REMEMBERING MATTHEW

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Surely everyone who knew Matthew Zandbergen felt a deep sense of loss when word came that he had died quietly in his sleep, while he was resting after lunch, on October 3rd. It was of some comfort to learn, from Suze, that his last three weeks had been particularly happy ones, as had been his last meal when they were together.

It had been a matter of common concern that the past few years had not been easy ones, for all of us felt especially close to him in a very special way. Perhaps Matthew, himself, best expressed our feelings when he wrote 'The love of the Daffodil, that happy touch of Nature, makes us all akin, as a happy band of pilgrims from many distant lands."

When he spoke to the ADS members at the '66 Convention in Memphis, he said it would give him immense pleasure if all of them could visit him in Holland. As it happened, many of our members were able to make this pilgrimage and it gave all of them immense pleasure.

Alas, I was never able to make this trek to Holland and he was only able to visit The Forty Acres on two occasions, but now and again we found time for brief encounters at various shows, on his many subsequent trips to the States. What I have, and do cherish, is the folders in my file, including all of our correspondence (his letters to me and copies of my letters to him) along with all of the bulb lists and records of those ordered (and when) not just for myself but for the many groups with which I worked over the years. What a wonderful contribution Matthew made, making it possible for so many people to grow and enjoy so many of the Tweenies and Miniature Daffodils, that otherwise would not have been available.

His influence is even apparent when I can go to any local supermarket, in the chill and dreary days of January and February and see pots and pots of 'Tete-a-Tete' in full bloom, at a cost that anyone can afford! It was Matthew who first realized the potential of this marvelous little daffodil and went about making it widely available at low prices!

It just isn't possible for any one person to be aware of the complete legacy he left us, for he appealed to so many people in so many different ways. Even more important than the daffodil delights he brought us, was his wonderful attitude toward life — his gift of sharing, not just bulbs but also information and enthusiasm — and his wonderful way of wearing his erudition and deep knowledge so lightly!

It was a joy just to be with him and judging or evaluating specimens with him was a revelation. He had an unerring instinct for recognizing excellence, combined with a wonderfully understanding sympathy and empathy for those who were just learning.

In fact, one of his greatest lessons was that he, himself, never stopped learning nor pursuing the quest for finding daffodils where they were growing, in native habitats as well as old gardens, or in modern gardens where all sorts of daffodils were growing in happy profusion and confusion! (In addition to the Tweenies and Miniatures he had a special fondness for Heirloom cultivars and all of the species.)

At the age of 16 he left home to learn what would be his trade for life — serving as an apprentice in Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland — and even then his weekends were spent exploring Alpine

slopes and pastures, finding daffodils growing in natural surroundings. Almost fifty years later he wrote me, looking forward with boyish enthusiasm, to travelling to Turkey and other Middle Eastern countries — still searching for daffodils!

Everywhere he went he seemed to notice everything. On one visit to The Forty Acres he noticed a well-dried Christmas wreath, still hanging on the front door. Because of the season he wondered if this was some unusual Easter custom? I had to explain the wreath was still there only because I had been too trifling to take it down. (I still find it amusing that nearly every spring thereafter, when the daffodil season was approaching, he would send me a reminder that it was time to take down the Christmas wreath!)

An example of how thoughtful he could be was a letter in '67, enclosing slides he had made for me, showing daffodils growing wild on the Scilly Isles and along the roadside in England, where he was traveling to Dover. (In fact, how many people do you know who would even notice these little wildlings in the hedgerows along the roadsides — much less take the time to get pictures of them and send them on to Virginia?)

But this was typical of Matthew, that most special Pilgrim who loved all daffodils and all humanity — even the insignificant ones.

I'm sure that everyone joins me in sending our loving thoughts and deepest sympathy to his dear, devoted Nel and those fine children, Suze, Fritz and Adri, and their families. And join me in the hope that this happy Pilgrim has "found the Delectable Mountains and sweet sleep."