



GARDENING GLIMPSES

WED, 03/08/2017 - 2:34PM BY MRS. HERMAN MCKENZIE

Last weekend, in this very warm, very early springtime, the past looked at the future together, and both were excited. And this is how history is made, and remade.

Five longtime daffodil growers and exhibitors, with friendships nurtured through 50 years of daffodil shows, joined last weekend with a dedicated group of garden club women who care deeply about their enchanting historic community, but who knew nothing about daffodil shows. They know now, and many of them are excited to take part.

Last March, the Central Mississippi Daffodil Society, based in Clinton, looked back on a proud 34 years, including the hosting of two fine national conventions of the American Daffodil Society, in 1987 and in 2011. But grey hairs and aching knees were just the first clues that it was time to pack away the test tubes and blocks, and call it good run.

But somehow, through the months that followed, two people never quite accepted it. Ted Snazelle had retired from his teaching of biology at Mississippi College, but never from growing and hybridizing daffodils, his love of competing, and his pride in his beautiful new seedlings in the tazetta classification.

And an energetic young redhead (You are young in my book if you do not qualify for Social Security.), retired early from the high school classroom, had moved to southern Louisiana with her new husband, and they'd begun carving a garden out of their open land near the small town of Washington, La.

And when Ted realized we had show properties, some financial support, and a whole lot of experience to offer, he said, "Let's organize a Louisiana-Mississippi Daffodil Society." Louisiana had never had an official group, nor an accredited ADS competitive show.

So Annette Parker Kahn, packing up all her daffodil memorabilia and digging most of her bulbs and many other plants, moved south to join her new husband, Russell Kahn, in what one visitor last weekend called “making a paradise out of an open field.” And she thought, “It’s time for Louisiana to have its own society and its own show.”

Annette looked at the community of Washington, La., and said “Where can we have a daffodil show?” She’d joined the local very dedicated garden club, which had bought the Old Rectory of the St. John’s Episcopal Church. She thought, “I’ll see if the rectory is booked for a wedding or anything the first weekend in March,” and when she found out it was open and ours for the using, history was about to be remade.

Washington, La. is a small historic community located near Lafayette. One article compares it to colonial Williamsburg, except that there’s been no John D. Rockefeller to come in with his open wallet and rebuild the town.

And the word went out, to the group who had been such a part of CMDS and other societies in the Southern region. And I said to myself, I want to go. Maybe...

When Annette got a phone call from Charlotte Roush, a longtime friend of all daffodil people, in the Little Rock area, saying, “The report from the doctor isn’t good. But we aren’t going to talk about that. I’m coming to your show; how do we get there?” she said she took the time to cry, then wiped her eyes, passed the word to the rest of us, and got to work making it happen.

Margaret Nichols from Olive Branch, and Jean Sutton, formerly of Memphis and now Tennessee, always visited Char, every season. Jean called me and said, “How do we get there? We have all got to come. We don’t know how many more times together we will have.”

Of course now it’s not so simple as getting up and going, which we once would have done. Jean’s son is always faithfully there to take his mother and “Miss Margaret” anywhere. Char’s dear friend happens to be a nurse, doesn’t care about daffodils, but cares deeply about Char.

And now I started checking my options. Vicki, who had been a good friend of our family for 10 years, had called us first when she decided to set up her own business, personal shopper, caregiver, housekeeper, whatever is needed. We said, “Be here tomorrow by noon and block out Friday for us.” Now it’s become three days a week, with her other two days in personal caregiving. But she is just like family, and always has been.

Vicki came to us right after Christmas. Soon it dawned on me, “You could help me garden.” “I’ll be glad to,” she answered, “if you will teach me how.” Now I asked her to sit down, and said, “Look at your schedule for March 4,” knowing that Saturdays were family time. But I hadn’t gotten two paragraphs into my description before her eyes lit up and she said, “A road trip. What fun. And I’ve never gotten to go see beautiful gardens.”

So my great pleasure in once again being part of a group I loved, and “doing daffodils” was enriched by watching her enjoy it, making new friends, getting a different slant on the whole experience. Daffodils do make people smile, and nurture friendships.