general physician in Bluffton, South Carolina, actually wrote the first article that gave evidence that pitcher plants were carnivorous—digested bugs. We did not know that. We were excited. We thought it was providence—that it was meant to be.” She says that Joseph Mellichamp was not a gardener, but back then medical doctors gathered plants out in their natural environment to use as medicine. “They would collect the roots or leaves, and take them to the pharmaceutical companies to make medicine.”

Dr. Joseph Mellichamp and Dr. Larry Mellichamp surely would have had a lot to share, but too many years separated them. “He died in 1903,” says Audrey, “so we never met him. But we did visit his grave in 2009 and laid down some pitchers of the species he studied, *Sarracenia minor*, the hooded pitcher plant. It was quite moving for Larry.”

It is intriguing, all the same, to imagine their meeting. Joseph could have shown Larry how he conducted those early experiments and told him about how fascinated he was when he realized that the hapless bugs he dropped into the pitcher plants’ leaf tubes became meals for the growing plants. Larry could have told him about his own pitcher plant hunting adventures, and his research and experiments. Most impressive of all, he could have shown him some of the hybrids he has created. Dr. Joseph undoubtedly would have been amazed.

A couple of more recent family members may have helped inspire Larry’s love of gardening. “His great aunt, Annie, encouraged him to play in the dirt,” says Audrey. “And I have a photograph of him when he was two or three, and he is in front of a big wooden bucket of soil and he is holding a trowel at his paternal grandparent’s farm.”

His maternal grandmother also may have helped spark his horticultural interests as she was a florist in the tiny South Carolina town of Lamar. “I think that did begin when he was observing his grandma’s garden and her flower arrangements,” Audrey says, “she told him the names of the flowers. She had unusual flowers in her side garden, but most of her flower arrangements were permanent plants because they were for grave sites.”

Larry by Grave of Dr. J. H. Mellichamp

Perhaps it was fate: Dr. M had a relative who was an early discoverer of pitcher plant secrets, an aunt who encouraged him to explore the fun of dirt, and a grandma who grew wonderful flowers. With a family background like that, maybe for Dr. M, botany was destiny.

Larry, ca. 1950

Some Tropical Rhythm

Tropicals Outside

Feel the city breakin' and everybody shakin',
And we're stayin' alive, stayin' alive
Ah ha ha ha we're stayin' alive.
—The Bee Gees

Greenhouse Co-Manager, John Denti, met Dr. Mellichamp in the mid-1990s while attending Orchid Society meetings. John had earned a B.S. in Botany from Ohio University, was living in Charlotte, and was busy with his own business. His knowledge of orchids must have impressed Dr. M because in 1997 he asked John if he would be interested in helping to take care of the Greenhouse orchids for ten hours a week with money donated by Professor Dr. Nish Jamgotch, orchid fancier and lover of all fine plants. The ten hours turned into 20 hours, which eventually turned into 30 hours a week. John's specialty was orchids, but along the way he learned more and more about the other greenhouse plants. He also found that he enjoyed working with the

John Denti

staff, students, and visitors. And John could build anything. He constructed most all of the wooden structures that were built during his tenure. John eventually became Greenhouse Co-Curator with Sandy Lester, and in the spring of 2000 the two decided to ignore conventional wisdom and try growing some tropical plants outside the Greenhouse. Most people were skeptical about trying to grow tropicals in this area and believed that windmill palms were the only palms that could survive North Carolina winters.

The UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens is, after all, more than just a pretty place. It's also where people learn about a variety of plants and the environments and conditions they need to thrive. With that in mind, Sandy and John got out their measuring tape, shovels, and dirt, and got busy in the hope of educating visitors and enlightening skeptics. With the eighteen foot wall of the McMillan Greenhouse's brick wall as a backdrop, they set the bed's dimensions at 4 x 36 feet, then filled the raised bed with very rich soil.

That June, John's friend was selling his house, so he asked John if he'd like to take the jelly palm tree that was growing in his yard. Great, he could take it to the university and plant it in the Greenhouse's new tropical bed. Good idea, but the palm apparently wasn't enthusiastic about moving. "We broke three shovels while we were digging it up," says John. "We cut off the leaves and roots. Fortunately, palms are easy to move [once you break several shovels getting them out], because they don't need their old roots to replant."

The jelly palm apparently liked its new home. "We planted it that June, and it took off right away," says John. It grew and grew that summer.

Inspired by the success, they bought more from various nurseries and planted them in the new tropical bed garden.

Early that September, the Charlotte Observer came to check out the unconventional new garden that they dubbed "A Little Plot of Paradise" in their article "Going Bananas… and other Tropical Adventures." It was supposed to be published on September 12, but of course the 9/11 attacks took center stage, and it finally appeared in the September 27 edition.
Word was spreading about the new venture, and the Burlington, N.C. Times-News also highlighted John and Sandy's new tropical garden. The two showed off the plot and explained how it had all come about. By that time garden included many courageous occupants—Charleston jelly palm, hardy banana, canna, crepe ginger, and sago palm.

"I had wanted to do it for years," Sandy said, "because we wanted to grow tropicals that were hardy, just an expansion of what we were already doing. And the idea was to put it outside, so people could see it driving down the road."

"Our biggest surprise has been how surprised other people are when they see things growing here they don't think ought to be here," John said. "What we're doing is pushing the envelope."
John joined the Southeastern Palm Society, and in the pioneering spirit of the early Piedmont Rhododendron Society, this group was determined to grow plants that were "impossible" to grow in this area. Most people still believed that bananas, palms, citrus, and many broad leaf evergreens would die a slow and painful death, or in the case of a hard frost, die a quick and painless death in this area where winter temperatures can fall way below freezing.

The Palm Society members, however, were undaunted and were determined to 'push the zones.' The zone pushing crusade motivated John to march on, shovel in hand, planting tropicals in unexpected places. "I figured if they can do it, I can do it, too."


tropical adventures

Hibiscus paramutabilis is a hardy, free-flowering shrub.

This crepe ginger, Costus speciosa, is one of the gingers proving hardy.

A contrast of foliage: tropical smoketree and Lime Zinger xanthosoma.

This papaya plant prospered outdoors all summer but will spend the winter indoors.

LAYNE BAILEY – STAFF PHOTOS

Tropical Garden curators Sandy Lester and John Denti admire the banana tree, Musa basjoo, that they are studying for hardiness at UNC Charlotte.

Charlotte Observer
Sandra (left) and John (right)

Inspired by his success with the Greenhouse's outdoor tropical garden, John headed over to a nursery in York, South Carolina and bought three large palmetto palms—two for his own yard and one for the Greenhouse's outside bed. "They were special because they each had eight foot trunks and seven or eight leaves," he says. "That's unusual because palms are usually sold with no roots, and they seldom have leaves."

The palmettos were each 1,000 pounds. To illustrate how dense palms are (because of all the water they hold) John says, "During the Revolutionary War, American troops used palm tree logs to build coastal forts because the wood was so dense yet resilient that the British Army's cannon balls bounced off. Many people say that that helped America to win the war. That's why a palm tree is on the South Carolina state flag."

Although grown palms can fend off cannon balls, not all palms can fend off the problems that prevent them from growing. Of course John hadn't planted them for wartime defense, but he wanted them to survive. John's good news: "The ones in my yard flourished." John's bad news: "The one here outside the Greenhouse didn't grow but a half inch in two years."

John realized that the languishing palmetto outside the Greenhouse had been planted too deep, and that the situation was hopeless. Time for the big island in the sky. John had a guy come out and hoist it out of the ground and lay it on the grass. Now for a decent burial. "I didn't want it to just lie there like a dead dinosaur," John says.

It's not easy to handle a 1,000 pound tree, so John revved up his chainsaw and started by cutting off the crown. "I hauled off the crown to the compost pile, and came back about ten minutes later to a surprise. The trunk had sprouted a new leaf—two inches long—it had pushed it out in the ten minutes that I was gone! That was more than it had grown in two years. It was telling me, 'Don't cut me up. I'm still alive!' It was like the disco song Gloria Gaynor sang: 'I Will Survive.'" So John planted it on the west side of the greenhouse where it still stands today and has seen snow and single digit temperatures.

All it needed were strobe lights and a disco ball.

Palmetto in Snow, 2010

Where the Wild Things Grow

In the Glen

I don't like formal gardens. I like wild nature.
It's the wilderness instinct in me, I guess.
—Walt Disney

"People ask, 'Where's the Garden?'" says Meredith Hebden, manager of the Van Landingham Glen. "The concept of a woodland garden is foreign to them."

Meredith started working at the Gardens part-time in 1998, and then became full-time in 2000. She studied botany and photojournalism in college, so she looks at the Glen from three perspectives—creatively as a professional photographer, scientifically as a plant enthusiast, and practically as a garden caretaker.

"The title 'Garden Manager' is inappropriate," she says, "because it manages you." She's in manages seven acres that are intended to give visitors a feeling of wandering through a mountain woodland. Although Dr. Hech created the Glen to look rustic and somewhat 'untamed', it still takes a lot of work—maintaining paths, pruning rhododendrons, planting native plants, and more. Meredith likes planting new things, and in the spirit of someone who appreciates the natural-looking part of the Glen, she especially likes planting wildflowers as if they'd been there all along.
She might like the Glen to look natural, but she appreciates the modern conveniences, especially the new irrigation system that was installed in the early 2000s. "The old one was hodge-podge, here-there, low pressure, rusty pipes, dilapidated hoses and sprinklers, not enough coverage. The one we have now is a big improvement. We have more than 60 overhead sprinklers that we can run for as long as 24 hours."

Meredith also appreciates many of the critters that inhabit the Glen. "I still find Jan's turtles," she says. "It's interesting to watch a turtle and yellow jackets fighting over a dead toad."

Through the years she has become friends with many of the cats that frequently hang out in the Glen: Squeaky, a black cat with asthma; Mama, who lived for twelve years; and Smiley—so named because he had white markings on his face like a smile, who lived to be sixteen years old.

Gardeners often need to be resourceful and devise clever tricks. Meredith has come up with trick to prevent being stung: "Raccoons eat yellow jacket nests, so I bait the nests when we find them with over ripe fruit or Chick-fil-A sauce to entice the raccoons to dig up and eat the entire nest."

Stinging yellow jackets are nothing compared to the havoc nature can cause, like the ice storm in 2003 that broke off lots of tree limbs that blocked the paths, or Hurricane Hugo that left the famed monster of a mess.

Although much work had been done to clear the Glen after the hurricane, new plans and new plantings had not been a priority for a long time.

Meredith Hebden

"The big stuff had been cleared away, but in 2002 there was still a mess of mangled young trees," says Meredith. "We cleaned it out, and wondered what should we do here? We decided to feature plants that Michaux [a French botanist and explorer in the 1790's] discovered in the Piedmont. We made a list of his plants and then considered which ones would grow best there, and then planted."

When a dying oak in the Harwood garden had to be taken down in 2006, the Gardens hired a tree company (Cadieu Tree Experts) that brought a crane with a 140' reach. Meredith remembers: "I got a birds-eye view of the Gardens at the end of the day." From that perspective, the gardens must have looked pretty wild.

Tree Cutting in Harwood Garden, 2006

Dr. Hech Leaves a Legacy

You're Never Too Old

Though an old man, I am but a young gardener.

—Thomas Jefferson

Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner worked in the Gardens until 1990—he was almost 80 years old. All through his seventies, when he wasn't traveling, he headed outside wearing his gloves, picked up a shovel, pruners, or any other tool that would get the job done, and got to work on the Gardens he had created. Through the years, he had cleared land, dug holes, smuggled seeds, planted rhododendrons, fended off builders, yanked out invasive plants, created a pond, built an Asian Moon Gate, and a whole lot more. To Dr. Hech, being seventy-something probably seemed like a walk in the park.

The Piedmont Rhododendron Society held a 90th birthday celebration in his honor in 1999 at the McMillan Greenhouse where they viewed memorabilia from the past 33 years of the UNC Charlotte Botanical Garden, and presented Dr. Hechenbleikner a Bronze Medal Award. Presenter Dr. M said that the award was "for dedicated service to the local Chapter over a thirty year period, and for significant contributions to the fields of botany and horticulture."
Dr. Hechenbleikner died in 2004. "He loved to work," says his daughter, Madeline. "That's why he lived to be 95."

"Hech left an outstanding legacy," says Dr. Matthews.

Dr. Hech and Family, 1999

Dr. Hech and his 90th Birthday Cake, 1999

Bonnie Cone Leaves a Legacy

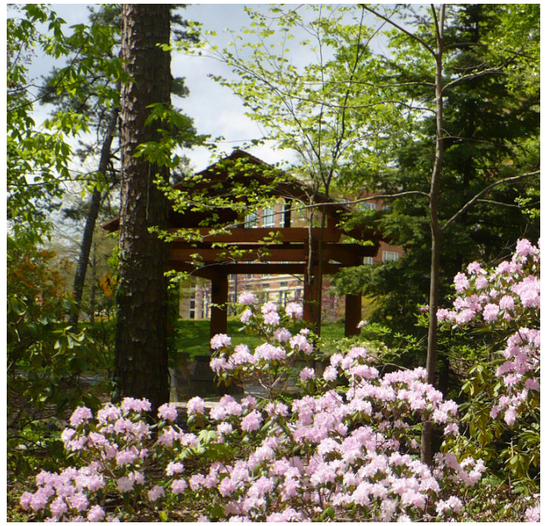
You're Standing on Hallowed Ground

The supreme accomplishment is to
blur the line between work and play.
—Arnold J. Toynbee

Bonnie Cone, or Miss Bonnie as she was popularly known, died in 2003 just one year earlier than Dr. Hechenbleikner, and at the same age—95 years. She is buried in the Van Landingham Glen, and will probably be the only person buried on campus (though there are cremated ashes throughout the gardens). As a founder of the University, she had worked diligently, and her smiles captured in photos taken through the years show that she enjoyed life along the way. She accomplished much, and apparently had a good time too.

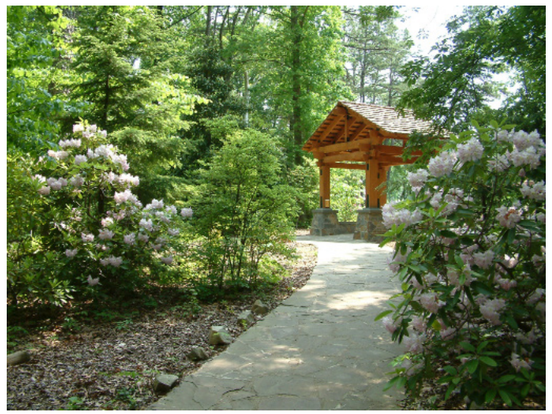
Chancellor Jim Woodward said of her passing: "I do believe that the character of a university, the spirit of a university, is determined by a very few people. And I think the spirit of UNC Charlotte was determined by Bonnie Cone."

Her motto, engraved on a ceramic tile on her desk, read, "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I ought to do, and what I ought to do, by the Grace of God, I will do." As founder of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, she put that motto to work and did a lot—for the University, and in support of the Botanical Gardens.



Cone Entrance Gate Gazebo

Tom Payne, Bonnie Cone, and Dr. Hech



Cone Entrance Gate

Joy

Weeding in the Garden

There are two ways to live your life.
One is as though nothing is a miracle.
The other is as if everything is a miracle.
—Albert Einstein

In the fall of 2004, Connie Byrne was retired and ready to do something different, so she came to the Gardens and began working part-time as an assistant. They were without a manager for the Harwood Garden when she arrived, and her help was much appreciated. She pulls out weeds, prunes shrubs, collects tree debris and such. As she works, her hands encased in gloves, a trowel and basket nearby, she finds delightful things all around her, saying:

> "One morning I got here just about sunrise, and as I started to walk into the Harwood Garden, here comes a Mama 'possum, calmly strolling down the trail before she disappeared into the hole at the bottom of the big White Oak at the entrance to the Gardens. She seemed to think she owned the place, and in many ways she did. The young raccoons up in the trees in the spring feel the same way, I'm sure, even if it does drive us nuts when they dig up stuff we've just planted."

Although gardeners expect to see animals like bugs, snakes, and raccoons, Connie has found some animals that she didn't expect. "Someone decided to use the pond for five large-mouthed bass." She says that the finned foreigners gobbled up all the goldfish living in the pond at the time. Then she got an idea. "My granddaughter, Serena, and I baited them with worms and caught them, put them in five gallon buckets, and gave them to a friend who had their own pond. One of those bass was literally sixteen inches in length! Biggest bass I ever caught that didn't end up on someone's dinner plate."

As she works, Connie has fun walking around the creek, wading in the pond, and looking at the plants. "I've gotten to play like a kid again," she says. Along the way, she feels that the labor is worth it. "Standing back when I finally finished mixing all the peat and sand for the Bog Garden down by the pond felt really good. Hot, sweaty, tired and thirsty, but feeling good about the job I'd done.

"It's so gratifying at the end of the day to look back and see the difference I've made in the appearance of the small space where I've been working. I know some folks think I'm weird because I happen to love the maintenance part of gardening—the weeding, pruning, and such, but it gives me great pleasure, and, in the end, that's all that matters."

Dr. Hech surely would agree.

Connie Byrne

Dino Fangs and Horse Tails

The Prehistoric Room

Scientists think that Sauropod dinosaurs may have used their extremely long necks to reach plants like horsetail and club mosses that lived in wetlands. The heavy dinosaurs could stand on solid ground and eat the plants growing in the soggy area without falling in.
—unknown

Disneyland celebrated its 50th birthday in 2005, while the McMillan Greenhouse was getting a magic kingdom of its own—in the form of a Jurassic dinosaur world.

It all began when Dr. Matthews took his six-year-old grandson and true dinosaur enthusiast, Corey Matthews, to an outdoor dinosaur exhibit on the lawns at the UNC Charlotte campus in summer of 2004. The monsters were made of junk parts from old farm tractors and machinery, painted primary colors. Corey thought the ancient monsters were pretty cool and asked his grandpa where all the dinosaurs went. Corey apparently didn't like the answer, because he asked, "Well, why couldn't we keep just one?"

When Dr. Matthews told his former student and colleague, Dr. Mellichamp, about what his grandson asked, Dr. M got an idea: why not create a dinosaur garden in the Greenhouse?

All projects cost money, so Dr. M asked about 30-40 people for donations to fund the new dino exhibit. Apparently many adults agree with Corey that dinosaurs are pretty cool because enough of them donated for the venture to begin.

You can't have a dinosaur exhibit without a dinosaur, so Dr. M bought one from a California sculptor [Larry Williams of the Jurupa Mountains Discovery Center] for $9,000. "Nykie" is a ten-foot long steel sculpture of a bird-like, meat-eating dinosaur that roamed western North America 65 million years ago, a *Deinonychus*. The sculpture is anatomically correct and life-size, and you can get the idea that dinosaurs evolved into birds.

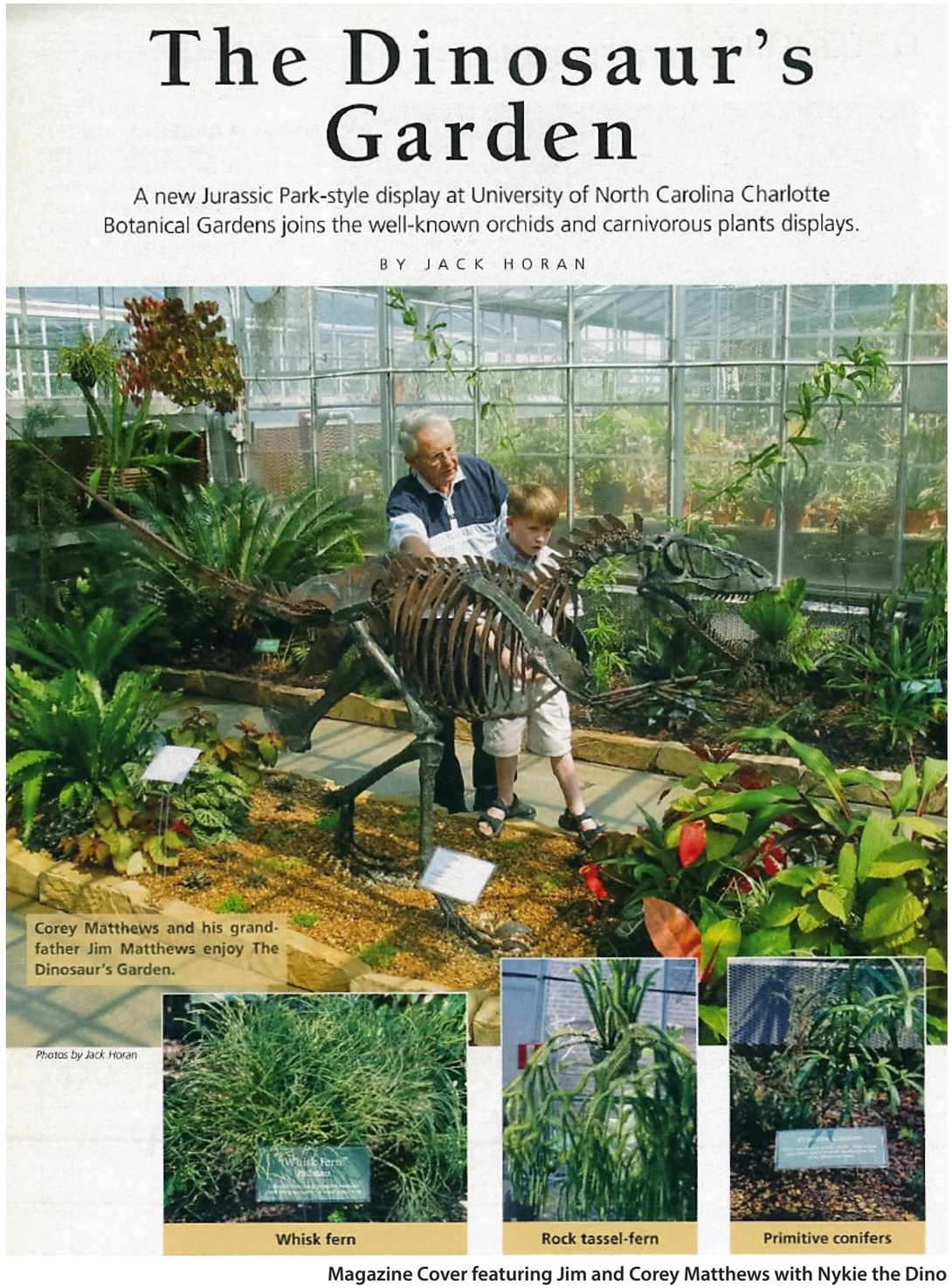
Its habitat, which included plants like horse-tails, tree-ferns, mosses, cycads, and small tropical conifers, was recreated by Paula Gross, John Denti, and Sarah Leo, then Greenhouse Manager. "The concept of the Dinosaur Garden is to show primitive plants that are related to plants that were around 65 million years ago," Dr. M said in a Carolina Gardener article.

"Helping to create the Dinosaur Garden was really fun," says Paula. "I loved that." She and Dr. M drove to the Atlanta Botanical Garden and talked to a couple of people who took care of those kinds of plants for advice about what to grow.

To add to the other-worldliness of the exhibit, they added lava rocks to the display. Next to the window fossils are displayed—imprints of plants, petrified wood, and even a dinosaur bone.

Thanks in part to Corey Matthews, kids can see a dinosaur in its prehistoric stomping ground. Children smile when they see the rusty-looking steel dino skeleton with its long sharp claws reaching out and its open jaws showing long pointed teeth.

"Can I touch it?" they ask tour guides. Nykie has lots of friends.


The Dinosaur's Garden

A new Jurassic Park-style display at University of North Carolina Charlotte Botanical Gardens joins the well-known orchids and carnivorous plants displays.

BY JACK HORAN

Corey Matthews and his grandfather Jim Matthews enjoy The Dinosaur's Garden.

Photos by Jack Horan

Whisk fern

Rock tassel-fern

Primitive conifers

Magazine Cover featuring Jim and Corey Matthews with Nykie the Dino

The Economic Room

The Spices of Life

Vegetables are a must in a diet.
I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread, and
pumpkin pie.
—Jim Davis

Eating is fun (hey, even necessary), so why not show off some plants that stimulate the palate and keep us going? In fact, how about devoting a greenhouse room to display plants that people grow and sell (hence the name 'economic plants') for food and to season culinary concoctions?

In the 2005 Annual Report to Donors, Dr. M announced the New Economic Plant Display: "In one greenhouse room we have gathered such famous food and spice plants as coffee, cocoa, starfruit, allspice, pineapple, black pepper, citrus, and ginger. Right now we have a dozen papaya fruits ripening, and we will soon have vanilla beans on the vine."

Guides sometimes pull a leaf off the allspice plant and break it up to let visitors smell the pieces. They try to guess what it is. "Cinnamon." "Cloves." "Nutmeg." Then a couple of spice aficionados pipe up and say: "Allspice. I use this when I cook…" Game over.

Visitors see papaya fruit growing overhead on tropical trees. Some mention that they have grown a pineapple plant after cutting off a pineapple crown. They can smell the fragrant flowers on the coffee shrub, or see its berries that lead to coffee beans that make the coffee they drank that morning, which helped them feel energetic enough to visit the McMillan Greenhouse.

McMillan Greenhouse's Economic Room

Cacao in Economic Room

Part Five
2005-2014

A Touch of the Orient

Creation of the Asian Garden 2006

One of the most delightful things about a garden is the anticipation it provides.
—W.E. Johns

"I've come to appreciate the Susie Harwood Garden more and more," says Paula Gross. "I always thought it was charming, but I remember

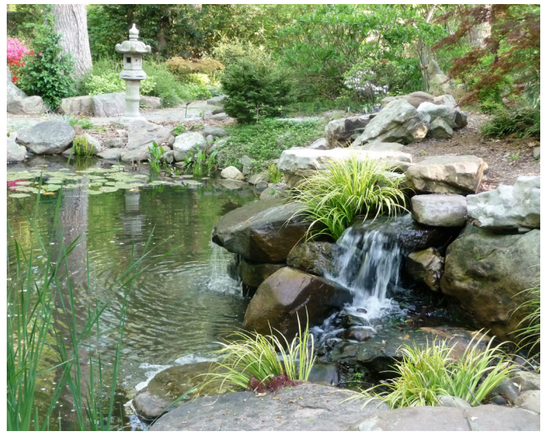
Moat in Harwood Garden, 1985

Harwood Garden Pond, 2012

the moat, before they built the Water Garden. It was kind of scary. I was never sure what was in that moat." Apparently she didn't see the snapping turtles.

Twenty-five years after Dr. Hech made the original 'pond' it was finally replaced by a new one. In 2006, Creative Ponds Company brought in a small track-hoe and dug out the moat-with-an-island. It was a messy job—lots of mud and murky water. The hoe got stuck and had to be pulled out. "But it was a tremendous improvement," says Dr. M, "and added a new dimension to the Garden with running water and new areas to plant things. Its creation was the highlight in the Gardens that year."
"I was glad when we got the new pond," says

New Plant Beds in Harwood Garden



Harwood Garden Waterfall

Paula Gross. "There are still snakes out there, but now you can see the pond because the water is clear." The snapping turtles no longer had a place to hide.

Teri Edwards and Connie Byrne

Teri Edwards, now the Susie Harwood Garden Manager, came on board in 2006. She was from Minnesota where she had been a teacher, then a school principal. After moving to Charlotte, she volunteered for two years at the Botanical Gardens working on Saturday mornings.

It's true that you can take the gardener out of the north, but it's a challenge to take the north out of the gardener. "It's different taking care of a garden that's alive year-round rather than one that's covered with snow for six months," she says. "When they started talking about winter gardening, I asked, 'Where's the snow shovel?"

She is apparently a quick study, because in 2008 she took on the position of Manager of the Susie Harwood Garden.

The Susie Harwood Garden had many bright qualities around 2006, with fewer trees (thanks to Hurricane Hugo), more sunlight shone in; a colorful mosaic with tiles arranged to represent the four seasons and the power of the sun; and the new pond's water was glistening in the sunshine.

One part, however, was not lovely then. Dr. M remembers that the quarter acre, named the Mayer Moon Garden area (beyond the Moon Gate that Dr. Hech had built) was "rows of overgrown crepe myrtles, unpleasant, uninteresting, and hot."

Teri says that if the Moon Garden was attractive at one time, it no longer was by the time she came onto the scene. "I saw that something could be done, but I could not imagine that it would be so phenomenal. I could not visualize that it would turn out to be so terrific."
In 2007 Teri came up with the idea of refashioning the Moon Garden area into an Asian Garden. "I looked at books about Japanese gardening and looked at how they were laid out," she says.

When Teri mentioned her idea of an Asian Garden, Dr. M was skeptical at first. "I didn't know what an Asian Garden was, and I was cool about the idea," he says.

"It's in Dr. M's nature to be a little bit apprehensive about everything," says Teri.

He may, perhaps, be naturally cautious, but Dr. M is not closed minded. "Fortunately I said, 'Well, let's look into it.'"

Time went by, and perhaps Teri assumed that Dr. M had forgotten about the project, or maybe had decided to put it on the back burner indefinitely. But apparently the idea was simply simmering, because Teri says, "Out of the blue Dr. M said, 'I thought you were making a plan for the moon garden.' And I said, 'Here it is.'"

"I myself am a procrastinator," Dr. M admits. "My motto is, 'Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow.' Teri's motto is, 'Do it today, rather than tomorrow.'"

Teri's drive must have won out because Dr. M did get the ball rolling. "I decided to go ahead with the project, says Dr. M. "We would develop an Asian Garden."

"But we didn't necessarily want our garden to be a Japanese garden," Teri says. "We wanted it to be an Asian inspired garden."

Now they needed money—lots of it—to turn the idea into a reality. Sue Richards, who served various roles at the Greenhouse, wrote a grant proposal to the Arts and Science Council. The Council awarded $7,500 for the Asian Garden. Dr. M says, "and we applied for a grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Fund in California, and lo and behold, we got $20,000—a great success, a big pile of money—for us."

Now, finally, they could begin.

"I talked to Pat Rogers, who is well known for designing with Asian plants and Japanese gardens," Dr. M says, "and asked her to come out and do a design for us. She sketched out a simple drawing that showed a trail that split in two and went around large rocks and a dry stream bed." This made the concept easier to imagine. Johnny Massengale of Ponders Inc. worked on many of the garden features. "Words cannot describe what he created," says Dr. M. "A dry stream bed, boulders, paths of stone. He transformed it into a magical place."
"The basic footprint was there, but on a grander scale," Teri says. "Johnny kept looking back at the footprint of the original design, but his vision was much greater than mine."

The Charlotte area had just been through the devastating drought of 2007, so they wanted to plant things they wouldn't have to water frequently. In fact, no water is needed in the dry stream bed—hence the name.

In 2009 they bought new plants and architectural trees (many from a nursery called Architectural Trees, near Durham, NC) that complemented the Asian architectural elements, and they left several of the trees and shrubs that were already there including a columnar southern magnolia tree, a gingko tree, Japanese maples, and evergreen shrubs. In 2010 a local woodcrafter from Belmont, North Carolina, Nathan Rose, built a wooden fence with an oriental flavor around the garden. He also constructed a massive zen-style entry gateway, erected by Joe Cadieu and his giant tree crane.
Visitors can now stroll the stone path and see the stone stele with the Chinese greeting that Dr. Hech put in, and the majestic magnolia tree and gingko tree that have been there for many years [since about 1982]. They can also now see newer elements, like the winding dry stream filled with rocks that suggest flowing water, and boulders that suggest mountains.

Elegant. Serene.

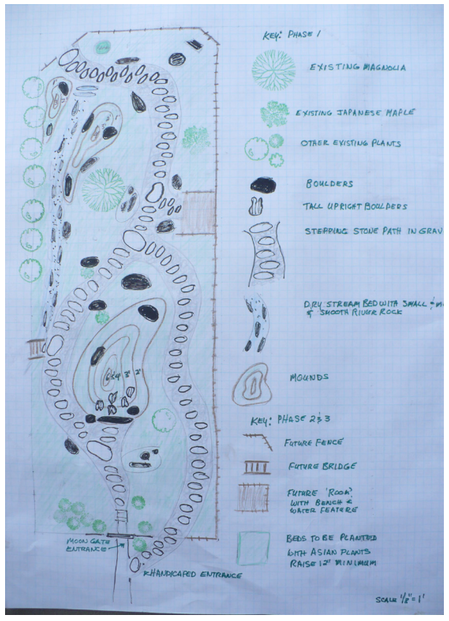
Asian Garden Rock Placement

Asian Garden Progress, 2008

Teri (left) and Johnny Massengale (right)

Nathan Rose raises Asian Garden Gateway, 2009

Asian Garden Planning, 2008



Pat Roger's Sketch of Asian Garden

Asian Garden Dedication 2010

Umbrellas and Fancy Food

There are as many special occasions
in life as we choose to celebrate.
—Robert Brault

It was a lovely day with bright sunshine for the Asian Garden Dedication on April 11, 2010. There was a great turnout. Invitations had been sent out, and many people came to see the Susie Harwood Garden's new Asian Garden. The 6,000 square-foot space is the only Asian inspired public garden in the Charlotte area.
The celebration was a fusion of cultures: Asian and American. Assistant Director Paula Gross said, "UNC Charlotte's Asian Garden demonstrates how principals of Asian landscape design can be used to create an intimate experience with nature. A careful selection of plants, rockwork pathways, and ornaments combine to engage the visitor on a deeper level."

Asian food was catered in and placed on tables in various places in the Susie Harwood Garden. Visitors enjoyed the taste of the Orient as they discovered plants and trees that are often found in Asian Gardens: bamboos, azaleas, hydrangeas, camellias, and Japanese maples. Asian community leaders attended. John Chen represented the Carolinas Asian American Chamber of Commerce.
"I think the ceremony was very honoring of the Asian community," says Teri Edwards. "Dr. M wanted it that way."

Dr. Mellichamp says, "We think the Asian Garden has attracted more people to the Gardens than any other single thing we ever did."
Inspired by a trip to China, Dr. Hech began creating the Moon Garden in the Susie Harwood Garden in 1980 to recapture some of the beauty elegance he had seen in the Asian gardens. Thirty years later, the Asian Garden affirms his belief that they are enchanting.

Crowd at Asian Garden Dedication, 2010

Suzanne at Asian Garden Dedication, 2010

Genie White and Ann Armstrong, longtime friends of the Gardens celebrate the Asian Garden Dedication, 2010

Asian Garden Dedication, 2010

Big Bella Blooms

The Titan Arum

From there, to here, to there,
funny things are everywhere.
—Dr. Seuss

Titan Arums are rare, have the largest inflorescence in the world (up to twelve feet tall) and are well, shall we say, odorous. Not many exist in the wild (endemic only to Sumatra), few botanical gardens have one, and they bloom very rarely (up to 10 years is common between blooms) and the blooms last for only a few days.

When one bloomed at London's famous Kew Gardens, the event was covered with fanfare and announced, complete with colorful photos, in media worldwide. A video of Kew Gardens Titan Arum blooming in 2010 can be found YouTube.

That year the same big blooming spectacle was happening in the McMillan Greenhouse. The UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens has its own Titan Arum plant—affectionately nicknamed Bella—and after resting as an underground corm for several years, she decided to make an appearance and put on a show for the first time since her maiden display in 2007. In anticipation of the rare event, regional newspapers, websites, and TV stations announced when Bella was expected to bloom.

Bella was a hit. On Tuesday, June 22, 2010 she opened. During the two days that she was in flower, 4,000 people came to the Greenhouse to see her live, in person, and up close—if they could stand the awful smell. The visitors stood patiently in a long line that sometimes stretched from the Prehistoric Room, the Desert Room, the Economic Plant Room, and finally into the Tropical Conservatory where Bella stood several feet tall, like an odd, exotic celebrity.

Connie Byrne with Bella in 2007

Teri Edwards

John Denti

Visitor

Bella was beautiful, in a kind of strange, almost creepy way. Its name explains a lot. The scientific name for Titan Arum is *Amorphophallus titanium*, which in layman terms means giant shapeless penis. Bella's spadix stood erect like a loaf of French bread covered with tiny male and female flowers, and was surrounded by a leaf-looking spathe that was green on the outside and burgundy on the inside.

Visitor Appreciating Bella's Smell

And, oh, the smell. One visitor said, "It almost made me throw up." Actually the stink was half the fun. People bravely walked up close to Bella, wrinkled their eyebrows, held their noses, and laughed when they caught a whiff of the putrid stench that Titan Arums emit to attract pollinators that consider rotting meat a delicacy. Children especially had fun reacting to the stink and overall weirdness.

Volunteers helped with over 4,000 Guests

The fun was fleeting. The unusually hot weather (even by Charlotte's summer standards) made Bella wilt even faster than is usual for a Titan Arum.

Paula Examining Titan

"Wow—that was QUICK!" Paula wrote on the Gardens website after Bella's appearance was over. "Most likely she was fully open and at her stinkiest during the middle of the night between Tuesday the 22nd and Wednesday the 23rd. By the end of the 24th, her petal-like spathe was withered and we pronounce her over on the 25th."

Bella (or one of her kin) is dormant now—sleeping while snugly wrapped in a corm under a blanket of dirt, dreaming of a bright, warm sunny day when she can awaken again and put on another awe-inspiring and smelly appearance for the curious UNC Charlotte Gardens friends.

Might take a while, but maybe her dream will come true.

Nurturing and Sharing

A Greenhouse Manager

Flowers always make people better,
happier, and more helpful;
they are sunshine, food and
medicine for the soul.
—Luther Burbank

Horticulturalist and Greenhouse Co-Manager, Tammy Blume, who has a B.S. in Horticulture from North Carolina State University, isn't afraid of defending the Greenhouse plants from invaders. She dons a white Tyvec suit and green rubber boots, sets out a bright stand-alone plastic warning sign that reads: "Danger Do Not Enter, Area Being Treated
With Pesticide," picks up a plastic pesticide container, smiles, and says "I love killing stuff," and then marches out to eradicate the pesky plant munchers.

While one small part of her job may be annihilating the bad guys, Tammy spends more of her time and expertise growing and encouraging the good guys. She propagates plants using cuttings, planting seeds, and by dividing parts. Surrounded by pots, soil, shears, and other tools of the horticultural trade, Tammy stands at the long steel tables in the Greenhouse workroom and preps the plants for visitors to enjoy.

When she's not growing them, she's ordering them. And when she's not growing or ordering them, she's planting and caring for them. Along with taking care of all of the Greenhouse plants, Tammy designs and plants the perennial beds around the outside of the Greenhouse. She includes a wide variety of plants—some are popular and prevalent, like coleus (Tammy's favorite), that many visitors recognize, while some are a bit more exotic, like passion flower, that cause the curious to stoop for a peek at the identification markers and perhaps to ask Tammy a few questions while she's garden-tending. She knows each plant well because she has taken them carefully from small to impressive.
Co-worker, Esther Carrasco, says, "Tammy's very knowledgeable, but she doesn't show off, and she stays low key."

Her knowledge and calm help a lot during the hectic times when she's helping to prepare for and manage the Gardens plant sales. Patrons can then come and check out the bug-free plants in the Greenhouse and the tended beds outside the building. They can ask Tammy questions like "What is this plant, and can I grow it in my yard?" Tammy knows—she has cared for it since it was nothing more than a twinkle in a pollinator's eye.

Tammy Blume

Passiflora violacea (Passion Flower)

Are You From Around Here?

Certificate in Native Plant Studies

Let nature be in your yard.
—Greg Peterson

There are two kinds of plants—those that live here (native), and those that live there (non-native). The idea is simple. It's a good idea to plant things like cardinal flowers, viburnum shrubs and redbud trees which are native to here (the North Carolina Piedmont region). It's a not-so-good idea to plant things like chinaberry tree, bush honeysuckle, autumn-olive, and purple loosestrife which are not native and are from there—wherever there is.

So how do you know what is native, what difference it makes (the benefits), and, assuming that growing natives is beneficial, how do you make them thrive? Well, there are courses for that.

The Botanical Gardens offers a valuable program for gardeners—professional and non-professional—who want to nurture the plants that live here. The Gardens website explains:

> "In response to increasing interest in native plants and the environment, the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens has partnered with the NC Plant Society and the Habitat and Wildlife Keepers to offer a series of in-depth courses combining lecture and hands-on learning, leading to a Certificate in Native Plant Studies."

The program includes core courses including "Basic Botany," "Basic Horticulture," and "Plant Identification." Elective courses include "Attracting Birds to Your Garden," "Insect Identification," and "Soils of the Piedmont." Gardeners, landscapers, and environmentalists learn how to identify plants and trees native to the Piedmont region, to understand their habitats, to select native plants for gardens and landscapes, and to take care of the plantings.

When Dr. Mellichamp and others had the idea to start a native plants program in 2008, they didn't know how much demand there would be and how successful the program would become.

After having taken over for Sue Richards as the Certificate in Native Plants Program Registrar, Esther Carrasco is in charge of managing the program's enrollment. She says that the people who take the Native Plant Program classes are from diverse backgrounds. About a third take the classes for professional enrichment—professional landscape architects, and landscape designers and others who want to plan more environmentally friendly gardens for their clients. Roughly the other two thirds take them for personal education—homeowners who want to learn how to use native plants in their gardens. Why are all these people so interested? For one thing, native plants are suited to the environment—they need less care, and they

Esther Carrasco

attract local wildlife. That means less time watering and more time watching butterflies.

The program is popular. The first class was held in 2009, and many people were enrolled. Esther says that she feels fortunate to have been in that first class. She was so impressed by what she learned that she continued in the program and was one of the first to graduate and to receive a Certificate in Native Plant Studies from the Botanical Gardens.

Her enthusiasm began in the introductory course. "The Basic Botany class that Dr. M taught was part lecture and part hands-on experience," she says. "The class was a turning point for me. Not only did I learn a lot, I also realized how much I still had to learn in the botanic world and the world of nature. It was a wonderful feeling as I learned more, layer after layer, and more was to come."

Esther says that she considered herself to be a beginner in the study of native plants, but that many of her classmates were very knowledgeable. There were about 30 students, and about a third or half of them were involved in launching the pilot program. Rather than feeling intimidated by what they knew, however, Esther found their comments intriguing. She says, "The complexities of their questions and their interaction with other participants and Dr. M added layers to the class.

"When they made a comment, I could see how their knowledge, experience, and related knowledge of the subject came together," Esther says.

> "For example, we could see a palm outside the classroom window, and when the other students asked a question about the palm, they asked about its habitat, palm evolution (how it became the way it is) and how it interacts with wildlife. For most of us, a palm is a palm and you just put it in your garden, but to most of these people it is so much more than just the one element—it is all the elements that come with it. That's what made it so interesting—it was like opening a wondrous box of how many more things there were to learn."

One hands-on experience stands out as significant to Esther:

> "We were opening a flower, seeing its parts, like most of us learned in third grade — the pistils, the stamens, the petals, and the sepals. But when we did it, Dr. M connected with the class in a way that someone who has no knowledge of botany could benefit from that, and also someone with a lot of experience could gain more insight. I was a novice and I learned the intricacies of the flower.

"One of my classmates and I were having fun opening the plant parts, and I looked at him and said, 'Wow! I'm never going to look at a flower the same way again.' And that's true. Since that class, I haven't looked at flowers the same way."

That was a beginning. The program can help people not only to appreciate the intricacy of flowers in particular, but also to appreciate the value of native plants in general. It's a big step, but the courses can help gardeners and landscapers to focus less on the plants that grow there, and more on the ones that grow here.

Colleagues and Friends

Dr. Matthews and Dr. Mellichamp

There is nothing better than a friend, unless it's a friend with chocolate.
—Charles Dickens

Back when Dr. Mellichamp was an undergraduate, his relationship with Dr. Matthews was that of student and professor. Later, when Dr. M came back from the University of Michigan and filled Dr. Hech's position, the two became colleagues and friends.

"Larry and I have always been good friends," Dr. Matthews says. "We've communicated well and understood each other."

Larry (left) with Jim Matthews (right)

He contrasts that relationship with the one he had with Dr. Hech: "Hech and I were never friends. Hech never asked for help." Dr. Matthews says that Dr. M has a much different demeanor. "Larry knows when to ask for help. Larry is more easy-going and laid back."

Dr. Matthews and Dr. M have a lot in common. They are both scientists, have strong ties to UNC Charlotte, and enjoy teaching others about plants. They do, however, have distinct personalities. As the years have gone by, Dr. Matthews has discovered that his friend has some interesting characteristics. "Larry has some eccentricity about him that many people find intriguing. He doesn't think like everybody else. He's on the edge of everything and is creative. He and I look at things from a different angle. I'm more conservative, and sometimes he surprises me."

Beyond their rapport and differences, Dr. Matthews respects Dr. M and his work. "Larry is viewed as a professional, not just a garden guy. He can talk hard core botany, and can talk gardens and horticulture. Larry is always willing to share his knowledge and his time."

He adds: "I've been pleased to see him stake his claim in the Gardens."

Knee High Boots and a New Garden

The Mellichamp Native Terrace and More

To affect the quality of the day,
that is the highest of arts.
—Henry David Thoreau

Much has happened at the Gardens in the last few years. Paula Gross and Dr. Mellichamp have co-authored *Bizarre Botanicals*, a book that, in a lighthearted and witty way, highlights weird plants like flying dragons and unicorn plants. Dr. M's book, *Native Plants of the Southeast: a guide for the best species for gardens*, was published in 2014. John Denti has created a new orchid display in the Greenhouse, Tammy Blume has managed more plant sales that raise funds for the Gardens. Meredith Hebden has refurbished trails and seen stone bridges built. Teri Edwards became an expert on Japanese maples.
And as students have been walking around campus in knee-high boots and talking on smartphones, a new native plant garden, the Mellichamp Native Terrace, has been developing in the Susie Harwood Garden.
Many of today's gardeners are so accustomed to planting hearty hybrids and exotic plants arranged in carefully designed plots, that the idea of using native plants in normal home landscapes seems almost avant-garde. But that's what makes it all so intriguing.

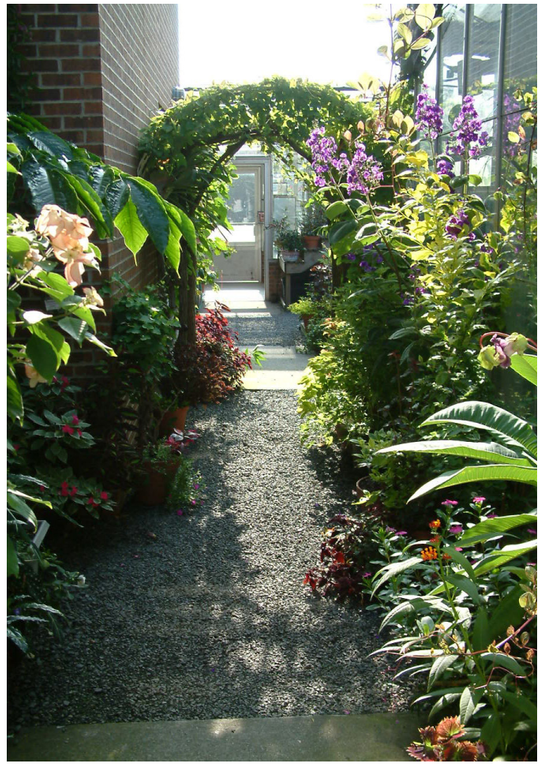
And yet the Mellichamp Native Terrace is designed to be more than a curiosity. As gardeners and naturalists are becoming increasingly interested in growing native plants and in sustainable landscaping, the UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens is striving to educate people about how to make native areas thrive. The purpose of the new garden is to show how it can be done.

The one fifth acre is designed "to inspire and inform visitors about the beauty, horticultural utility, and sustainability of the southeastern flora." The project was completed in 2015. It features a rain garden with a water retention system (less watering!), a streamside meadow (a café for butterflies and bees), a wildlife habitat (critters can hang out here), carnivorous plant exhibit (insects beware!), and native lawn substitutes (sell the lawnmower!).

Some visitors may be inspired to forego the modern lawn (especially that grown from industrial strength hybrid seeds, fertilized with nasty chemicals, and watered by hyperactive sprinkling systems), and instead plant native groundcovers that need far less water and

John Transporting Orchids for Sale

John Creating Naturalistic Orchid Display



Display at McMillan Greenhouse

Bog Plants Maintained by Tammy

feeding. They also may decide to decline the newfangled hybridized flowers (especially those that look artificial and bewilder native pollinators), and instead grow indigenous flowers that local bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds recognize, and that also require less care.

And, perhaps most of all, the Mellichamp Native Terrace will be pretty. People will stroll on the gravel paths, walk up the wooden steps and onto the terraces that overlook the stream, the holly/myrtle/bay screen, stonework, shrubs, trees and colorful flowers.

Planning for the Mellichamp Native Terrace began in 2012. Landscape Architect, Ed Davis, has led the project, but a variety of people have been involved—contributing ideas, talents, and labor. He says, "From the beginning, I understood and have tried to remain true to Dr. M and Paula's vision that the new garden be a collaboration. A variety of people have had a hand in not only the planning of the native garden, but also the installation and management of it—from Dr. M to

Dr. Hech's Bridge Built by John Gossett

Glen Gate Created by Meredith

Stone Bridge Construction in Glen, 2008

Stone Bridge Completed

staff, student workers, and even volunteers."

Some craftspeople who added elements to other parts of the Gardens have returned to lend a hand. Nathan Rose, the carpenter who built the wooden fences in the Asian Garden, constructed the observation deck and bridge. Johnny Massengale of Ponders Co., who made the dry stream bed and boulder display in the Asian Garden, and his crew have created the stonework.

In August 2014, Ed was experiencing what all gardeners feel: "At times I have been impatient because I could not see results fast enough. But comparing photographs of where we were one year ago against where we are now are surprising. It will be fun to see photo comparisons after one more year."

The Mellichamp Native Terrace was already coming alive when Ed said:

> "My biggest surprise was seeing the immediate attraction of new wildlife to the native plants site. I did expect to see a few bees on the flowering perennials in the streamside meadow area, but I had no idea that I would be able to count as many as fifteen different pollinators on one plant all at once during a warm July day. The site has been transformed from a forgotten area to a nucleus of wildlife activity and interest in the Gardens."

In a way, it has all come full circle. In the late 1960s, Dr. Hech and his young student, Larry Mellichamp, hit the road in search of native plants, and planted them in the Van Landingham Glen. Over 40 years later, the Susie Harwood Garden includes an area named for that student, now Dr. Larry Mellichamp, which showcases native plants.

Ed Davis

The Natives Terrace

The Story Continues

The Plant Frontier

"The future is not an inheritance, it is an opportunity and an obligation."
—Bill Clinton

Our story began with mini-skirts and Dr. Hech's new garden. Along the way, styles have changed, and as the Botanical Gardens has grown, it has become a place of many stories.

It's a story of the Van Landingham Glen, the Susie Harwood Garden, and the McMillan Greenhouse. It's about the plants that grow in those places—rhododendrons, wildflowers, orchids, carnivorous plants, cacti, tropical plants, and many more. It's about the structures that adorn the Gardens including a Moon Gate and gazebo, a rustic log cabin, stone bridges, and an indoor tree. It's about dealing with money matters and unpredictable weather.
Most of all, it's a story about people—a man who went out there and started digging. Donors who gave funds and plants. A man who came back to defend and manage the Gardens. People with creative ideas. People who like to tell others about plants. People who plant, prune, and weed. Students and plant experts who come to learn. Visitors who stop by and enjoy it all.

The story of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Botanical Gardens continues to grow, and what Dr. M wrote in the 2005-2006 Gardens Annual Report is still true:

> "In short, more than ever before, we did more things for more people with minimal resources and realized that we are an invaluable facility for the University and Charlotte community. We are very proud of our accomplishments and look forward to a busy, creative, and productive future."

Dr. Larry Mellichamp Points to the Future

Appendix

Dr. Hech
More of Buddy Hechenbleikner's Memories

Where Credit is Due

Dr. Lucius Gaston Gage Jr., a Charlotte physician and a major benefactor to UNC Charlotte, died in September, 2011. His obituary mentions Dr. Gage's 2004 contribution to the university, which included his home and 130 acre property, worth an appraised value of eight and a half million dollars. The start of the second paragraph begins: "The benefactor, Lucius Gaston Gage Jr. had no formal connection to UNC Charlotte…"

True, Dr. Gage had no formal connection to the university, but he did have a personal connection to UNC Charlotte. He was friends with Dr. Hech.

Buddy Hechenbleikner explains in an email one of his father's invaluable, but perhaps forgotten, contributions to the university. And he lightheartedly conveys pride in his father's accomplishments. Buddy begins by pointing out what Gage's obituary doesn't mention.

The writer doesn't try to solve the mystery. The only reason that UNC Charlotte received this gift from Dr. Gage is that Dr. Gage was one of my dad's best friends for many years! He was also dad's doctor for allergies. Dad had to get shots and take pills because of the plants and flowers that he loved so much gave him hay fever. Go figure.

It was dad's and only dad's suggestion that led Dr. Gage to give his property to UNCC.

Dr. Gage used to take Richard and me water skiing behind his boat on a number of occasions when we were teenagers. Dr. Gage and I went white water canoeing in the NC mountains at dad's suggestion. Dad drove us to and from the Green River on that trip. My canoe was wrecked—Dr. Gages' fault—and I was almost drowned on that trip.

I would like to see that dad get credit in your article for Dr. Gage's gift. One sentence would be fine. If it is not appropriate to work in your article, then so be it.

Added together—Ralph Van Landingham's gifts (his estate and cash/stock) to the gardens, the $500,000 gift from dad's friends [the McMillans] *for the greenhouse and attached building, and Dr. Gage's gift to the University—I believe would be more than the $10 million dollar gift that Jerry Richardson, the owner/ founder of the NFL Carolina Panthers, gave UNCC.*

Jerry is a former client of mine. He was President of Spartan Food Systems, Hardees largest franchise owner company. Jerry and I have been friends for over forty years. Jerry got a huge write up in a magazine, and rightly so.

Not many people know how much money was raised for UNCC by my dad. The Hechenbleikners certainly do.

Not many people remember dad at UNC Charlotte, he's been gone from there a long time. I'd just like to see dad get credit for the millions of dollars that he brought to the university through the power of persuasion/salesmanship.

Naming the lake after him was a nice thing, hopefully it will stay on it forever. Heck, he helped to build it…lol.

In addition to the money that he raised for UNCC, the sweat equity that he gave the university is incalculable.

OK, getting down off my rattlesnake cage soapbox.

Buddy Hechenbleikner

Lassoing a Cottonmouth Water Moccasin

Buddy Hechenbleikner remembers the day he went out exploring with his dad and some of his dad's doctor friends. Always on the lookout for a feisty serpent, Dr. Hech spied a cottonmouth water moccasin inside some bushes. His friends and Buddy were keeping a wide distance between themselves and the snake, but Dr. Hech had other ideas. Buddies recalls: "Dad decided that he wanted to catch it, but he had to get it from behind the bush, so he took his belt off, made a lasso by passing the belt through the buckle, slipped it over the snake's neck, and dragged him out."

"That's when the snake wriggled loose. That's when the doctors and the son disappeared to get as far away as possible on that small island from the mad snake and the mad Dr. Hech.

Shooting Snakes

Buddy had another memorable adventure that involved his dad and snakes. One time they were canoeing on a river in a swamp—Buddy and his son in one canoe, and paddling ahead in another was Dr. Hech and his brother. Unbeknownst to his dad, Buddy had come fully prepared for this Hechenbleikner adventure. "I had a pistol–a colt woodsman," he says. "I was tired of being nice to water moccasins."

When Dr. Hech and his brother had gotten pretty far ahead, Buddy and his son spotted poisonous snakes. "The banks were covered with copperheads," Buddy says, "all lying along the side of the banks. That's when I snapped, and declared war on copperheads. They were not my little friends. I started shooting. That pistol is over one hundred years old, but the snakes will tell you it works pretty well.

"When we reconnected with Dad, he said, 'I heard some shooting down there,' and I said, 'I did too, Dad. Maybe someone was hunting.' I never admitted that I had been shooting at snakes. Dad would not have approved. Not at all. He took a scientific approach—that they deserve their place in nature."

Buddy, however, had a different viewpoint, and a message for the nasty serpents: "Get out of my face and take your forked tongue and poisonous fangs with you!"

Wrench in the Lake

One day many years ago Dr. Hech was on campus at Hechenbleikner Lake when he called Buddy. "Dad called me and said that he had dropped a wrench into the lake when he was working on an overflow pipe," Buddy says. "He was a good swimmer, but he figured he had a helper who was younger, and that he could convince to swim for him—which was me. So I drove out to the lake and we went out in the canoe."

They paddled out to the point in the lake where Dr. Hech thought he had lost the wrench. Buddy remembers: "Dad said 'I dropped it around here.' I went down time and time again to find the thing, and it was cold down there on the bottom. I couldn't find it. Finally, I said, 'This is going to be the last dive I do', and I went back down."

On Buddy's last trip he had some luck. "I hit the wrench with my foot, and it flipped up and over. I reached down and grabbed it, and came up with it.
"I wanted to suggest to him that he tie a tether around his wrist for that wrench, but one didn't tell my dad that kind of thing."

Dr. Hech

More of Madeline Hechenbleikner Freeman's Memories

Snakes

Madeline remembers Oscar and Rudolph—two rattlesnakes that Dr. Hech kept as pets at home: "One day, Daddy caught them mating, so turns out they were male and female, but Daddy kept calling them Oscar and Rudolph regardless. Apparently he didn't inspect them too closely because they were poisonous. He fed them hotdogs—he'd heat up the hotdogs and toss them into the cage."

Explosions

Dr. Hech apparently got a kick out of explosions, whether they were backwards or forward. Madeline says that he had a sense of humor about things that go boom. "Daddy would bring home films about volcanoes, and we'd watch them erupt. Then he'd play the films backwards. We'd 'hee-haw' while we watched the volcanoes 'un-erupt.'"

Dr. Hech liked forward moving explosions as well. The Hechenbleikner family lived on nine acres surrounded by undeveloped land around the property. Darn good thing. Nearby neighbors would have cramped their style because Dr. Hech had some unconventional landscaping techniques.

Madeline well-remembers one of them:

> "When a tree had to come down, Daddy would have us kids help him. He'd use dynamite. He would put the sticks in there, light them, and take off backwards. We had so much fun pulling the rope trying to get the tree to topple over after he had dynamited it. I don't know how he got dynamite. I don't know if you can get dynamite now, but he did."

However, Dr. Hech got the explosives, his tree-removal method didn't shock his children. "It was commonplace for us to see him do things like that," says Madeline.

One blast in their yard, however, did surprise the Hechenbleikner family. "We had never seen Daddy run," Madeline says, "but one time he had been digging to plant something in the yard, and he dug into a bumblebee [or perhaps yellow jackets] nest in the ground. All of the sudden the explosion came. The bumblebees were flying after him big time. It was so funny—he was hot footing it, dashing across the yard, trying to get away from the bees."

Dr. Hech apparently was braver around snakes than bees. After all, you can't lasso a bee.

Hiking

Dr. Hech was an enthusiastic hiker. He wasn't a beach person. He had grown up in Austria where he had hiked on the Alps, so he was very much a mountain man at heart. He didn't take his daughter and two sons on pleasant walks; he led them on adventure-filled treks. They had a mountain home and even there things would get vigorous and lively. "We would hike on the backside of the mountain and cross the hanging bridge," Madeline says. "We walked up the large rocks, went in caves, and went fossil hunting. We had some adventures, that's for sure."

Dr. Hech was a world traveler, and he found adventure wherever he went. He climbed the highest mountain when he was 57. When Madeline was sixteen she went to Mexico with her dad and some friends. "We rode these tiny donkeys for seven miles, and then rode up to a volcano and climbed the cinder cone. It was still steaming in some places."

Madeline says that her dad collected wherever they went. On one trip this included keeping his eyes open for tarantulas to take back home. Maybe the snakes wanted a new friend.

Miss Elizabeth Lawrence
More of Dr. Mellichamp's Memories

Discussions

She accepted Dr. Hech's pontifications and theories on plant ecology and geography, and

could counter some of his ideas (of course, no one knew better than he on anything, even if he was wrong).

Her Home Garden

Her garden was not "designed" as you might do to a home landscape, but it was more of a collection, always changing, of botanicals and unusual specimens she was working to identify or write about. Therefore, Dr. Hech did not learn much from her in terms of design or plant recognition—and maybe he didn't try.

Travels with Dr. Hech

She wrote a weekly column in the Charlotte News, and would occasionally mention Dr. Hech and their outings. He favored traveling with her on botanical journeys around the state, especially in South Carolina, where he would take pictures and collect specimens to try to grow at on the grounds of UNC Charlotte (before the Botanical Gardens). I inherited several of those photos. Although I wasn't there on those trips, those images instilled some feelings in my mind as I viewed them frequently.

Getting to Know Her

I went with Dr. Hech one time in 1978 and struck up a conversation with her. I don't remember drinking bourbon though! I met with her several times. One evening when Audrey went with me, she fixed a delightful soup for us.

I wish I had spent more time with her, but I was busy with my career at UNCC. I didn't get to spend time in her garden, which has become famous as a mecca or shrine to her memory and pioneering work with Southeastern gardening. I felt slightly intimidated by her—which is strange because she was so warm-hearted and accommodating. I didn't know how to behave around her—which was the fault of my youth—and avoided visiting more often.

She told me to get in touch with the famous landscape architect Billy Hunt in Chapel Hill, also a remarkable encounter, but alas too late in his life (and too early in mine) for me to take more advantage of his influence.

Dr. Hech's Gardening Approach

Dr. Hech's 'designs' and plant placements in the Harwood Garden left much to be desired. Very few, if any, were the result of thoughtful consideration. There were some combinations; however, but at the hands of both these gardeners—Dr. Hech and Miss Lawrence—they can be attributable to just plain luck.

Dr. Hech did have convictions about certain plants—Canada and Carolina hemlock, mossy-cup oak, Carolina rhododendron, Big-leaf magnolia, native azaleas, and other fragrant natives. He had more of a way with stone and structure (rock formations like 'Little Crowder's Mountain and the Moon Gate). For that I am eternally grateful, for these fixtures in the Harwood Garden have provided settings that I'm sure I would not have devised in my time there.

Writing

Miss Lawrence was famous for goring many different plants in the South and writing about them. During her period in Charlotte (1950-1980) there were very few books about southern plants and gardening, and very few reference books of any kind, so we could view her and Dr. Hech pioneers of the period and the genre, working without benefit of wisdom from others, and not fearing to try what seemed worth doing at the time.

Her most famous books are The Little Bulbs and Gardens in Winter. In her later years, she was obsessed with writing about the "garden bulletins''—southern newspapers or periodicals that advertised plants and such mostly from rural people with whom she corresponded. She had stacks of the bulletins in her cluttered study. She talked to me a little about those. Her involvement is documented in the posthumous book, Gardening for Love: the Market Bulletins by Allen Lacy.

Additional Memories from Dr. Mellichamp

Dr. Larry Mellichamp was reminded of more memories and details to share a he read through this history. Some notes have been worked into the history, and the rest are included here.

On The Cabin in the Woods

The first roof of hand-split cedar shakes over a plywood cover lasted a really long time, but we finally had to replace the roof in 2011. Also, some logs had rotted and had to be replaced in 1987, and other adjustments to keep the cabin sturdy and stable had to be made in subsequent years. We have occasionally found that someone has slept in the cabin, and several times professional photographers have used the cabin as a backdrop for…various kinds of photographs. We view the cabin as an important part of the Glen, and in 2014 Polly Kellam donated funds to repair the cabin in memory of her husband, Dr. Donald Kellam, who was such a good friend of Dr. Hech.

On Problems and Proposals

That first plant sale was surprise. I started teaching at UNC Charlotte in the fall of 1976, using the home-made greenhouse as a not-too-great horticulture laboratory. An eager student of mine, Bob Prophit, who was tuned in to horticulture and who realized our plight financially, suggested we have a plant sale the following spring. I was skeptical, and in fact said "no" because I didn't know what it involved or how we would grow plants. But he was persistent, and I finally relented. Bob did it all, organizing and growing hanging basket of petunias and foliage pants and some bedding plants that winter in a small glass greenhouse on campus. In April 1977 we had our first sale and made $176. I thought, this is real money, since we had almost no way to make money back then. And we were overjoyed! Bob wrote up the paper work and we "founded"

the UNCC Horticulture Club, which was a student organization allowed to make a little money to support its activities. This is how it began, and we have had a plant sale every year since.

On Planting In and Kicking Out

Dr. Hech made a special license plate naming his little car "Mushi" which he said meant 'insect' in Japanese, because it looked like a VW beetle. He thought that was so cute—we all did. He had his own special little parking spot, just big enough for that bug, up on the side of Mary Alexander Dr. that all the police on campus respected. He had put a sign there that said "reserved," and no-one knew that it was not official, he just did it. It was right across from the McEniry Bldg. where he had his same old office, which he occupied for several hours weekly until about 1995. He had threatened to buy a diesel car when gas prices reached 50 cents a gallon (it was 26 cents in 1969, and rising, and he always complained), and he did. In January 1985, however, the temperature went down to -6 degrees F, the coldest recorded temperature in Charlotte, and the diesel fuel froze in his Mushi. The next month he went out and bought a more conventional car.

On Bonnie Cone Leaves a Legacy

This motto [I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. What I can do, I ought to do, and what I ought to do, by the Grace of God, I will do.] *is engraved on her gravestone ledger of polished black granite. Her memorial site is in the eastern portion of the Glen, near the Bonnie Cone Entrance gazebo. Some of her favorite plants surround the patio. There is a sitting rock consisting of a single large piece of gray native granite shaped, ironically, very much like the state of North Carolina. I think she would have been pleased with her final resting place—peaceful and natural. Because she grew many native plants in own backyard, she would have sympathy with the feats and foibles of managing a large garden. She always welcomed guests, and many people came by just to say hello or to ask her advice. She always had time for everyone. Many days we find that visitors have placed candles, flowers, cards, and other memorabilia at her patio. I'm sure she welcomes every gesture and emotion. She was much loved and is well-remembered.*

On Dino Fangs and Horse Tails

I tried to purchase one of the steel lawn sculptures to place in the gardens because they were so popular, but the cheapest one was $20,000. I was shocked. I then found one for sale on the Internet and offered immediately to purchase it. What a bargain as it was mostly already paid for by having been created for a special museum display, then returned to the sculptor. This sculpture was anatomically correct, modeled after real bones discovered in Montana in 1965, not made of plow-shears and gear wheels. I went to Riverside, California during a very rainy period the first week of January 2005 to meet with the sculptor. He was busy building an 80 ft. Brontosaurus! His museum's director honestly told me she wouldn't have normally let him sell the sculpture, but that it was his and she wouldn't fight it and that I was lucky. Indeed!

After arranging for the sculpture to be dismantled, crated, and shipped to UNC Charlotte, it miraculously arrived after having the wrong address on the box—someone must have known we were getting it in Charlotte. In March 2005 John Denti and I went on a plant buying trip to Florida to acquire appropriate plants for the room. Several of the rare conifers were donated by Ron Determann, curator and plantsman par excellence at the Atlanta Botanical Garden.

I had raised well over $10,000 from private individual donations to pay for the sculpture and room renovations after sending out a special appeal letter to our members and friends. And some donations came from folks who had never planned to give a penny to the gardens. Bravo for them, and thanks to all our generous friends!

This is an excellent example of the kind of crazy things I would come up with to do at the Gardens. We never knew how we would pay for them, but support always came through, so we felt that we were doing the right thing.

A Touch of the Orient

I'll always remember the day we were in a staff meeting in late 2006 and I said we need a mosaic sculpture, something to depict the four seasons in the gardens. Everybody rolled their eyes. They said, yeah, sure, great idea. I nearly fainted when within a week an art student, Margey Breish walked in the office and said: "I'd like to do a mosaic sculpture in the gardens. Do you all allow that?" Teri immediate got behind the project, or maybe I should say inside of it, because she and Margey had to excavate a 7 ft. cylindrical hole in the ground for the concrete foundation. It was more work and more money than we had thought—it always is, which is why staff always hated to see me coming with a gleam in my eye. "I have this new idea…!"

But Teri bought into the project idea, saw that it was done properly, and it was wonderful: it is a large bright rayed sun with the four points of the compass representing a tree in each of the four seasons. It has become a favorite setting place in the Harwood Garden on a cold winter's day because it is in full sun.

On Asian Garden Dedication 2010

Actual construction and final features installation took two years, starting with the conceptual idea in Jan 2008, and the first planning in July 2008. We planned the May 11, 2010 Asian Garden celebration for many months. Many people were involved because we wanted to invite the Asian community, and we had to involve campus caterers and the Chancellor's and Dean's offices. This is one of the times my idea didn't work out—I had envisioned Asian food being prepared and brought by Asian shops in Charlotte, set up on tables as advertising for them. Not only did University food services say they could not accept that because of risks to the public safety (not knowing the qualities of the preparations) but Asian companies did not want to do it. So, we went with Campus catering preparing a fantastic array of Asian foods that were served in Asian style dishes at several locations throughout the Harwood Garden. Paula prepared a fabulous program brochure with information on Asian plants. Staff got all involved acting as tour guides. Speakers included Chancellor Phil Dubois's wife, Lisa Lewis Dubois; Liberal Arts and Sciences College Dean Nancy Gutierrez; president of the Charlotte Asian Chamber of Commerce John Chen; and leader of the a UNC Charlotte Asian Association, Dr. Jian Zhang. Religious Studies Professor Emeritus Jeff Meyer read a document he composed on the concept of an Asian Garden, the text of which is at the Zen-gate entrance to the Asian Garden. Even Chancellor Dubois I made a few remarks wearing my striking Chinese jacket I had acquired in 2007 on a botanical trip to Wuhan, China. After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, we all enjoyed food and drink. It was all a colorful and meaningful gala affair, and the gardens looked great.

On Big Bella Blooms

The first Bella, flowering in July 2007 was the most spectacular. It was our first, and the first in the Southeast region south of Virginia. We named it "Bella" due to the bell-shaped leaf covering the floral spathe, as well as a take-off on Bela Lugosi who played Dracula with his flamboyant surrounding cape. The inflorescence was over 5 ft. tall. I could smell it ¼ mile away when I arrived at the crack of dawn that Sunday morning. It was awful; but it was wonderful. It only stinks

the first morning—when it attracts beetles that bring pollen from another flower (if there is one blooming, but not around here, only in the jungles of Sumatra). The second day it sheds pollen and smells less badly. The third day it begins to wilt, and the fourth day it goes on the compost heap, in a ceremony of completion for a process that took over ten years from seed to flowering. Were it to have set seeds, it would have taken a year for them to mature. After setting seeds, the plant often dies. Bella bloomed twice before expiring. In 2007 we had a video-cam set up on Bella and people watched it for weeks as each day the flower structure grew bigger. We had national news coverage (slow news week, I guess) from coast to coast. Some 7,000 people came to see Bella. Many botanical gardens have now bloomed a Titan Arum. We were the 20th Institution in America to have a flower. They are not easy to grow—needs a BIG windowsill and a gas mask.

Our second Titan Arum (third one to bloom), named Odie, flowered in 2015 and we were able to pollinate it and obtain a fine seed crop.

On Colleagues and Friends

I owe much of my success to Jim Matthews. Without him I would not be where I am today. He took a surprising interest in an exceedingly naïve freshman biology major in 1966 and suggested things for me to do that I would never have thought of. That is what advisors and mentors are supposed to do, to see the potential in a young student, but he worked harder at it than most. My first involvement was a stint as a summer undergraduate botany research intern to work with Professor C. Ritchie Bell of UNC Chapel Hill who was spending the summer teaching at the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory in Gothic, Colorado. I went out there, spent two weeks with Dr. Bell's graduate student Guy Nesom, and then 6 weeks at the Lab in the high Rockies. That was like Darwin's Voyage on the Beagle for me—my first time away from home and everything was new and exciting. I was so innocent, I took with me the Flora of the Carolinas guide to use in identifying Rocky Mountain plants. There aren't two species in that book that grow in Colorado (one is the common dandelion). Jim helped me get the teaching job at UNC Charlotte in 1976 as I was finishing graduate school. He was my mentor as a young professor. Jim and I have worked closely together on everything, from graduate students to research projects and consulting. Jim always had great answers to every question and I am so thankful he was always there for me. Our running joke for the past 50 years has been the time I ordered lasagna at a restaurant on a student class field trip and it took an hour to prepare; everybody else had a simple sandwich.

People

Gardens Managers and Directors
Dr. Herbert Hechenbleikner: "Dr. Hech", Biology Professor, Founder of the Botanical Gardens
Dr. T. Lawrence (Larry) Mellichamp: "Dr. M" Botanist, Biology Professor, Director of the Botanical Gardens (1976-2014)
Jan Truitt: Biologist, Outdoor Gardens Manager (1984-1998)
Walter Raley: Glen Manager (1998)
Sandy Lester: Greenhouse Manager (1986-2004)
Jonathan Ertelt: Lecturer and Greenhouse Supervisor (1989-94)
Richard Stickney: Lecturer and Greenhouse Supervisor (1995-96)
Paula M. Gross, M.S.: Lecturer, Botanical Gardens Assistant Director (1997-2017)
John Denti: Greenhouse Orchid Curator (1997-2017)
Meredith Hebden: Van Landingham Glen Manager (1998-present)
Tammy Blume: Horticulturist, Greenhouse Manager (2004-present)
Sarah Leo: Horticulturist, Greenhouse (2004-05)
Dawn Shepard: Harwood Garden (2005-07)
Connie Byrne: Gardens Assistant (2005-07)
Teri Edwards: Susie Harwood Garden Manager (2006-2016)
Ed Davis: Landscape Architect, Gardens Supervisor (2015-present)

Experts
Dr. Donald S. Kellam: Orthopedic Surgeon and Expert in Growing Rhododendrons
Dr. Charles Dewey Jr.: Electrical Engineer and Pioneer in Growing Rhododendrons in Piedmont
Ernest Yelton: Physician whose Woodland Garden Inspired Dr. Hechenblikner
Elizabeth Lawrence: Garden Writer, Friend of Dr. Hech
Robert K. Gardner: Curator of Carnivorous Plants at North Carolina Botanical Garden
Tom and Shan Nassar: Chemists and Owners of Carolina Orchids, Fort Mill, S.C.

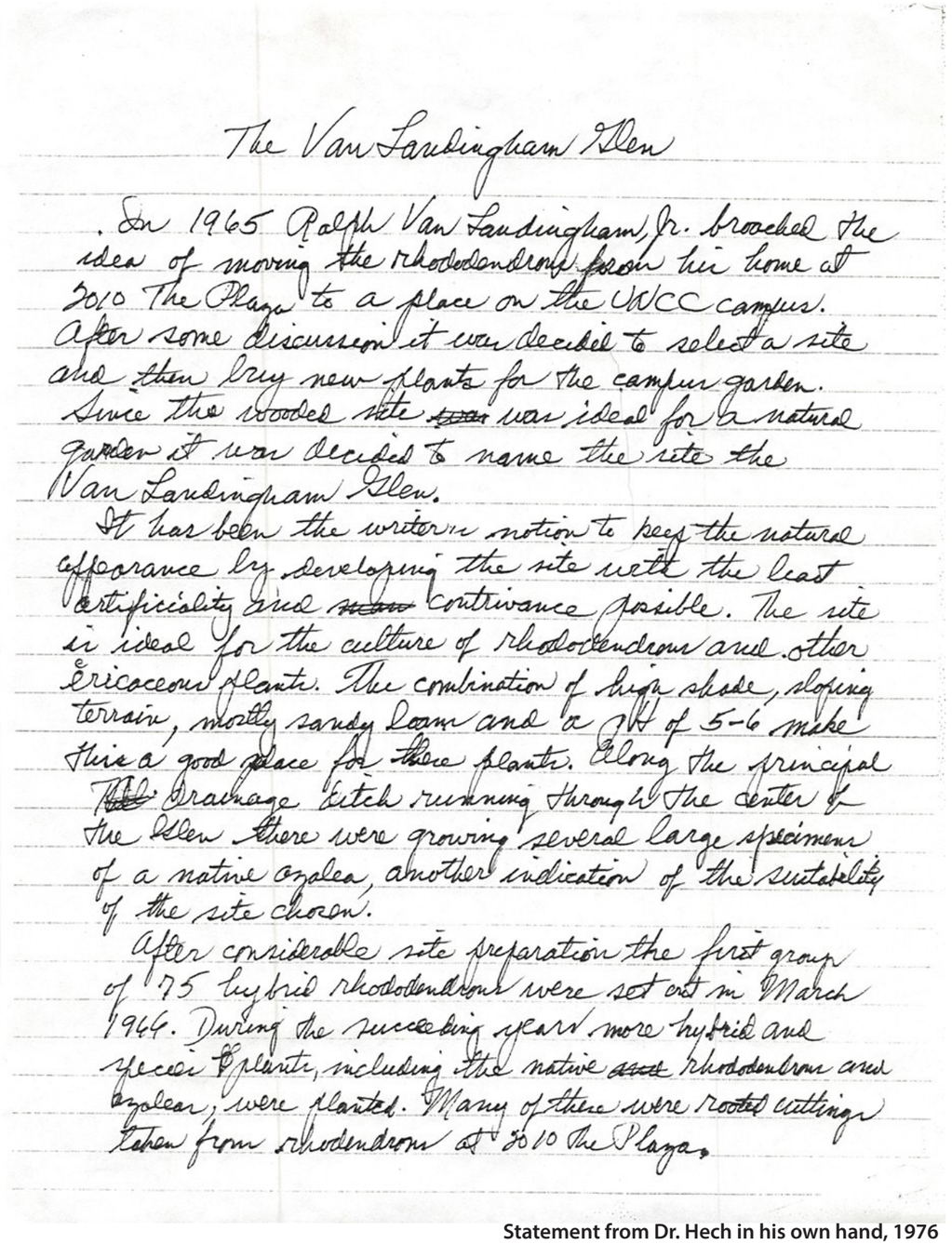
Donors
Ralph Van Landingham, Jr.: Businessman
Susie Harwood Van Landingham: Ralph Van Landingham's mother
Dorothy Schoenth McMillan: Orchid Enthusiast
Dr. Thomas M. McMillan: Physician, Dorothy's husband
Daniel J. Stowe: Textile Magnate in Belmont, NC
Madeline Hechenbleikner Nichols: Dr. Hechenbleikner's sister
Margery and Carlisle Adams: Plant Lovers and 20-year donors
Dr. Nish Jamgotch, Jr.: Professor and Orchid Enthusiast

Specialists
Esther Carrasco: Certificate in Native Studies Program Coordinator
Sue Richards: Grant Writer, Tour Guide
Susan Scholly: Woodland Walk Guide
Kathy Zimmerman: Weekend Host and Tours Coordinator

University Administration
Bonnie E. Cone: A founder of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Dr. Dean W. Colvard: First Chancellor of UNC Charlotte (1966-1978), wife: Martha
Dr. James F. Matthews: Biology Professor, Department Chair, Botanist, and Herbarium Founder
Ken Sanford: UNC Charlotte Public Relations Director, Author of UNC Charlotte History
Dr. E.K. Fretwell: Chancellor of UNC Charlotte (1979-1989)
Leo E. Ells: Vice Chancellor of Business Affairs (1976-1991)
Dr. Roger H. Trumbore: Biology Department Chair (ca. 1980-1986)
Dr. James H. Woodward: Chancellor (1989-2005)

Gardeners
Harland Jackson: Computer Expert, Outdoor Gardens Volunteer, wife: Kae
Brad Black: Assistant Gardener to Dr.

158. First board of advisors, 2007.
(left-right) Larry Mellichamp, Paula Gross, Sharon Harrington, Richard Hechenbleikner, Dean Nancy Gutierrez, Carla Vitez, Jack Weil, Margaret Zimmermann, Eugenia White, Price Zimmermann, William Logan, Chancellor Emeritus Jim Woodward, (kneeling) Thomas Nunnenkamp, Harland Jackson, Charlie Williams.



The Van Landingham Glen

In 1965 Ralph Van Landingham, Jr. broached the idea of moving the rhododendrons from his home at 2010 The Plaza to a place on the UNCC campus. After some discussion it was decided to select a site and then buy new plants for the campus garden. Since the wooded site was ideal for a natural garden it was decided to name the site the Van Landingham Glen.

It has been the writer's notion to keep the natural appearance by developing the site with the least artificiality and contrivance possible. The site is ideal for the culture of rhododendrons and other Ericaceous plants. The combination of high shade, sloping terrain, mostly sandy loam and a pH of 5-6 make this a good place for these plants. Along the principal drainage ditch running through the center of the Glen there were growing several large specimens of a native azalea, another indication of the suitability of the site chosen.

After considerable site preparation the first group of 75 hybrid rhododendrons were set out in March 1966. During the succeeding years more hybrid and species plants, including the native rhododendron and azalea, were planted. Many of these were rooted cuttings taken from rhododendrons at 2010 The Plaza.

Statement from Dr. Hech in his own hand, 1976

2 - Van Landingham Glen.

Soon it became apparent that other plants than rhododendrons would add to the appearance and usefulness of the Glen. The writer decided to start planting shrubs, trees and herbaceous ~~plants~~ species native to North Carolina (in Carolinas). Then it is now possible, by visiting the Glen every week or ten days from mid February to mid September, to see many native plants ranging from the mountains to the swamps of the coastal plains.

As gasoline becomes more expensive and field trips are shortened or curtailed otherwise it will be possible for biology students to see and study more and more of our native flora on campus.

The garden at 510 The Plaza, called the ~~Susie~~ Susie Harwood Garden, features hybrid rhododendrons but also has a varied selection of exotic trees and shrubs from many parts of the world.

In his will, Mr. Van Landingham, left the house and ~~grounds~~ garden to the University (of NC at Charlotte) together with an endowment to maintain the two gardens.

At this writing there are more than two thousand rhododendrons in the Van Landingham Glen, ranging in size from one to six feet with a few ~~still~~ nearly eight or ten feet in height. The colors are mainly various shades of red, with whites, purples and blues scattered here and there. Some of the hybrids are fragrant as are three species of native azaleas.

Herbert Heckenbleikner Sept. 1976

Statement from Dr. Hech in his Own Hand Continued, 1976

Larry Mellichamp Retirement Reception
Chancellor Dubois's Remarks
November 19, 2014

2015—50th anniversary of UNC Charlotte as member of UNC system

At that time, 1965, Larry was just about to enter his senior year at East Meck, entering UNC Charlotte in fall of 1966 and then graduating from UNC Charlotte in 1970, returning to us in 1976 after his graduate ed. at the U. of Mich.

My point is that he has been here a long time. So it is fair to say he is one of the few people on campus today who has seen us develop through nearly all of our history as a four year institution.

I can tell you what he has been through because I pulled his personnel file from AA and, in violation of all applicable federal and state laws, want to share some little known things about this veteran. File was 2" thick so I have had to be selective.

First, you know that Larry has been here a long time because his file is full of carbon copies of his hiring and other actions during his career. Carbon paper.

Secondly, his file contains letters and notes from the "giants" of UNC Charlotte—Herbert Heckenbleikner, Jim Matthews, Phil Hildreth, Sherman Burson, Colvard, Fretwell, Shley Lyons, Woodward, Mark Clemens, Phil Dubois.

Third, you can tell Larry has been here a long time when you read his early resume. In fact, in 1972, Larry published a piece on "the Use of 2 x 2 Kodachrome Slides in the Teaching of Biology." Kodachrome. Carbon paper.

The file of that time also contains recommendation letters from Larry's doctoral advisors at Michigan, one of whom had an early and very accurate assessment on Larry's career—described him as dedicated to "ceaseless inquiry into the biology of plants." Also said Larry was "consistently pleasant and cooperative." I did peek at Larry's transcripts—he was absolutely a biology and botany geek of the first order—and a student of French, German, and Russian of the third order.

You could also tell that, even at that time, Larry had a single-minded focus on his professional interests in botany. There was a section on his application to UNC Charlotte where he was asked to describe his "main recreation or diversional interests." Larry listed "gardening"!

So, along comes 1976, and the Dept. of Biology realizes that the replacement of the legendary Herbert Heckenbleikner will be a major challenge, but in a national search they select Larry, at the crazy good salary of $11,600. And Larry quickly rises to the challenge as the heir apparent, taking over the development of the gardens, the greenhouse, and the glen.

When Larry came up for promotion to associate professor in 1982, you could tell his colleagues were very proud of their selection. Larry was described as having "an uncanny ability to blend the

Mellichamp Retirement Reception
November 19, 2014
Dean Gutierrez remarks

Good afternoon.

I would like to welcome you to what is always a bittersweet event, a reception where we honor a colleague for whom we have a great deal of fondness and who, by the way, has spent many years—in Larry's case, a 37-year career—helping to build this amazing institution.

When I arrived as dean in 2005, one of my direct reports was the Director of the Botanical Gardens, someone named T. Lawrence Mellichamp—Larry. The Botanical Gardens had historically been a unit within the Biology Department, so its move to report directly to the Dean was new to both of us. Larry and I spent the first few years, working together to figure out our relationship.

The Botanical Gardens, after all, I would say, is not a teaching unit. But Larry would shout, "No, no!! It is an academic unit. Students take classes here!"

And I would say, "Ok, it is a teaching unit, with a secondary mission of engagement."

And Larry would say, "No, no! We engage all the time."

And then I would say, "OK, you have this continuing education series for adults. You support the gardeners in the region."

And then Larry would say, "Really? You think kids might be interested?" and then lo and behold, the next time we meet, there is a Children's Program, and classes with titles such as "Plant Costumes" for Halloween are listed as part of the Gardens' work.

And then I would say, "But Larry, with the teaching and the outreach, you can't be an academic unit, because I don't see research—where is the publication and where is the external funding."

And, as you might guess from this litany, I shortly see successful grant proposals from organizations such as the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust and the North Carolina Native Plant Society to help create some of the lovely spaces we see in the Gardens. And I also see two gloriously beautiful publications: Bizarre Botanicals in 2010 (with Paula Gross) and, most recently, Native Plants of the Southeast. And then we would have serious conversations about money.

"Larry," I would say, "I have academic units with degree programs and with students needing classes, so I am unable to fully fund all your needs and provide continuing state money—I have to serve the students first."

"OK," Larry would say. "I understand. Let me see what I can do." And he created a Council to help fundraise, and accelerated the marketing for plant sales.

And finally, in the midst of all he does, he would periodically appear in the Dean's Office, bearing gifts of interesting plants to give to grateful Dean's Office staff.

So, Larry is a Dean's perfect faculty member and administrator: smart, dedicated, visionary, entrepreneurial, and generous.

Larry's vision for the Gardens has been constant during the time that I have been here: the mission of the Botanical Gardens is academic first and foremost, and on this foundation, it builds meaningful and broad engagement with the community. Larry has developed stunning spaces in the Gardens, including the Asian Garden in 2010 and the Mellichamp Native Terrace, now in development. His work ethic is unparalleled—just to let you know, we are just beginning the process of recruiting two people to replace him, and we in the Dean's Office are already worrying about whether that is enough.

So I will miss Larry a lot—he has stewarded a very special space for the campus and the broader community, and in so doing, has connected the university with the world. Thank you, Larry, for spending your career at UNC Charlotte.

And now I invite first Chancellor Phil Dubois and then Provost Joan Lorden to the podium to give their stories about Larry. Then, after Phil and Joan, Larry will have the last word.

Hechenbleikner
Jim Leiby: Student Gardener for Dr. Hechenbleikner
Connie Byrne: Gardens Assistant for Dr. Mellichamp
Scott Griffith: Student Assistant to Dr. Hechenbleikner

Family
Madeline Hechenbleikner Freeman: Dr. Hechenbleikner ’s daughter
Herbert (Buddy) Hechenbleikner: Dr. Hechenbleikner ’s son
Richard Hechenbleikner: Dr. Hechenbleikner’s younger son
Audrey Mellichamp: Botanist, Dr. Mellichamp’s wife
Suzanne Mellichamp: Artist, Audrey and Dr. Mellichamp’s daughter

This list only captures some of the very many people who have made this garden something special: donors, gardeners, students, administrators, advocates, and visitors, past, present, and future.

Photographers: Larry Mellichamp and Paula Gross

Editors: Jeff Gillman, Kailan Sindelar, Kayla Edmonds and Paula Gross

Designer: Kailan Sindelar

SUSAN SCHOLLY 2014
Growing Gardens