Volume II (Appendices)

A Conservation Garden:

The North Carolina Botanical Garden at 50

(1966-2016)
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APPENDIX A: Dedication of the Paul Green Cabin, April 12, 1992

Transcribed from a cassette tape made during the program.

<Vocal Prelude by the Solstice Assembly>

WELCOME by Dr. Peter White, Director of North Carolina Botanical Garden

SUMMARY:

Dr. White recognizes members of the Green Family. He speaks of Green’s reputation as a writer, the inspiration provided to writers by the natural world, Green’s use of the cabin as a writer’s studio and woodland retreat, the important relationship between people and landscape, and Green’s references to plants in his writing.

TRANSCRIPT:

I want to begin by expressing my own pleasure at seeing you here today. Welcome. Welcome to all of you who have come today and to all of you who have helped us move the Paul Green Cabin to the North Carolina Botanical Garden. Let me extend a special welcome to Chancellor Hardin, to the other invited speakers who are with me on the stage, to the Solstice Assembly for that wonderful music. I want to recognize that there are members of the Paul Green family with us today. I am going to ask them to rise, if they would. We are very glad that you are here with us today. Paul Green was a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright and a man who established outdoor drama in this country. He was a prolific writer and a long-term member of the Department of Philosophy at the University. Why has his cabin moved to the North Carolina Botanical Garden? The arrival of the cabin here symbolizes a major principle to us: the relationship, the linkage of humans and nature. That relationship includes the inspiration that artists and writers like Paul Green have found in the natural world. Indeed, this log cabin, then on the edge of Chapel Hill two miles north of here, was a writer’s woodland retreat. In the cabin Paul Green escaped the world of humans on the busy campus; in the cabin he sat and created, gazing at its logs and its fireplace, gazing from its windows and doorway. The rough-hewn logs of this cabin are themselves, quite obviously, a product of nature. But there is a second human/nature relationship that we celebrate here, for Paul Green often wrote about the relationship of people and landscape, people and nature. Included in that relationship is the use that people have always make of wild plants. Paul Green incorporated southern history and folklore about plant uses into his writings. He was concerned with the scientific accuracy of those writings, often visiting the University’s Department of Botany and the Herbarium. Nature’s bounty is the basis of all human cultures, past and present. The cultural knowledge that develops about nature often holds hints for its future use. Economic botanist, Jim Duke, who received his Ph.D. in the Department of Botany at Chapel Hill, tells the story of the Indians who first gave us the tobacco plant and then out of compensation gave us the mayapple. Mayapple is a native North Carolina plant. I am going to put on my professor hat and give you an assignment, which is before you leave today find a mayapple and recognize what it looks like. Indians use the mayapple to treat warts. Today it has become the source of a significant cancer-fighting drug and one that Dr. Kuo-Hsiung Lee of UNC’s own Pharmacy School has done research on. These thoughts illustrate why we are excited about moving the Paul Green Cabin to the North Carolina Botanical Garden, but let me also state our four themes. Our first
theme is the wondrous diversity of the plant kingdom. This diversity is all around you today. Our second theme is the dependence of human life, quantity and quality, on that diversity. This story is the focus of the Garden’s Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden and it is the story, not just of culinary herbs, but also of all plants used by people in all cultures, in commerce, in medicine, by Native Americans and other ways. Humans depend on nature not just for tangible products, but also for the beauty, which constitutes a psychological, a spiritual benefit. Beauty is a role that the Garden plays, not only here on the grounds of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, but also at the historic Coker Arboretum on the central campus. Our third theme is the importance of wise use and conservation of plant diversity. Our fourth theme is the important role that universities and gardens plan in the discovery of new knowledge and the communication of that knowledge to the public that will aid in improving the human/nature relationship. We tell the story of our four themes with science, but storytelling is also an art, a domain of the creative human mind, a domain of writers like Paul Green.

ADDRESS by Dr. Laurence Avery, Chairman of UNC Department of English, President of Board of Trustees of the Paul Green Foundation, author of A Southern Life: Letters of Paul Green, 1916-1981

SUMMARY:

Avery describes how Paul Green and the cabin found one another, Green’s need for a writer’s retreat separate from his family’s home, and reads notes from Paul Green’s diary that relate to the reconstruction of the cabin on the Greenwood property (its “old logs full of age and meaning” and “the lizards, sand runners, beetles and insects that had taken up abode in the cabin” before him, the day his little girls—aged 7, 9, and 13—helped nail down the flooring), and the “wonderful quiet” Green enjoyed during his first day’s work in the cabin.

INTRODUCTION by Peter White:

I would now like to introduce Laurence Avery, President of the Board of Trustees of the Paul Green Foundation and Chair of the Department of English who will read from Paul Green’s 1939 diary notes relative to the cabin.

TRANSCRIPT:

I am glad to be here. I have been asked to talk just a little bit about how Green and this cabin, which is situated right down the hill here, came into contact with one another. And to do that you have to take your minds back to May and June of 1939, that’s 53 years ago. Europe was not at war in the spring of 1939. That wouldn’t begin until September of that year. For America it was still the 1930’s and the Depression. Green was 45 years old and busy, as usual. The previous September, September of 1938, he had been a pallbearer at the funeral of Thomas Wolfe in Asheville and during the spring and summer of 1939 was leading a campaign to raise funds to bring all of Wolfe’s books and papers to the library here in Chapel Hill. He needed to raise only five thousand dollars, but in fact, succeeded in raising only a few hundred dollars. That’s one of the most frustrating discoveries I have ever made. So all of those papers, the Thomas Wolfe papers went to Harvard, instead of coming to UNC where
Green was involved with that summer was preparing to write the second of his historical plays, The Highland Call, which would be done in the fall of 1939, in Fayetteville, I believe in celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the settlement, the founding of that city. In the fall of 1938, Green had also rejoined the UNC faculty. He had been on the faculty of the Philosophy Department, but after a leave of absence, he came back and joined the brand new Department of Dramatic Art. In 1939, school began a month later and ended a month later than it does now, so in May and June the semester was winding down. Green and all the other faculty members were involved in term papers and classes and oral exams and that sort of business. During the period when he was obtaining the cabin, he was also involved in what’s known as the Fred Beale case. There had been a lot of labor strife in Gastonia in 1929. Fred Beale, a labor organizer, had gotten into a great deal of trouble and eventually was convicted of murder and was imprisoned. Green and a few others over the years continued to visit influential political people in Raleigh on Beale’s behalf, trying to win a pardon for him. Twice during the period, May and June of 1939, Green went over to visit Governor Broughton on Beale’s behalf. He was also involved with The Lost Colony, which was about to begin its third season. So a lot was going on around the time he obtained the cabin. He and his wife, Elizabeth, who was 42 years old, had recently moved into the new house in what we think of as Greenwood now. They had built that house in 1936, so it was still relatively new to them. Green had not worked out a place where he could study. He had not worked out a place in that house where he could work. He needed something close by, but also clearly separate from the house that was filled, at that time, with four young children. That’s how the idea of the cabin came up. He tells the story in his diary of how he came into possession of it. These are passages from his diary:

May 20, 1939.

“Went up towards Hillsborough about 9 miles from C.H. to see about the old Cates cabin, which a woman wants torn down. I feel it would make a good study, which I need. And it would be cheaper than building from scratch. Sally Davis lives in house next to it. Old farm, desolate, falling-down house, old buggy, wagon falling to pieces, bits of iron and harness in the rank, matted grass.”

Two days later: “May 22, 1939. Sent men to Sally Davis’s to begin tearing down old cabin.”

A few days later, next day in fact: May 23, 1939. Men moving old cabin. Paul and I [that is his son, Paul, Jr., who is 15 years old at the time] worked late putting up the first logs, each one full of age and meaning. Heavy rain in the afternoon and the trucks got stuck down in the orchard hauling.”

Throughout the period, he did lots of the work on the cabin himself, putting it back together, reassembling it. Usually he got up early in the morning to work on the cabin because it was hot.

On May 26th, however: “I woke early, the opening of a story in my mind. It seemed wonderful. After a cup of coffee, it seemed poorer stuff.”

The next day, May 27th, he was back at the cabin: “In the afternoon, the little girls helped me nail down cabin flooring. [The little girls were his three daughters, Bird who was 13, Betsy who was 9 and Janet who was seven.] A great bustle of little hammer blows and vast talk”, he noted.
Here is one sort of day during that period. This is May 29, 1939: “At work early on the cabin. Jim Boyd [an historical novelist from Southern Pines] arrived about lunchtime. Then the Tates from Greensboro [that’s the poet Allen Tate and his wife, Caroline Gordon]. We all ate at the inn. In the afternoon late, back at work on the cabin, the children helping. At night, Mr. Oates from Fayetteville [one of the folks helping to plan the celebration that led to The Highland Call], about the celebration. Then Sam Selden, back from a Guggenheim trip, and with Selden and others we worked much on plans for The Lost Colony until 2:30 a.m.”

Here is another sort of day. This is May 31st: “Worked on the cabin and keeping at it until late. Dog tired at night, couldn’t sleep. Read some plays and also Yeats essays.”

This will be telling tales out of school, but commencement occurred that year on June the 6th: “Commencement day. Didn’t go up. Worked on cabin. Hot and dry. Lizards, sand runners, beetles and all sorts of insects have already taken abode in the cabin before me.”

June the 7th: “Temporarily finished.”

June the 9th: “Worked on final crack stopping in the cabin.”

Then there was a trip to Manteo to cast The Lost Colony.

And on June 14th, he left Manteo: “Up early on the way back. Raining and gloomy. A blow-out and busted oil line, added to the troubles of getting home.”

But then on June the 16th, the great day occurred: “I wrote a short autobiography for a reference book, a list of facts as I remembered. Also letters, dabbling with one-act play, first day’s work in the cabin. Wonderful quiet. The weather, hot and dry. The plums and blackberries around the house are passing to quick maturity.”

ADDRESS by Dr. Albert Radford, Retired UNC Professor of Botany and Biology, member of the University Advisory Board that discussed and finally approved moving the Paul Green Cabin to the grounds of the NCBG.

SUMMARY:

Radford explains why the NCBG is an appropriate home for the Paul Green Cabin. He notes that Green was “interested in all things botanical,” “very knowledgeable about plants and their uses,” and consulted his friend Dr. Totten numerous times concerning the accuracy of plant names he mentioned when writing about people and places. Radford offers the opinion that moving the cabin to the Garden will both “honor Paul Green” and “add prestige to the Garden.”

INTRODUCTION by Peter White:

Our next speaker is Dr. Albert Radford, a long-time member of the Departments of Botany and Biology and now retired. Dr. Radford was senior author of one of the great and important books on botany of the Southeast, as well as many other works and has been an important influence in both botany and conservation. Dr. Radford is also a member of the Garden’s University Advisory Board.
and, as a member of that Board, helped us think about and discuss the opportunity of moving the cabin some two years ago. Dr. Radford.

**TRANSCRIPT:**

Paul Green was a friend of Roland Totten, who was a professional botanist interested in plants and their uses. Of course, Green was a professional writer interested in things botanical, if they related to people and places he was writing about. Green had trouble with plant identification, plant identity use. Most of his resources had common names, plant common names, so tying the use to that was a real problem. So it meant he had to get some help. He spent a lot of time in the library, a lot of time in the herbarium, but more time, I think, with Dr. Totten. Dr. Totten provided Paul with the professional help in the resolution of many of his problems. Down through the years, Dr. Totten often mentioned Paul Green’s scholarly interest to me, and his thoroughness in working with plant use problems for his manuscripts of various sorts. In Dr. Totten’s later years, I became personally acquainted with Paul Green. I really hadn’t known him. I had met him, but really didn’t know him. I found him very knowledgeable about plants and their uses. A man dedicated to his profession and a writer who actively pursued accuracy in his written statements about plants. We really appreciated that. A short time ago, a proposal was made to the administrative board of the North Carolina Botanical Garden to place this cabin on the Garden property. On the basis of Dr. Totten’s comments, and my personal relations with Paul Green, I most enthusiastically recommended that we put that cabin on this property, under appropriate financial conditions, I might add. I was convinced that this would honor Paul Green and would certainly add prestige to the Botanical Garden. If Dr. Totten were alive today, he would be the first to be pleasantly agreeable to having the Paul Green Cabin so close to the Totten Center.

**ADDRESS by John Ehle, North Carolina writer & longtime friend of Paul Green.**

**SUMMARY:**

_Ehle reads from a selection of Paul Green’s literary works: Drama and the Weather (“Like any work of art, it comes pretty much when it will come . . . no man can provide its presence at his will.”), ‘Mullein’ from Paul Green’s Word Book, and Plough and Furrow. In Ehle’s words, Green was “one of the best writers this state has produced ever . . . his intellect was remarkable.” Ehle notes that Green “was a Southerner, and a Southerner who did not hate the people who disagreed with him.” After reading Green’s account in Plough and Furrow of a near-fatal attack by his Uncle Hick and the KKK on a black man named Reuben Matthews, who “had been talking sassy,” Ehle quotes Green as saying, “We are full of the drip of human tears.” Over the years, Green observed, his Uncle Hick and Reuben Matthews would become the best of friends._

**INTRODUCTION by Peter White:**

Let me now welcome Mr. John Ehle. Mr. Ehle is a writer and an alumnus of Carolina who received the Distinguished Alumnus award several years ago. He is a former member of the Department of
Radio, Television and Motion Pictures and a long-time friend of Paul Green. Mr. Ehle will read some excerpts from the literary works of Paul Green.

**TRANSCRIPT:**

This is a little piece…I have 24 books by Paul Green. I don’t know how many he wrote. I’d like to have some of the others, if anybody would like to forward any books. This comes from a book of essays called *Drama and the Weather* and it seems rather fitting for this particular case and therefore:

“Looking across the burning field about 2 o’clock, you see low on the horizon edge, a faint little wad of cloud, no larger than the cloud Elijah or Polonius saw. And as you sit there watching, another little cloud appears swimming out of the sky to be followed by another and then another. Soon the whole southwestern horizon is marked by these little up-boiling racks. And in less time than it takes to tell, a low dark swollen band begins shutting itself up behind them and above the line of sycamore trees along the river. Presently there is a roll of low ominous thunder, just below the earth. And the windows rattle. The moments pass, the dark wide stretching cloud now reaches from north to south and reaches to the edge of the burning sun. Then it obscures the sun. A flash of lightning marks a sudden fiery crack from sky to earth. The elm trees around the house shiver with a strange delight. The chickens start going into the henhouse and the doves fly into their cote. And then up from the meadow, the old bell cow comes, leading the other cattle, her head high, her tail arched narrowly. Another roll of thunder sounds. A gust of dust cuts a jiggling whirlwind down the lane, trying to keep up with the edge of the cloud, which has now raced across the sky and passed over the house. The wind blows more strongly, and somewhere, a door slams. You continue to sit, waiting for the rain to fall. The wind dies out, the thunder is no longer heard, nor is there any lightning. Everything is breathless, expectant, still. Now with a sudden clatter, like stones on the roof, or gravel thrown, the rains begin. A fine mist of dust is beat up in the yard and in the lane and out across the fields, like a morning fine fog, it is. And then it, too, is wetted down to earth as the rain settles into a steady pour. The drought is over. In a few days, everything will be green again. And as with the weather, so with writing a play, so with any work of art. It comes pretty much when it will come, is absent when it will be absent, and no man can provide its presence at his will.”

I won’t try to evaluate Paul Green as a writer. Obviously he is one of the best writers this state has produced, ever. But looking at people I’ve met, and I mean no criticism of anybody, and the work of other people I have read, I would say that he is the greatest man in North Carolina who was a writer. His intellect was really remarkable. If one looks at the *Wordbook*, [*Wordbook: An Alphabet of Reminiscence*], which is the latest publication, it is really incredible. His IQ would be somewhere around two or three times that of me, and most of you. [Laughter.] Here is just a little bit from the *Wordbook*. He is talking about a plant that many of us know very little about. And this is just what he wants to say about it. It is sort of Paul’s autobiography, intellectual autobiography in alphabetical order.

“Mullein [I think that is the correct pronunciation, I am not even sure about that]. It loves to grow in fence jams and along the roadsides. It grows up to the height of a man’s head and has a whitish fuzzy bloom. It is also called Achilles Heel after the famous Greek warrior. The tea of this mullein was especially good for stomach pains in children and also the warmed leaves, as in the case of jimson
weed and collard leaves, placed on sores and poison places were considered, and still are, a good remedy to bring down the swelling. Many a young girl in the valley has been wont to make her cheeks pretty and pink by rubbing her face with the velvety leaves. Another good folk medicine for the mullein, was to take the root of the mullein and stew it along with wild cherry bark, brown sugar, and a little vinegar, and then keep it on hand for colds and coughs. “They ain’t nothin’ better in this world to cure up that hackin’ and barkin’,” said Mr. Jimmy Ackland. The oil from its blooms used to be recommended for earache. According to one book I read, the Romans called the mullein, candelaria from their custom of taking the long dry stalks and dipping them in suet or some kind of oil and using them as funeral torches. The Greeks were supposed to utilize the leaves for lamp wicks. It was sometimes called Indian tobacco, as the Indians were sometimes wont to smoke the leaves.

And that seems to be all he knew about mullein. [Laughter.]

“Not by hate and the iron fist, they said, but by love and the friendly open hand, should a man live out the greenery of his days and reap the mellow harvest of his soul. The idea of the beautiful has ceaselessly haunted the human race. And a man through the ages has sought to fashion his life in terms of that ideal. But betrayed by his own appetites, weaknesses, and confused by false doctrines, a prey to the imagined evils and nightmares of dread and hindered and handicapped by many an evil chance and accident of fortune and war. He has too often failed in this seeking, and too rarely succeeded. But still his effort to build an ever more noble life goes on, and will go on until the scientific universe has swallowed him and his dream to nothingness…”

A few scientists worry about what he thought about scientists, you should have heard what he thought about preachers. [Laughter.]

But still his effort to build an ever more noble life goes on, and will go on until the scientific universe has swallowed him and his dream to nothingness or until he has won something of his final and ultimate victory.

He was a Southerner and he was a Southerner who did not hate the people who did not agree with him. Which is a very good lesson, I think, for us in the day of thought control, or an effort at thought control. This little thing I am going to read comes from a book he wrote called Plough and Furrow. It might be momentarily a little offensive to some of us, but if you will bear with me, I think it will come out all right in the end, which is true of Paul many times.

“You ask whether being a Southerner has its advantages for creative writing. Yes, I suppose it does. At the present state and time of the world, it does. That is, if raw experience is the first need, and maybe it is, experience linked with imagination. And here I hurry to say that there can be both kinds of experiences, the actual kind and the imaginative kind. Some of our American and modern writers have held an aesthetic credo, that in order to write about an experience, one must have had that experience. Of course, this is nonsense. No, the purpose of the imagination is to be able to experience, and see, and feel by proxy. So perhaps, the South, of which North Carolina is a part, has had more of both kinds of these experiences that any other part of the country. Let me enumerate a bit. She has experienced more hate, more anger, more prejudice than any other part of the country. There has been more of sin, more sense of guilt, more frustration, and maybe more spiritual hunger in the South than in any other part of the country. The South is the only part of the nation that has suffered the
humiliation of a military defeat. We have been occupied. This hill, where I live, was occupied by Sherman’s soldiers. The University of North Carolina, up there a mile away from this hill, was occupied by these same soldiers. People love to tell the story that Sherman’s horses were housed in the lower rooms of what is now the Carolina Playmakers Theater. At least we have made progress in that particular… Yes, we had the carpetbaggers, and the hate of the carpetbaggers. We had the Ku Klux Klan here. We still have hate and the Ku Klux Klan. For instance, my uncle started the old and original Klan movement down in Harnett County where I was brought up as a boy. Anyway, he was one of the leaders in it. And one night, he and his companions waited on a young Negro man named Reuben Matthews. Now, Reuben had been talking sassy, they said. And they were going to set him straight. When they got to his cabin and he called out from the inside that he would kill anybody that tried to break in. Well, Ed Gaskins was in front of my uncle Heck. So when Gaskins in the door, Reuben killed him with an ax. My uncle Heck pulled out his pistol and shot Reuben down. Shot him six times and he left him dying there on the floor, he thought. But Reuben didn’t die. He later crawled off into a ditch, and there a Negro girl, who loved him, found him, hid him, and nursed him finally back to health. Well, fifty years later as a little boy, I often cut wheat in the fields where Reuben, who was by ten an old man, lived. And I called him Uncle Reuben. He was very tough and wiry. And over the years he and Uncle Heck had become the best of friends. In fact, I think they loved each other better than brothers. When they would meet, they would hug and almost kiss. Well this sort of thing, happened all over the South, this shooting, this killing, this cruelty, and then the repentance and the forgiveness and love that followed. Instances like Uncle Heck and Uncle Reuben could be multiplied dozens of times. I know half a dozen myself. So the material out of which art, out of which writing and music and drama and philosophy and sculpture and painting can be made is here. I keep saying the same thing. We are full of the drip of human tears. And I hasten to add, we also have lots of laughter, the sparkling eyes of humor and fun. All we need here in North Carolina is to get rolling and keep rolling. Use what we have. And if we do that, we might, well we might participate in a great literary, artistic, and therefore cultural birth in this country. We have had sporadic people like Wolfe, Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, Red Warren [Robert Penn Warren] down here in the South. But they are not enough. The slant they have on things is not enough. No, sir, not enough.”

Thank you.

<Song by the Solstice Assembly>

ADDRESS by Dr. Josephine Newell, M.D., family physician, founder of the Country Doctor Museum in Bailey, NC.

Summary:

Dr. Newell recalls Paul Green’s role at the dedication of a medicinal herb garden at the Country Doctor’s Museum, in August of 1971. When Newell accidentally tangled her foot in an extension cord and disconnected the public address system, Paul Green accompanied her as she slithered into the crawl space beneath the building in her pastel suit. Once back out in the open air, Green offered her a memorable warm smile, a pat on the shoulder, and complemented her on her spunk. During his talk at this dedication, Green spoke of the need for a spirit of cooperation on this earth, and the healing of men everywhere. He expressed the belief that our flag, the flag of the United States, must become the
flag of humanity. Dr. Newell ended by stating that every civilization has its heroes and builds shrines in their honor, shrines that serve to renew ourselves and what we value. To Newell, “the Garden is a State marker; it marks something wonderful.”

INTRODUCTION by Peter White:

Dr. Josephine Newell is founder of the Country Doctor Museum in Bailey. She has been in general practice in Bailey for 24 years and was also the first woman president of the North Carolina Medical Society. She’s also been a member of the Duke medical faculty. The North Carolina Botanical Garden has something in common with the Country Doctor Museum, for the country doctor used preparations made from plants. It was also Charles and Mercer Hubbard, long-term supporters of the North Carolina Botanical Garden, and it is for Mercer that our herb garden is named. Charles and Mercer helped get Paul Green to speak at the dedication of the Country Doctor Museum medicinal herb in 1971. Paul Green’s own diary describes the day as hot, and according to his diary, “I did poorly. Tried to praise those who heal in the presence of those who maim.” His dedication speech survives and I think from that speech, we will find out that I don’t think he did so poorly on that occasion.

TRANSCRIPT:

On August 29, 1971, 21 years ago, the founders and supporters of the Country Doctor Museum were honored to have North Carolina’s dramatist laureate, Paul Green, a distinguished North Carolina humanitarian, author and dramatist to deliver the address at the dedication of its medicinal herb garden. Those privileged to be present could not have failed to be inspired by his sentimental heartfelt message. Many of you may have been there, because our garden was sponsored and created by the North Carolina Wildflower Preservation Society, driven by that soft-spoken, coercive influence of one well known to us all, Mercer Reeves Hubbard, who will always have the gratitude of North Carolinians for her numerous contributions to the creation, maintenance and preservation of botanical medicinal gardens in our state. Now the weather has never favored occasions at the Country Doctor Museum. The museum’s dedication, December 8, 1968 occurred on the coldest day I have ever experienced in my entire lifetime in North Carolina. And was blessed by the only snow of the year, falling gently on the heads of 500 loyal friends and supporters who stood during a 90 minute program. The horns of the brass ensemble froze. And no matter how valiantly those talented musicians blew, the only thing they could produce was squeaks and squawks. The horse snorted, shivered and stomped his feet to contribute to the cacophony of the event, but our loyal friends and supporters stood, sturdy and staunch, like a little toy soldier. In contrast, the dedication of the medicinal herb garden occurred on the hottest day I have ever experienced in my lifetime in North Carolina. It was another outdoor ceremony, during the hottest time of the day, 2:30 in the afternoon. The bright, red-hot sun gave new meaning to that term, solar power. But Paul Green was not deterred. Noticing the funeral home tent, which sheltered our refreshments from the elements, he smiled and asked if that funeral home would be so kind so as to furnish those wonderful palm leaf fans, so often seen in country churches. One of his many admirers, here present, in a frenzied effort to get closer to this great man, tangled her foot in an extension cord and disconnected the public address system. This kind, gracious Paul Green, merely smiled and offered to go with me as I crawled through the crawl hole under the building to remedy the situation. However, Mercer assured him that I could do it quite
alone. But he waited patiently at the opening, as I brushed the debris from my pastel suit, which I had bought for the occasion, when I emerged and patted me on the back and said, “You have intestinal fortitude”, which I thinks translates into You’ve got guts! It is one of the most treasured compliments that I have ever received and I shall never forget his warm smile or his pat on my shoulder. Finally the ceremony began and I am convinced that Paul Green should receive a second Pulitzer award for his brief, inspiring address. To reach out to everyone who has their own experience with herbal usage, he sent a message that should resound throughout the ages. Let me remind you of his message. He very eloquently said, and I quote,

“I was so saddened to see our astronauts land on the moon and plant only the flag of our country. Here today in this garden, here in the memories of doctors long gone, the message is cooperation on this earth and the healing of men everywhere. The national flag, like their flag, must become the flag of humanity. This is the time with technological devices, with our knowledge of nature, for all men everywhere to recognize that is now the time for one world, the world of science, the world of healing, the world of brotherhood. So the message to me here today is the brotherhood of man, helping of man. And I certainly bless you and thank you for the invitation to come here today and be a witness to the truth that is not buried here, but the truth that lives here. Finally, we are all involved in the business of building a civilization. How do you build it? You build it by having heroes, signs at which you renew yourself. I can tell you right now, without fear of contradiction, I bet you there is not one monument in all of Virginia, or in all of North Carolina, to any great composer, to Mozart or to Beethoven or to any man who invented a new kind of wheat or did something wonderful in the garden or works like these people for the beautification and cherishing of the world. We have monuments everywhere to people who died foolishly in some battle, killing somebody else. We even have a state marker down in Fayetteville, which says: ‘Here on so and so in 1922 [actually 1914] Babe Ruth hit his first professional home run. This garden is a state marker. It marks something wonderful. And I am glad to be here today to say it over and over. Many, many thanks.

ADDRESS by Charles Wheeler of the Botanical Garden Foundation

INTRODUCTION by Peter White:

Today we also recognize that the fundraising that was undertaken to move the cabin to the Botanical Garden was undertaken by our support group, the Botanical Garden Foundation. And with the success of that work, the Cabin becomes officially turned over to the University of North Carolina. Here with us today, representing the Foundation, is Charles Wheeler, President Emeritus of the Botanical Garden Foundation. Charles was President at the time when many of the negotiations were carried out...[missing section due to tape running out] ...The UNC Development Office published a little book called A Vision Fulfilled, which represents the transition from the Foundation to the University. I would like to present that to Charles and bring him to the podium.

TRANSCRIPT:

Thank you Peter, Chancellor Hardin, and members of the Paul Green family and friends. As Peter has stated, the Botanical Garden Foundation is a support group, a nonprofit corporation established to
raise funds for the Botanical Garden, to assist the programs of the Botanical Garden in any feasible way. And perhaps to put this in context, I will quote a former Chancellor of the Chapel Hill campus. The University, I suppose now, must have some 30 or 40 support organizations similar to the Botanical Garden Foundation standing in support of various University activities. A previous Chancellor said in public, and to my great delight in my presence, that the Botanical Garden Foundation was the best and most effective of all the foundations that serve the University. I think that it is particularly fitting that I be presented a legal document today. While Rhoda Wynn and Sally Vilas, who will be recognized more formally later, were doing the hard work of fundraising to make this activity possible, it fell to me to negotiate the bureaucracy and I have always considered myself a bit of a consummate bureaucrat, if you will. In reflecting on this occasion, I think I really started my bureaucratic career when I became a company clerk in the Army. My predecessors for a couple of years, apparently, hadn’t been very aggressive with the paperwork and the volume of regulations that was required to be processed and filed would easily fill the Paul Green Cabin. So that was my start. In this case, Chancellor, I wanted you to know that Gordon Rutherford and your other Facilities people protected the University at every corner. I have never signed so many assumptions of liability, waivers, and hold harmless clauses in my life. [Laughter.] But it was all good fun. [Laughter.] The insurance turned out to be interesting too. I checked into liability and Mr. Dickinson, of course, had builder’s risk insurance, which only protected him. And I had signed the indemnity waiving any liability of the University. So I started calling insurance men and I discovered what I theorized that I wanted (I used to sell insurance a long time ago) was an owner’s type of builders risk. Well, one of the most imminent insurance in this town had never heard of it. But it promised to call his home office. They had never heard of it either. I cast around and finally I found one agent who would write the insurance. Then it occurred to me belatedly, as things often do; why not call your own insurance man. So I called him and he referred me to something called the insurance center in Durham, which wrote a very fine policy for half what the other folk had quoted me, so that worked out nicely. This is indeed a triumphant moment and I think I would be remiss if I didn’t recognize one person who so often made it easy and delightful to do the things the Foundation attempts to do on behalf of the Botanical Garden. This is Dr. Carol Reuss, who is the Associate Provost who oversees a number of the public service activities of the University, including the Botanical Garden. And finally, I have to say about my good friend Ritchie Bell. Most of you, virtually all of you, know that Ritchie is famous for his impatience with the bureaucracy. I told him he never would have obtained the Paul Green Cabin.

ADDRESS by Paul Hardin, Chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

INTRODUCTION by Peter White:

I am delighted now to bring to the podium the other half of the partnership, the University of North Carolina and Chancellor Paul Hardin.

TRANSCRIPT:

Thank you, Peter. It really is unfair to any of us that we have to speak our own words after Paul Green’s words have been read by John Ehle. However Joe Newell was undaunted, so I will do the
best I can. I suppose, Peter, it is about time for someone who is in powered to do so, to say that, on behalf of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I proudly and happily accept the Paul Green Cabin as a permanent part of the North Carolina Botanical Garden. I offer warm thanks to all those who accomplished the project of bringing this cabin to this site. All kinds of thoughts crown into my mind as I acknowledge this wonderful gift and accept this cabin on behalf of the University. First, the partnership between our University and the broader community, represented so well in the Foundation and in the willingness of Bill Joslin to go through the bureaucracy. Incidentally, Bill, I have been here four years. I outrank Gordon and I still can’t figure out how to do what you did. So I congratulate you. I have been known to turn to Carol Reuss for help, as you probably did. But all kidding aside, I am most grateful to all who contributed financially to this good project and those of you who gave so much time and energy to bringing it about, including the acquisition of appropriate insurance and all the rest of it. We really are grateful to the community for this wonderful service. Another thought that crowds into my mind is the importance of this Garden in the life of the University. I have been nurtured in that, not only by my instinctive admiration for what goes on here, but I have been nurtured in that by my friendship with Sally Couch Vilas and Mercer Reeves Hubbard. You can’t know those tow wonderful women and not understand the importance of this Garden in the life of our community, the state, and the University. The Garden is perhaps best know for its public service role, but please understand, please understand how important the Garden is as it functions as an outdoor classroom for University teaching and as an outdoor laboratory to support University research by University faculty, by graduate students, and by undergraduate students alike. Starting with William Chambers Coker and his student, Henry Roland Totten, in the early 1900’s, through the days of John Couch, Al Radford, and Ritchie Bell, to the work of current faculty members Bob Peet, Haven Wiley, the Garden and the University faculty have produced significant work for the larger academic audience, while Coker Arboretum, which preceded the North Carolina Botanical Garden, with the Garden, has provided students, faculty, staff, residents, and visitors with education and enjoyment. And a final point of reference as we experience this wonderful transition, a philosophic point about what the Paul Green Cabin represents and what it represents as it sits in its new site. That is the unity in University. This event represents the coming together of the work of a man who was a professor of Philosophy and he wrote plays and moved, as Laurence Avery tells us, to the Department of Dramatic Art. As a professor of Philosophy, the discipline that seeks to discover the meaning of life. Maybe he had a glimpse that an important part of what makes a human being human is dramatic art. It certainly seemed one of his insights that an important part of being human was to seek to understand science. I am struck by his curiosity about plants. So here, the work of a man who was a philosopher and a playwright and loved nature unites with a Garden that has been founded and maintained by scientists and teachers. The unity of interests represented by this cabin is, indeed, the relationship between people, art, and nature. I am so happy to join all of you in celebrating this very historic event. Thank you.

CONCLUDING REMARKS by Peter White, Director of the Botanical Garden

Moving the cabin was a bold act. In fact Paul Green, himself, took such an action when he moved it to Chapel Hill. We were given the opportunity and we moved it again. It is perhaps obvious to you
that it was no simple act to move that cabin down the bypass, to see it rumbling along down the highway. But today, the project is declared a complete success. A writer goes from concept to completed work as well. The concept is important, but no one will see that written work without the long hours of labor that go into it. This project came to be because the Garden staff, volunteers, and University formed a partnership to complete it. But we needed leaderships for this partnership to work. I would like to take this moment to officially thank our real leaders in this project, members of the Paul Green Cabin Task Force: Betsy Myers, Patsy Warnoff, James Webb, and of course, our hardworking co-chairs Sally Couch Vilas and Rhoda Wynn. And if the members of the Task Force would all rise, so we can all thank them. The Botanical Garden would like to give a little present to Sally and Rhoda. We wanted to give them some flowers, since this is a Botanical Garden. But a cut rose, that wouldn’t last very long, was not what we had in mind. We have some Garden-propagated azaleas that we would like to present to them to day, to be planted on this occasion. There is another person that I would like to give recognition to, and that is the staff member who was the liaison person for this project. That is Jim Ward, who is standing at the back. Jim, could you rise. Jim has a busy job. He does a lot around here. He is curator the Habitat Gardens and he is curator of the Plant Families Garden. He has many other responsibilities. He worked hard on this cabin over a period of two years, and I think Thursday after my class was done and I came down to the Garden to see what was happening, there was Jim, painting the ceiling and the walls of the Paul Green Cabin to get it ready for today. So really a lot is owed to him and his persistence and good nature in this long, long project. I would also like to take this moment to recognize Becky Welborn, another staff member. Becky is curator of the Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden. This cabin will paly a future role in the Garden as well. It sits in the middle of what our master plan sees as an expanded herb garden. And Becky has also helped to create some of the exhibits that are in the cabin today, exhibits that are based on the Paul Green’s Wordbook published in 1990. And a tremendous thanks to all the other Garden staff members who helped with this event today. Let me ask, Is Becky here today, I saw her earlier, but she has gone down to the cabin to be with her exhibits. You can thank her down there. I would also like to recognize and thank the person who was the restorer of this cabin. We have heard Paul Green’s words about fixing leaks and long hours. With us today is Todd Dickenson of Dickenson’s Restorations of Hillsborough. Todd, are you in the audience? Please stand. A wonderful man moved the cabin, Mr. Eugene Chance of Dunn, North Carolina. I would also say that Dr. Maurice Newton, the man who gave the cabin for this move, is also with us today. If he would stand, so we could thank him. The cabin was owned by some people in Hillsborough when Paul Green acquired it. And with us today are the granddaughter and grandson of Sally and Robert Davis who were living in the cabin at the time, Julie Davis Dawson and John Lewis Dawson, if they could rise. We are glad you joined us today, too. Well let me close by saying that we have some refreshments for you down by the cabin. There will be additional music. Also there are copies of the book we have mentioned, Paul Green’s Wordbook: An Alphabet of Reminiscence published in 1990. It is available today at a special dedication day price. Proceeds of the sale will be split with the Botanical Garden Foundation and will benefit the future of the Paul Green Cabin. Let me extend an invitation to all of you to return often to the North Carolina Botanical Garden. Enjoy the rest of your day here. And please find that mayapple, so I can be sure that you passed your test. Thank you.

<Musical Closing and Blessing by the Solstice Assembly>
APPENDIX B: PORTRAITS OF THE MASON FAMILY

Legacy with the Land

The portraits on the walls of the North Carolina Botanical Garden’s Totten Center classroom depict the family of one of the most generous donors in the history of the University of North Carolina, Mary Elizabeth Morgan Mason.

Mrs. Mason, who died less than a year after her husband, Reverend James Pleasant Mason, left the University eight hundred acres of land and $1,000. One of the conditions of her will was that portraits of their daughters, Martha James Mason and Varina Caroline Mason, be painted and displayed in the halls of the University in perpetuity. William G. Randall, a famous portrait artist of the day, was commissioned to produce likenesses of the daughters and of Rev. and Mrs. Mason. (The Randall portraits are the older portraits in the heavy, ornate frames.)

The tragic story of the Mason daughters is known to many from the writings of Cornelia Phillips Spencer, the girls’ tutor and historian of the University of North Carolina. Naturalist John K. Terres also wrote about the family in From Laurel Hill to Siler’s Bog, a collection of stories taken from the journals he kept at Mason Farm in the 1960’s.

Since nearly half of the Garden’s acreage was donated by the Masons, it is appropriate that the portraits of Mattie and Varina and their parents have a home here at the North Carolina Botanical Garden.

The Mason Family

James Pleasant Mason, a farmer and a Baptist minister, was born in 1827 and educated at Wake Forest College. Mason maintained detailed daily journals from 1876 to 1893, and it is from his notes that we know a great deal about daily life and work on the farm that became known by his name after his marriage to Mary Elizabeth Morgan in 1854. Reverend Mason worked hard as a farmer six days a week and rode long distances to minister to seven congregations around the county on Sundays. Mrs. Mason, the only surviving daughter of Mark Morgan’s grandson Solomon Morgan, had inherited the large fertile farm on which she was raised, but hers was not a life of ease. She ran the large household and managed the farm while also raising children and caring for sick and elderly relatives.

The Masons had four children. Two daughters died as toddlers, and two survived to young adulthood. The surviving daughters, Martha “Mattie” and Varina “Rena,” were a source of great joy
and pride to their parents. Both girls completed their educations at the Baptist Female Institute (now Meredith College) in Raleigh and were well-respected young ladies of the community. According to their tutor, Mrs. Spencer, they loved and appreciated the wildflowers in the countryside:

*Neither of these girls would hesitate to take a long walk to secure for a friend a perfect specimen of some rare wild flower, the fringed gentian, the sabbatia, or the fragrant wintergreen. These walks, these wild woods, the rushing stream and the yellow jessamine that hung over it were among their best teachers and friends.*

In the fall of 1881, 20 year-old Varina contracted typhoid fever and died; 24 year-old Martha died two months later, leaving their parents broken in spirit and with no direct heirs for the farm they had worked so hard to improve.

The Morgan and Mason families are important in the history of the Garden and the University of North Carolina. The farmlands and forests bequeathed to the University of North Carolina in 1894 are now the site of many University programs. The University Golf Course and other UNC Athletic facilities, Ronald McDonald House, the SECU Family House, the Orange Water and Sewer Authority’s Wastewater Research and Treatment Center, “The Farm” Faculty and Staff Recreation Area, the Friday Continuing Education Center, and most of the Garden’s Mason Farm Biological Reserve and Nature Trails are located on the land left by Mrs. Mason for use by the University.

**A Family Tradition of Generosity**

Mrs. Mason was the great-granddaughter of early settler Mark Morgan, for whom nearby Morgan Creek is named. Morgan had come to the area in the 1740s and brought his family from Virginia to settle on lands along the tributaries of New Hope Creek which he had purchased from the Earl of Granville. A vestryman who helped locate the Episcopal chapel atop the hill for which the town would be named, Mark Morgan was highly regarded in the community and was chosen to represent the district during the initial years of the new nation.

In the early 1790s, Morgan joined several neighbors in encouraging selection of what is now Chapel Hill as the site for the University of North Carolina: together, the ten landowners contributed land at the top of the hill for the UNC campus and the village that would later be called Chapel Hill. After the elder Mark Morgan’s death, his son by the same name continued efforts to persuade farmers to give portions of their land that now forms UNC’s north campus. As we learned during the celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of the University, William Davie and other leaders of the new state were invited to meet in the shade of the tree now known as the Davie Poplar, where they
sipped cool water from the well and decided to locate the University on land originally owned by the Morgans.

Nearly 100 years after the University opened its doors, Morgan’s great-granddaughter, Mary Elizabeth Morgan Mason, continued the family tradition of support for the University. In addition to the request for the painting and display of the portraits of their daughters, Mrs. Mason specified in her will that the University not alienate (transfer ownership of) the land; that the family cemetery be properly maintained; and that the family be honored for its contributions. Shortly after the deaths of Reverend Mason in 1893 and Mrs. Mason eleven months later, the University erected beautiful marble monuments and fenced the family burial area with attractive wrought iron.

The Portraits

**Varina Caroline Mason**  b. 1861 – d. 1881  Randall portrait on north wall; Graves portrait over door.

**Martha James Mason**  b. 1857 – d. 1881  Randall portrait on north wall; Graves portrait over door.

**Mary Elizabeth Morgan Mason**  b. 1825 – d. 1894  Randall portrait.

**James Pleasant Mason**  b. 1827 – d. 1893  Replacement portrait by de Navarre.

At the urging of Mrs. Spencer, the University commissioned portraits of the parents as well as the required portraits of the daughters. William G. Randall, who was acquainted with the family, painted the portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Mason and the two portraits of the daughters. The Randall portraits of the daughters, modeled on a single tin type image and attired in the fashion of fashionable young ladies of that era, had been stored and could not be located for some time. In recognition of the requirements in Mrs. Mason’s will, UNC Comptroller William Carmichael commissioned a new set of portraits by artist Mary Graves. Graves used a distant cousin of the Masons, Lena Mae Williams, as a model for the mid-twentieth century portraits. The Randall portraits were eventually found. Because the original portrait of Reverend Mason painted had been defaced, his fierce eyes punched out while the portrait hung in a dormitory, a new portrait of Mason by Armand de Navarre was commissioned in 1995.

The North Carolina Botanical Garden, a beneficiary of the Morgan and Mason family’s generous gift of land, hung the portraits in the Totten Center as part of the centennial celebration of the gift of the Mason Farm lands to the University, fulfilling the condition of Mrs. Mason’s will and paying tribute to the family whose foresight and generosity provided the setting for UNC’s Botanical Garden and the Mason Farm Biological Reserve.
The Future

The Garden’s Master Plan approved by the UNC Trustees in 1990 called for Mason Farm Biological Reserve to continue to support research and education, while preserving the beautiful natural areas which survive because of the Masons’ gift and the careful restrictions of the will. Plans for the North Carolina Botanical Garden included construction of a visitor education center, a new herbarium, expanded habitat displays, and other collections on land between Laurel Hill Road and the farm that once belonged to the Morgans and Masons. The Mason portraits displayed here remind us of those who went before and all that their generous gift has made possible.

—Contributed by Charlotte Jones-Roe
APPENDIX C: TRADITIONS, * MILESTONES, AND CELEBRATIONS TIMELINE

*Indicates start of a continuing tradition.

1970  The first Earth Day is celebrated.

1971  *The first Labor Day Open House is held.

1973  Dot Wilbur-Brooks is hired as first Public Programs Coordinator.

   *The NCBG newsletter is launched.

1975  BGF membership reaches a total of 200.

The fenced area of the Garden opens on weekends.

Late in the year, NCBG staff move into the Totten Center from the Green Shed, a tool shed that sheltered staff.

1976  Dedication of the Totten Center, the Garden’s first permanent building, 10 years after the first trails in the Garden were opened to the public. The keynote speaker is Dr. William Steere, President Emeritus and Senior Scientist, New York Botanical Garden. Staff with offices in the Totten Center are: C. Ritchie Bell, Director; Kathryn Fort, Administrative Secretary; Dot Wilbur [-Brooks], Activities Coordinator; Alan Johnson, Nursery Supervisor; and Garden staff: Rob Gardener, Charlotte Jones [-Roe], Harry Phillips, and Jim Ward.

   *The first art exhibit, with a botanical theme, is installed in the Totten Center: “An Exhibit of Art [sic] and Crafts.”

1977  *Herba Officinalis, Information for Volunteers, a project of and for Herb Garden volunteers, begins publication and continues until 1984.

1978  *Handmade natural ornaments for the Garden’s Christmas tree and wreaths are created by volunteers, led by volunteer Virginia White, establishing a Garden tradition.

   *T-Shirt Silk screening Day is held after the Labor Day Open House Potluck Picnic. “Bring your own T-shirt” to be silk-screened by Charlotte Jones-Roe, with either a Jack-in-the-Pulpit or Venus flytrap design, becomes an Open House tradition. Cost: $1.

   A week-long celebration of the sun is held at the Garden.

   NCBG’s Horticultural Therapy program begins.

1979  *NCBG holds its first wildflower sale. Forty-four native species sell out. The sale was preceded by four months of preparation by volunteers and staff.

   The NCBG newsletter begins quarterly publication.

1980  *Saturday morning walks through the Garden conducted by Garden Curators begin.

   The first England Garden Tour is led by Ken Moore.

   *The Henry Roland Totten botany lecture series begins, held at the Totten Center and offered to the public. Dr. John N. Couch gives the first lecture.

   12,000 plants are purchased during the wildflower sale in April, and 60 new NCBG members join. Membership stands at 1100.
Weekend volunteers host 2000 visitors during the spring.

1981  The Garden comes under the direct administration of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the future, the Garden will be governced by an Administrative Board chaired by the Dean.

The wildflower sale moves from April to September: “Fall is for Planting.”

The fenced portion of the Garden closes on weekends, and the Weekend Volunteers group is discontinued.

Garden visitors are requested to sign Visitor Registration sheets.

1982  *The Wildflower of the Year program begins, co-sponsored by the Garden Club of North Carolina, to promote a showy southeastern native plant. The inaugural plant is Cardinal-flower. Flower seeds are available on request, but the supply runs out, so Cardinal-flower continues as Wildflower of the Year in 1983. (It repeats in 2001).

The Garden, Coker Arboretum and Mason Farm Biological Reserve become a single administrative unit under Samuel Williamson Jr., Dean of Arts and Sciences. C. Ritchie Bell is named director of the unit. When Dean Williamson becomes Provost and Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs in 1984, the unit moves with him.

*Daily sales of propagated wildflowers and herbs, early April into October, replace the annual wildflower sale.

*Dot Wilbur-Brooks broadcasts a show on horticultural and botanical subjects, aired twice every Monday on WUNC-FM with NCBG mentioned as sponsor. Scripts are written by Dot and volunteer Virginia White.

1983  15,000 plants are sold at the Spring Plant Sale.

1984  The Labor Day Open House draws a record 3000 newcomers and friends of the Garden.

The Herb Garden celebrates its 10th anniversary and the opening of the Herb House at the back of the Herb Garden.

A long-range plan for the Garden is prepared.

1985  The wildflower sale is revived and held for 3 hours, sponsored by Propagation volunteers.

*BGF establishes the C. Ritchie Bell Conservation Internship.

Garden hours extend until 8pm on Thursdays and Sundays during the summer months.

An IBM PCXT arrives to modernize plant record keeping, bookkeeping, and word processing.

A seed-cleaning machine is purchased with funding from the Institute of Museum Services, saving much hand labor time.

*The first Wildflower of the Year T-shirt features Butterfly Milkweed.

1986  C. Ritchie Bell retires as the Garden’s director and is celebrated during a dinner honoring his leadership that turned 72 acres into one of the most active gardens in the southeastern U.S. “Under Dr. Bell’s guidance, the Garden has become a place where an interest in flora can develop into a passion.” At this time, the Garden has a permanent staff of 12, 15 seasonal workers, 150 dedicated volunteers, and 8 major plant collections, and is administering 600 acres for UNC.
Dr. Peter S. White, plant ecologist and conservation botanist, becomes Garden Director.

The Administrative Board adopts the Garden’s long range plan, the signal to begin more specific planning and fundraising for parts of the plan assigned highest priority.

*Index Seminum* lists all species for which the Garden has seeds.

1987 Once again, the annual wildflower sale is discontinued, replaced by daily plant sales.

1988 The Garden’s Administrative Board approves a report setting forth the NCBG mission, goals and objectives that also includes proposed development projects, creating a comprehensive master plan to chart the future course of NCBG. The report updates the 1984 Long-range Plan.

*During the Labor Day Open House, the exhibit “Art for Outdoor Spaces” displays works by 22 local and regional artists. The exhibit was planned, organized and curated by Kathy Buck. Many sculptures will remain in garden spaces surrounding the Totten Center during September. This is the first *Sculpture in the Garden* show.

Lady Bird Johnson visits and tours NCBG to help launch the first fundraising campaign, “Celebrating Wildflowers,” and is presented with the first *Flora Caroliniana* Award during a campaign gala at Fearrington. During her visit, she said: “I admire your North Carolina wildflowers, but I want North Carolina to remain looking like North Carolina and Texas to remain looking like Texas.” (Read much more about her visit in the 1989 #1 newsletter.)

The Herb Garden is named to honor its founder, Mercer Reeves Hubbard, and celebrates its 15th anniversary.

The Botanical Garden Foundation approves funding for a joint project with UNC Office of Facilities Planning and Design to conduct a survey of all University-owned Garden lands.

Botanical Garden Foundation Vice President Anders Lunde initiates an effort to catalog the history of the Foundation and the NCBG, working with C. Ritchie Bell and William Lanier Hunt. Lunde arranges for archival storage of Foundation and Garden papers in Davis Library.

The Botanical Garden Foundation approves the transfer of BGF records to Wilson Library.

1989 The Labor Day Open House features the Garden’s new Master Plan.

1990 The Garden’s comprehensive Master Plan is approved by UNC Trustees.

1991 The [Paul Green Cabin](see) is moved from its location on Greenwood Road in Chapel Hill to its current location in the Garden. After being renovated, the cabin is dedicated at NCBG in 1992, with music, readings, and tributes to Paul Green.

The Totten Center art exhibit schedule includes for the first time an exhibit of works created by NCBG staff.

1992 The Totten Center gets some renovations.

The Garden opens for full days, 8am-5pm, on weekends.

1993 The tenth year of T-shirts of Wildflower of the Year is celebrated with reproductions of a special Wildflower of the Year design by Dot Wilbur-Brooks.

NCBG welcomes two eight-week-old kittens, Lily and Mullein.

1994 The 100th anniversary of the gift of Mason Farm to the University is celebrated.
Dr. Barbara Roth, a retired chemist and founder of the New Hope Audubon Society, is writing a history of the Mason and Morgan family as it relates to the lands of the Garden and the Mason Farm Biological Reserve. She and Charlotte Jones-Roe host the visit of two Mason relatives (great-great grandnieces of James Pleasant Mason) to see the land once cultivated by their ancestors. They discuss plans for celebrating the 100th anniversary of their family’s generous gift to the University.

The Paul Green Foundation and NCBG begin celebration of Paul Green’s 100th birthday, as part of UNC’s Centennial Celebration. The setting is the Paul Green cabin for an afternoon event with a special presentation about Paul Green by Bland Simpson. This is followed by an evening concert in Hill Hall featuring two of Paul Green’s grandchildren, renowned musicians Frederick Moyer and Nancy Green.

In April, NCBG joins UNC in a campus-wide Bicentennial Open House, “Celebrate Wildflowers and 200 Years of UNC.” Garden staff and volunteers are posted at Coker Arboretum and at NCBG. Visitors enjoy a variety of activities, including a treasure hunt at the Arboretum, and children’s workshops, gardening how-to’s, herb gardening, and other helpful tips at NCBG. The 1994 Wildflower of the Year t-shirt is unveiled. Lunch is available in a food catering tent. This Open House replaces the traditional Labor Day Open House for 1994, and in later years no Open House is scheduled, as the celebration had become so popular as to create a safely problem with attendees parking along the bypass.

*The first annual “Fall is for Planting” sale is held in late September.

Outdoor lighting is completely redesigned to improve parking lot safety and increase nighttime usability of the Totten Center.

*Ken Moore develops a weekly radio broadcast on WCHL on subjects related to gardening and the Botanical Garden, a successor to Dot Wilbur-Brooks’ weekly radio spots on WUNC-FM.

The Totten Center opens on weekends from 9am-4pm on Saturdays, and 1pm-4pm on Sundays.

1995  The Garden’s home page is created by graduate students in the School of Information and Library Science.

State-of-the-art computer technology is purchased with a gift of $15,000 from the Branscomb Family Foundation, together with gifts of computer equipment from UNC and other sources that enable creation of CD-ROMs and important research databases. Among the CD-ROMs is the acclaimed Floristic Synthesis from the Biota of North America Program.

The Garden staff acquires cellular phones for increased safety when working alone in distant parts of Garden properties and when leading field trips.

1996  During the visit to UNC of Garrison Keillor and his Prairie Home Companion Company to celebrate WUNC-FM’s 20th anniversary, he describes the Coker Arboretum on the radio show: “This is forest country down here ... beautiful trees all around and not far from Carmichael Auditorium here on the campus of UNC is an incredible 5-acre arboretum, right in the middle of campus with loblolly pines, northern catalpas, pond cypress, and water hickories, sweetgum trees and the magnolias, of course. It’s a lush forest here ... these are woodland people here, a little more modest than the rest of us.”

Mason Farm’s 101st birthday is celebrated, having started with a gift of 800 acres of land by bequest of Mary Elizabeth Morgan Mason. Her gift is the source of approximately ¾ of the Garden’s 600
acres and includes the Mason Farm Biological Reserve and the Nature Trails. The event also honored naturalist John K. Terres, whose book, *From Laurel Hill to Siler’s Bog*, made Mason Farm and its inhabitants famous.

Jean Stewart, the first NCBG volunteer, is celebrated for 25 years of service. She is an original Plant Rescue and Plant Propagation volunteer, and a go-to helper for Ken Moore in the early years of the Garden.

NCBG’s Administrative Board approves founding of a publication series with the first volume, a monograph, to be jointly published by the Chapel Hill Historical Society: *Chapel Hill and Elisha Mitchell, the Botanist* by Rogers McVaugh, Michael R. McVaugh and Mary Ayers.

**1997** The Garden receives a bequest of William Lanier Hunt’s library of many rare books on botany and horticulture. The books are moved to Wilson Library for safekeeping and inventory by Ken Moore.

*The Jenny Fitch Lecture Fund is established by R.B. Fitch Jr. and friends and family members of the late Jenny Elder Fitch, to provide an annual free public lecture about native plant horticulture.*

Douglass Hunt II (nephew of William Lanier Hunt), adviser to the Chancellor, provides a fascinating true story, “Unraveling the Mystery of the Ladies of Mason Farm,” during an afternoon lecture in the Totten Center classroom. He describes his archival sleuthing to unravel a mystery of missing, found, and doubled portraits. The portraits are displayed in the Totten Center classroom.

**1998** Plans develop for a NCBG herbarium/research/library building (Phase I). Phase II will be a visitor center. Both buildings, emphasizing sustainability, will be located on the southeast side of Laurel Hill Road, near the existing visitor parking lot. (This did not happen according to plan: Phase II exists while Phase I is still a dream). The State Legislature provides $350,000 for the architectural design of a new building, the UNC Herbarium and Botanical Library.

Dedication of the new Coker Arboretum arbor and new entry, funded by UNC’s 1997 Senior Class gift. (The original arbor was built in 1911.) Invasive Chinese wisteria that previously covered the arbor is replaced by ten types of native vines. A new Stone Gathering Circle is created, featuring a mosaic of a tulip poplar leaf.

The 90th birthday of the Herbarium is celebrated.

The 25th anniversary of the Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden is celebrated. The project to redesign and replant the Knot Garden is completed.

**1999** *The First Jenny Fitch Memorial Lecture is given by Rosemary Verey, English writer and gardener, in Memorial Hall, attended by 425 persons, followed by book signing and refreshments served by Chapel Hill Garden Club members in Coker Arboretum.*

**2000** The UNC Herbarium in Coker Hall becomes a department of NCBG, staffed by Carol Ann McCormick, assistant curator.

*The Evelyn McNeill Sims Native Plant Lecture series is funded by a gift from Nancy and Ed Preston in honor of Nancy’s mother, Evelyn McNeill Sims. The first lecture is given by Cecil Frost, Director of the N.C. Department of Agriculture, who identified issues that leave the State’s wildflowers hanging in the balance.*
*Wendy Wenck, Nursery and Greenhouse Manager, begins writing a monthly gardening column for the local Chapel Hill newspaper.

**2001** *NCBG Certificate Programs in Native Plant Studies and Botanical Illustration are officially initiated, to be administered by Dot Wilbur-Brooks.

**2002** *The first annual “Magic in the Garden” event is held, organized to draw children and families to the Garden, establishing a Garden tradition.

An historic early winter ice storm wreaks havoc in Coker Arboretum, downs trees on the nature trails near Laurel Hill Road and at Mason Farm, and the Totten Center is without electricity for 6 days. The Holiday Party takes place as usual, lit by candlelight.

**2003** *The Coker Arboretum Centennial is celebrated with three days of lectures, music, program and festivities.

Herbs are no longer included in NCBG sales.

**2004** *NCBG takes over management of Battle Park (93 acres) and the Forest Theatre. Stephen Keith becomes the first Curator of Battle Park and Forest Theatre.

The 20th anniversary of Mason Farm Biological Reserve is celebrated.

**2005** *The first eight graduates of the Botanical Illustration Certificate Program celebrate completion of their course of study in a reception and exhibition of their work in the Totten Center. Two more students graduate later that year and are similarly honored. The tradition continues every other year for recent graduates, with exhibitions of work by botanical illustration program teachers in alternate years.

*Johnny Randall starts a tradition with the first Darwin Day walk to observe plant adaptations.

*The first annual Members’ Preview Plant Sale is held on the Garden Commons.

The Chapel Hill Town Council votes to close Laurel Hill Road to through-traffic where it bisects Garden property.

**2006** *Grant Parkins joins the NCBG staff as the first full-time natural science educator.

**2007** *Twenty years of the annual Sculpture in the Garden exhibitions are celebrated with 77 pieces by 44 artists, a 20-year record. Founding curator, artist Kathy Buck, her successor as curator Ken Moore, and current curator Stephen Keith share stories and honor artists who participated in early shows, but who have died.

**2008** *The 100th anniversary of the Herbarium is celebrated. Its world-class scientific collection consists of 815,000 vascular plant specimens and 1,500 lichen specimens, and specimens of algae, fungi and plant fossils. It is the largest university museum and research collection of southeastern U.S. plants in the world.

*NCBG’s first Darwin Day lecture is given by William Kimler on Charles Darwin’s 199th birthday.

**2009** *The Education Center is dedicated and opened to the public on Oct. 12th. The Center was built entirely with private funds donated by nearly 600 private donors. Governor Beverly Perdue and UNC Chancellor Holden Thorp are among the speakers at the ceremony. Also in attendance are founding Garden Director C. Ritchie Bell and his family, architect Frank Harmon and his staff, New
Atlantic Construction supervisors, and Garden staff, students, and volunteers. [In 2014 the building is named for James and Delight Allen.]

*The Garden Gift Shop opens in the new Education Center, replacing a countertop sales area above storage cabinets in the Totten Center.


*A Garden Birthday Party program is offered by the Education Department as another draw to the Garden for children and families.

2010  *A long-term exhibit of floral quilts in the Education Center is a gift of their creators, members of the Durham Orange Quilters’ Guild. Each quilt represents a Wildflower of the Year (see Chapter 1B.). The exhibit was initiated and organized by volunteer and Foundation Board Member Muriel Easterling.

*The Green Gardener Desk in the Education Center becomes available to answer questions from the public.

2011  “Healing and Hope Through Science,” (later re-named Wonder Connection), a horticultural therapy program with a science curriculum serving hospitalized children and their families at Duke and UNC Children’s Hospitals, is hosted by the NCBG, with one-year support from the Oak Foundation. Katie Stoudemire, who led the pilot program for 5 years through the Sarah P. Duke Garden, joins the Education Department staff to expand and further develop the program. (In November 2015, WRAL featured the program during the nightly news.)

The first phase, “Play and Learn,” of the Wonder Garden, a model place-based education program serving infants through high-schoolers, their parents, and teachers, is being developed. The garden is designed by the Natural Learning Initiative of NC State University with consultation from Garden staff.

Start of “Around the Garden,” an on-line blog of informal writing and photos from the Garden, available by subscription or http://aroundthegarden.tumblr.com.

A bear wanders through NCBG and surrounding areas.

The Wildflower of the Year Program celebrates its 30th anniversary.

2012  *250 attend the first annual Carolina Moonlight Gala, hosted by the Botanical Garden Foundation.

NCBG celebrates the 50th anniversary of Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring.

Flora of the Southern and Mid-Atlantic States, by Alan S. Weakley, NCBG Herbarium Director, is updated and published together with a digitalized version with software for ease in updating and searching. http://www.herbarium.unc.edu/flora.htm (This entry is complicated and should be written by someone who knows about earlier versions). See the link.
*The daily plant sale is moved to a new shade structure outside the Garden Shop, and sales are extended into the winter.

The Horticultural Therapy program partners with the UNC Center for Excellence in Community Mental Health to create a community garden, The Farm at Penny Lane, in Chatham County.

2013  Aldo Leopold, father of wildlife management and the U.S. wilderness system, is celebrated with special programs including a Leopold bench building workshop.

The Garden’s Summer Camp expands its offerings to include week-long sessions, including Nature Illustration taught by Bob Palmatier. Classes such as Nature Painting and Nature Journaling (taught by Annie Nashold) are offered during the school year.

2014  *"Following in the Bartrams' Footsteps," a major juried exhibit of 44 original contemporary botanical illustrations from the American Society of Botanical Artists, inspires a series of events that honor and celebrate the contributions of John and William Bartram to the discovery and propagation of native plants and trees of the southeastern U.S. and their introduction in Europe. This becomes the first in a series of programs each consisting of many events related to a central conservation theme and art exhibit.

Artist-in-Residence Patrick Dougherty’s stick sculpture, “Homegrown,” is built and installed with the help of 100 volunteers, and is featured on CBS Sunday Morning. It is dismantled in early 2017.

NCBG celebrates the 30th birthday of the 367-acre Mason Farm Biological Reserve.

Dr. Peter White retires as NCBG Director after 28 years. He continues as faculty in UNC’s Biology Department.

2015  Dr. Damon Waitt, former Senior Director and botanist at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, becomes the NCBG’s first full-time Director.

The Garden organizes two more major theme programs: “Among Our Trees,” spotlighting trees of the southeastern U.S.; and “Saving Our Pollinators,” highlighting the importance of pollinators. Both include exhibits, workshops, lectures, field trips, and tours.

The Education Department reaches a milestone: since 2006, the number of children served tripled and between 2006 and 2015, 30,000 persons were served. (This needs clean up in case the number isn’t 30K unduplicated persons).

Flora of the Southern and Mid-Atlantic States becomes available as a FloraQuest app.

NCBG honors twin sisters Bernice Wade and Barbara Stiles with a 100th birthday celebration at their home, a tribute to them for the many years they’ve opened their garden to the public.

2016  *A new NCBG magazine, Conservation Gardener, issued twice yearly (Fall/Winter, and Spring/Summer), replaces member newsletters; members also receive monthly e-news.

NCBG introduces a new logo based on NC’s state flower, Cornus florida (flowering dogwood).

Jim Ward retires after 41 years of service (1975-2016) to NCBG, honored by a festive party and dedication of the Gazebo, near the Information Board, as the James Ward Gazebo.
“Winter Spectacle,” a celebration of winter’s beauty, is installed in the Education Center with an art exhibit, displays, informational posters, and haikus honoring the season.

NCBG celebrates its 50th anniversary with an April to June celebration featuring programs, hikes, and exhibits.

“Saving Our Birds” is the final program and exhibit series of the year.

2017   NCBG closes on Mondays.

Planning sessions begin for an Herbarium Building and Research Library on the NCBG campus.
APPENDIX D: GRANTS TIMELINE

1971  A separate allocation from the NC General Assembly, responsive to direct mailings from NCBG supporters, provides state funds for some operations; this is the first direct state support since NCBG was authorized in 1952.

1978  UNC receives a Title I HEW grant that sparks the beginning of the Horticultural Therapy Program, joining 13 U.S. botanical gardens offering horticultural training and consultation to human services professionals in the use of horticulture as a therapeutic and/or recreational medium. The program is established, coordinated and led by Judy Carrier who, with Bibby Moore, works in many kinds of facilities to enable residents to grow plants for food and beauty.

A National Science Foundation grant is awarded to NCBG to increase research activity.

1980  With Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) funding, NCBG participates in helping young adults, 16–19 years old, who are working toward a GED to learn skills in grounds maintenance, machine and tool use, landscaping, trail clearing and maintenance, weeding, mowing, transplanting seedlings, and identification of native plants. They will also assist with new projects such as those in the Herb Garden. This program continues through 1981.

1981  The Botanical Garden Foundation is awarded $33,460 from the Institute of Museum Services, which will be used to support some of NCBG’s education and conservation roles.

1984  Institute of Museum Services grants $37,276 for general operating support to cover the usual shortfall in NCBG state budget appropriation for existing programs and maintenance.

1985  NCBG’s Conservation Intern Program is begun with $25,000 from the Conservation Project program of the Institute of Museum and Library Services and will be funded in future years by the BGF. Part of the IMLS grant is used to purchase a seed-cleaning machine.

An Institute of Museum Services grant of $35,160 will cover shortfall in state appropriations through UNC for basic operations; part will purchase a dump truck.

1988  The first ever annual fund-raising campaign is held. Lady Bird Johnson visits and tours NCBG to help launch the campaign, “Celebrating Wildflowers.” $36,734.17 is raised.

IMS gives $24,000 to Coker Arboretum to fund a conservation plan and collections assessment.

NCBG receives $25,000 from the National Park Service to make recommendations on interpretation of biodiversity in US national parks, with a pilot project in the southern mountain parks: Great Smoky, Blue Ridge, and Shenandoah.

1988-2010  During this period, with partial funding from the Conservation Project Program of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, five comprehensive reports are prepared on natural areas in Chapel Hill managed by NCBG: William Lanier Hunt Arboretum and Gray Bluff Garden; Mason Farm Biological Reserve; The Nature Trail Area, Coker Pinetum, and Stillhouse Bottom Nature Preserve; Laurel Hill Nature Preserve and “Billy Hunt’s Garden”; Battle Park.

1995  A two-year, $112,500 General Operating Support Grant is awarded to the Garden by the Institute of Museum Services.

1996  The UNC Senior Class of 1997 selects design and reconstruction of the wisteria arbor in Coker Arboretum as the focus of their class gift.
1997  NCBG, through UNC, receives significant expansion of its budget from the state legislature.

1999  A grant of $30,000 is received from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Professional Development Program for an elementary-school teacher training program “Using Plants to Teach Science.”

The Institute of Museums and Library Science makes three grants to NCBG: $112,500 General Operating Services grant to be received over 2 years; $216,622 Professional Leadership grant to partner with the UNC Herbarium, UNC’s library school, and some Orange County Library branches to create a web-based plant information center.

$39,250 Conservation Project Support Grant to re-survey the 100-acre Hunt Arboretum and do a botanical survey of adjacent lands donated by Sally Brown.

2005  A $60,000 grant comes from the Institute of Museum Services for an Orientation and Interpretation Plan; it will fund wayfinding and interpretation signage.

2012  The Herbarium receives a National Science Foundation grant to catalog its mycological collection of 17,000 macrofungi.

2013  UNC Herbarium receives a National Science Foundation grant to catalog its collection of more than 30,000 algae, and the phycological collections of 6 other herbaria.

2014  The Herbarium receives a National Science Foundation grant to catalog its collection of about 500,000 plant specimens from the southeastern U.S.

The Green Dragons remove the road and build a boardwalk through Siler’s Bog in Mason Farm Biological Reserve with the help of a $15,000 grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
APPENDIX E: NCBG STAFF—PAST AND PRESENT

A roster of full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary, and seasonal employees who worked at NCBG over the years, some for weeks, others for decades.

Maureen Adams
Nick Adams
Melissa Adelstein
Nadia Alamo
Frances M. Allen
Kim Andrews
Tami Atkins
Matthew Barnett-Lawrence
Andrew Bell
C. Ritchie Bell
Elinor Benami
Caroline Bernard
Aaron Beyerlein
Diane Geitgey Birkemo
Aren Blake
Amara Booth
Abigail Breuer
Ainsley Briggs
Curtis Brooks
Sandra Brooks-Mathers
Mary Brown
Janie Leonard Bryan
Misty Franklin Buchanan
Lindsey Buckingham
Judy Carrier
Dirk Casto
Victoria Castor
Connie Cleary
Lynn Cole
Paula Cook
Al Cooke
Laura Mansberg Cotterman
Jacob Dakar
Matt Daley
Aliya Donnell Davenport
Lee Davis
Lauren Davis
Maggie Dickson
Helen Doerpinghaus
Ray Donheiser
Rebecca Dotterer
Nancy Doubrava
Mike Dunn
Nancy Easterling
Crystal Ebert
Karen Elder
Bobby Elliott
Allison Essen
Deborah Grimes Wenzler Farris
Amy Farstad
Amanda Faucette
Anna Fehrenbacher
Steven Feingold
Mary McKee Felton
Jackie Fitzgerald
Teresa Flora
John Foley
Alison Kitto Fontenot
Kathy Fort
Anne Frances
Ellen Gambling
Rob Gardner
Arielle Garrett
Hannah Gavin
Lisa Geincke
Kancheepuram Gandhi
Donna Lee Giles
Matt Gocke
Mary Gore
Jason Guidry
Neville Handel
Carla Handrinos
Karen Hardy
Anne Fleishel Benson Harris
Sally Haskett
Caroline Healy
Sally Heiney
Brian Helms
Lisa Hicks
Nancy Hillmer
Sara Hirsch
Ann Horner
Jonathan Howes
Clay Hudson
Mary Ishaq
Kristi Isola
Cricket Taylor
Elisha Taylor
Gudrun Thompson
Autumn Thoyre
Charlie Tomberlin
Andrew Torlage
Lauren Tuttle
Charlia Vance
Gustavo Vazquez
Rebecca Wait
Damon Waitt
Andy Walker
Alaa Wally Craddock
James Ward
Alan Weakley
Leila Webster
Rebecca Wellborn
Wendy Wenck
Peter White
Brenda Wichmann
Dot Wilbur-Brooks
Karen Wiley-Eberle
Amanda Wohlfarth
Julie Yarnell

**Early Herbarium Staff:**

Harry E. Ahles
Alma Holland Beers
John Bozeman
Mary McKee Felton *
Lee Glenn
Steve Leonard
Helen Massey
Jim Massey *
Linda Naylor
Albert E. Radford
Laurie Stewart Radford
Ruth Thomas

*Employees of UNC Herbarium and later NCBG.*
APPENDIX F: Additional Sources


Edwards Mountain Nature Preserve: www.ncbg.unc.edu/other-natural-areas.


Laurel Hill Nature Preserve:  http://ncbg.unc.edu/other-natural-areas.  See Wichmann, Brenda L.  
APPENDIX G: NCBG ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS

INTRODUCTION

INTERVIEWER: 2016 is a year of great significance for the North Carolina Botanical Garden: it marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Botanical Garden Foundation, the organization essential to the support of the Garden’s ongoing mission and programs. The Garden’s semi-centennial, a rare occasion, comes a year after the appointment of a new director for the Botanical Garden. Former director Peter White retired at the end of 2014, after 28 years of service; Damon Waitt joined the staff as the Garden’s current director, in April of 2015, only the third person to assume this post since the appointment of Ritchie Bell, in 1961.

A renowned public garden, whose headquarters in the early 1970s consisted of a humble, 10’ x 10’ structure known fondly as “the green shed”—furnished at that time with a single desk, a phone, an electric heater for chilly mornings, and a tree stump as a stand for the staff coffee pot— is now home to a 29,656-square-foot LEED Platinum Education Center. The garden’s grounds, staff, and public outreach have grown exponentially over time, as well. It is fitting that this anniversary celebration provide opportunities for both recognition and reflection, and lead to a deepening understanding and appreciation of the Garden’s past.

For this reason, a selection of people, including current & former staff and board members have been invited to share their memories and thoughts with us. They represent countless others whose knowledge, common vision, energy, and commitment have led the Botanical Garden from its early years—a time of “limited resources and unlimited idealism”—to the point where we find it today. May their stewardship of and service to this institution provide inspiration, wisdom, and resolve to those who will build on its strong foundation and lead the Garden into the future.

Note: NCBG member and volunteer Glenda Jones served as the interviewer for each of the following oral history interviews.

INTERVIEW WITH NANCY EASTERLING—APRIL 6, 2016

INTERVIEWER: As part of the North Carolina Botanical Garden’s Oral History Series, we turn today to Nancy Easterling. Since joining the staff in 1984, Nancy has served the Garden in various capacities, most notably as the coordinator of the Horticultural Therapy program, Curator of the Herb Garden, Program Manager for Children and Youth, and most recently as the Director of Education. She has earned the respect and the admiration of fellow staff, Garden members and countless others who have been touched by her strength and grace. Nancy, it is a pleasure to be speaking with you.
You joined the Garden staff in 1984, as a part-time horticultural therapist. What drew you to this profession?

NANCY: Thank you, Glenda, and thank you for the opportunity to tell this story. I think that my story begins with my grandparents. My grandmother and grandfather lived in rural North Carolina, were gardeners, loved gardening. I spent summers there, and there were responsibilities I had in the garden while I was there. My Granddad died, but my Grandma continue to garden. She was just so passionate about it all. She gardened and did a great amount of canning and freezing of vegetables, and gave away all that she could to friends and family. I remember that so well: the joy that she found in the garden. At 85, she was still growing more than one hundred tomato plants in her large garden; she was still out there gardening. At about this time, she had a heart attack in the garden. This is the story that my aunt tells: When the emergency responders arrived and resuscitated her, she told the emergency staff that if she had only had her hoe with her, everything would have been OK. When she saw the doctor, he firmly said, “No more gardening for you, not like this. You shouldn’t be out there in the heat.” And she said, “OK,” but went right back home and continued to garden until she was moved to a nursing home. She continued to garden there. I remember visiting her in her care home, and she had African violets everywhere, always. It meant so much to her, until the age of 93, when she died. But she died with the garden around her. That’s me: a gardener to the core.

That was also true of her daughter—my mother—who was also completely passionate about gardening. In her case, it was landscape gardening—landscape design in the garden. What I remember about my mother, most of all, was the confidence and joy and excitement that she found in her garden. My grandmother’s confidence as a gardener continued to show itself in her. My mother went back to school in horticulture and design—a woman of her age, with four kids. Seeing what that connection with the garden could do for her as a woman and as a person—for her identity—was amazing. I watched her grow. Witnessing that was my very beginning. Interwoven with that, in my family, as in many families, was taking care of other people and giving to the community; it was simply part of what we did.

So, early on, I knew that was where I was headed in my lifetime. Eventually, I found my way into the School of Social Work at UNC and became a clinical social worker. I found a job right after graduation working at a rural mental health center, in Harnett County. That was quite the experience. It was back in the days when there were few resources; there had been cutbacks. The resources were really limited. The community resources hardly existed anymore, after the closing of Dorothea Dix Hospital. Folks were leaving inpatient residential treatment and going back into the community, without the resources. What happened there was that without the resources in the community for these people that I was working with, I had to be pretty doggone creative to do the work I needed to
do. I worked with adults and groups and youth—people with chronic and severe mental illness. This rural mental health clinic was located in the middle of a peanut farm, quite literally. I had a small office with one window. Patients would come in and we would explore how life could change with the opportunities available. I noticed that patients sitting beside me would often look outside the window. So, I began to explore the option of holding therapy sessions outdoors. We also began to garden. That experience was pretty powerful for me. We were digging peanuts and understanding the peanut plant, which I didn’t know much about.

Due to the lack of support provided to the field of community mental health care, I decided to go back to school, this time in horticulture, at NC State. I had my eyes opened to the science part of gardening, a beautiful tool to have, and I loved that. I found my first job in horticultural therapy, at a sheltered workshop or work center in Durham, for individuals with disabilities. I worked with people of all ability levels, people with incredible challenges. But they saw the work they did as both productive and meaningful. I managed the greenhouse program. One person I remember very well embodies the values inherent in horticultural therapy. This woman, who continues to be a friend of mine today, had a childhood disease and was not able to use her arms or legs. She had a motorized wheelchair. She loved gardening; it was her passion, too. She loved it completely. She used her chin for everything that she needed to do, including moving her chair. We worked together in the greenhouse; we grew poinsettias. She was in the production line. She used a spoon that she had created, and held it in her mouth. That spoon was the one and only tool she used for gardening. She picked up soil with the spoon, put the soil in a pot, then picked up the pot with her mouth. She was just an amazing person. What courage, what strength, what challenges she had, yet she continued to garden! It made you understand the power of gardening. We have to provide these kinds of opportunities for people who love to garden—it changes everything. So, that was my beginning.

About that same time, I began to have children and did not want to work full-time. The Botanical Garden’s Horticultural Therapy program was just a few years old—it was started by Judy Carrier, in 1978. Bibby Moore joined her in 1980. When Judy left, I came in and filled the second position, working part-time. The work we did in horticultural therapy followed the money. The first project that I was involved in was training health care professionals across the state. We traveled from the mountains to the coast, working with individuals who wanted to learn to use plants and nature and horticulture as a therapeutic approach to wellness.

INTERVIEWER: Where did that funding come from?

NANCY: It was from a grant. We did that for a while and it was a great way for me to be introduced to the Botanical Garden and the Horticultural Therapy program. And we continued to build on that. We worked in assisted living facilities that could afford the contract money. At that time, the
Department of Corrections was really one of the few institutions that knew how to use plants and gardening as a rehabilitation tool, and they would put money into it, because it made a lot of sense. It was effective and efficient and affordable—all of those things. We assumed some contracts with the Department of Corrections for some years. That was another life-changing experience—working with prisoners. We started out working in a couple of correctional facilities, one for people with chronic mental illness. We went into the prison and worked in that particular unit. The other involved working with elderly inmates. We had greenhouses in both situations. We worked with individuals who, because of their age, would be spending the remainder of their life in prison, as well as those who would be going back into the community, at some point—with very few resources. So, having gardening, at least as a leisure activity, was going to be significant for them. We also worked in a medium security prison, in Durham, for a while. Pretty amazing! I learned a lot about people who live in prison—what their experience is like. You walk into a prison and you feel all of the confinement, that’s for sure. However, the garden and gardening were such a great opportunity for people there. Then I worked in the North Carolina Correctional Facility for Women, in Raleigh. I worked there with people who were incarcerated for life. These women would be there for the rest of their lives! That was just amazing. I remember Bibby Moore and I being in the back of a pickup truck that we drove from here to there with composted soil. Here we were, Bibby and I, with three “lifers,” hopping onto the back of that truck and unloading the compost into the prison garden. I think there’s a picture of this somewhere.

INTERVIEWER: We have to have that picture.

NANCY: For those women who are not going to see the outside of a prison again, you can imagine, how gardening and being around plants can give them hope. We know what gardening gives back to us, in our own situations, but for them it means so much more. Without that opportunity, they are missing out on being able to feel as though they are contributing, exercising, being themselves, having peace and calm, when needed, and a distraction from prison.

INTERVIEWER: For all that gardens mean to us, for them it is probably a hundred-fold.

NANCY: That’s right. Those were some of the early years.

INTERVIEWER: We have already covered a lot. We have covered the first question, I think. When you became the coordinator of the Garden’s Horticultural Therapy program, in 1992, you set a new goal for the program: to bring it home. Why did you feel that the time had come for such a change?

NANCY: There are a couple of reasons. I will say that one reason is that we were “burning out.” We were driving all across the state. The work that we were doing was powerful, both emotionally and physically. The contracts and grant funding was not sustainable. It was not healthy, in terms of a work
environment. Another reason was that this Garden, then and now, offers such a beautiful horticultural therapy classroom, in its outdoor space. It has all of the things that you would want in a horticultural therapy garden. We have accessibility, we have stimulating sensory plants. We have nature at its best, we have water, and seating and safety. Everything that you would want in a garden and a horticultural therapy garden was right here. When you go off to another site, you have to find those things or make those things happen. Here, it makes so much sense. So, we started focusing on local contracts, and they began to happen. I think part of the importance of it to me, and to us, was the Garden having greater ownership of the program. You are more visible here. When you are out and about, that is less the case. When you are here—and you are seeing these individuals and the effects of their experience—it becomes much more of a Garden program. I think that part of the Garden’s mission is diversity, reaching a wide, diverse audience. And Horticultural Therapy brings that front and center. It reaches a diverse community that is underserved, both in the community at large and here at the Garden. Horticultural Therapy can speak to that. Bringing the program home made a lot of sense, in a lot of different ways, for me and for us. We continue to do outreach off site. We will continue to do that. I think it is good to have a balance.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe how the program continued to accommodate and serve these groups, like the elderly, physically handicapped, the mentally ill, and maybe share a few stories of clients who benefited individually?

NANCY: Here are some of the things that come to mind, in terms of where we’ve been and where we are to date: In the earlier years we helped to build the Learning Garden, which was a partnership with the town of Chapel Hill. We worked there with children who were patients in the Pediatric Psychology unit at UNC Hospitals. It was a beautiful program. CNN picked up that story and that news story soon made its way around the world. The National Geographic also picked it up. The Learning Garden was a pretty powerful place. For whatever reason, the gardening that could be done there was pretty remarkable for the Botanical Garden and the community. I am thankful that we were able to do that. I just learned yesterday that it looks like the Learning Garden is going to come back. It is going to be different, but we are going to be involved. It will come back after how many years—maybe 25?

Another focus for the program was involvement in a movement taking place in many communities and cities: the transformation of residential care facilities into green communities. More residential care facilities were beginning to understand the importance of outdoor spaces. The Botanical Garden was considered an expert in this field. As a result, we became consultants at the state level in helping them think about regulations for residential care facilities, and how they might change policy so that
the natural world became a more important element. That was a big enterprise and, I think, a big accomplishment for the Botanical Garden and the Horticultural Therapy program.

Some groups that we worked with in the past were somewhat unusual and distinctive to the Botanical Garden. One was called Teens Climb High. This program was for fifth graders, troubled teens at risk. They came to the Garden for a summer program. They were angry adolescents. Our challenge was in helping these fifth graders learn to work together, take part in projects, and feel accomplished. These were teens who had no gardening experience whatsoever. We helped children open their eyes to nature; we gave them the tools and the opportunity to do this. They came with fears and unknowns. We were able to help these teens not be afraid of the outdoors, to actually find some peace and quiet in the outdoors. At home, life might be completely chaotic, but they left the program knowing that when this was the case, they could go sit under a tree with a pad and pencil—think, write, draw, be safe and sound. I was glad to be a part of that.

Another group program was Rosemary for Remembrance. Rosemary, as we know, is a very powerful herb and has so many uses. One of them is stimulation to the brain. At that point, I was working in the Herb Garden as well. We had the Rosemary Collection, so we had lots of rosemary to work with. We understood, having worked with individuals in residential care facilities, how important it was to not only work with the individual patient, but the caretaker, as well. So, we created a patient-caretaker program. We received some funding to do a pilot program. It was an effective approach to horticultural therapy: seeing the need not being met and using nature as the tool.

INTERVIEWER: What is the significance of the rosemary involvement?

NANCY: Living with someone with dementia is one of the greatest possible challenges. The patient and the caretaker—they both need our help. I came from the clinical mental health field. We continue to work with people with chronic mental illness. One group that we’ve worked with is called Herbal Essence. All are members of our community. We serve both these individuals and the community that way. Other programs within our larger Horticultural Therapy program involve working with children with autism.

INTERVIEWER: Is that continuing?

NANCY: It is not. There is another interesting group of individuals: pregnant women and mothers with infants who were drug dependent. The work with these women involved plants and nature and gardening, helping to provide diversions and distractions from their need to use drugs. And, just as important, how to care for one’s self and how to care for others. We had to be very thoughtful about all of these things that we would do in our therapeutic approach to working with these women. It was pretty amazing.
I think that close to that challenge was working with children, young people with eating disorders. We still do that through Wonder Connection, as well as Horticultural Therapy. Imagine the emotional difficulties that a young person or child with eating disorders has. It is so complicated. So, bringing plants—including edible plants—into the program was pretty amazing. One goal of the program was to help these young people focus on caring for themselves by caring for something else; understanding plants and their nutritional benefits, and how they can become a positive distraction. This is a group that needs to be given greater consideration in the future.

I mentioned people with traumatic brain injuries. For many years I did horticultural therapy work with people with TBI, and I found that these individuals were the most challenging and the most rewarding. The challenge is that these people were once just like myself. But, one day they left work, got in their car, had an automobile accident . . . and the following day were a completely different person, someone who would never return to being the person they once were. Accepting such a truth is huge: learning how to be another person without going into complete depression. We worked with individuals who were able to do that. It was so inspiring to think of how we could be of help. I am a gardener, so I can’t imagine waking up tomorrow and discovering that I no longer had the use of my arms or legs—and couldn’t garden anymore. I would be a mess! Life, probably, would not be worth living for me. So, you have to get their love for life—and its true meaning—back to them, somehow. That is the important work that we do for such people: getting the “gardens” back into their lives so that they can, once again, enjoy a good quality of life.

INTERVIEWER: You work with each individual in a different way.

NANCY: Yes, absolutely. You have to find their interests. For me, that would be vegetable gardening. For others, it might be landscape design, nature study, or botanical art—whatever it is. You must consider their limiting ability and figure that out. It’s all pretty amazing!

INTERVIEWER: And you can go back and be inspired by the woman with the spoon.

NANCY: Yes. Another inspiring story might be one that’s more recent. A fellow who was in the Iraq War lost part of his prominent arm from his elbow down. He had symptoms of traumatic brain injury, as well—maybe some post-traumatic brain disorder. Here you have a person who is married, comes back from the war in that condition. He goes through all the VA’s traditional therapies—which he and his wife would say didn’t work. The way they saw it, the VA didn’t provide the support that he needed and wanted. He happened to be a gardener; he loved gardens. They found us, by chance, and we started to work with him on an individual basis. He refused to use his prosthesis. We helped him become more confident in wearing his new arm: how to put a shovel into that new arm and go digging in the garden. We worked with him for a long time, building that confidence, building his
strength, building himself up to a good place. It was not only horticultural therapy that made the difference—I know it was not only that—but we played a part. He and his wife ended up going to a Congressional hearing to speak about the lack of services in the VA and the need for creative programs in local communities. He did that work for a long time, being an advocate for veterans in that way. He came back to the Garden and volunteered here with Matt Gocke, but is no longer living in this area.

INTERVIEWER: This could be a model for the VA, gardening as therapy.

NANCY: Actually, it has been. The use of horticultural therapy in VA hospitals goes back many years. Veterans’ hospitals incorporated it into their approach, finding it to be an affordable and effective form of treatment. Many of their patients came from a background that involved gardening and farming. The VA does have horticultural therapists on staff, in several locations.

INTERVIEWER: Great stories. All the lives you have touched.

NANCY: I have other stories. (Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: You can tell all the stories you want. We never get tired of hearing your stories.

NANCY: This one is about a seven-year-old. His parents came to the Garden for horticultural therapy for their adopted son because they had not been able to find any other effective therapeutic support for him. He was not able to adjust to school; it was too difficult for him. He was born to a mother who had developmental and intellectual disabilities. As a young child, he had, quite literally, lived in a cardboard box, in a closet. The Department of Social Services took custody of him, under their foster parent program. The foster parents that I met became his parents. They were farmers. They adopted a child with intensive emotional problems. They came and asked us for help. I worked with this child for four years and got to know him very well, as he became a teenager. He loved gardening! His favorite thing to do was picking and growing. He was extremely interested in greenhouse growing. I used behavior modification as the treatment model, and he responded to it very well. As he grew older, he developed other interests, and our sessions ended. I don’t know where he is now, but I hope that there is a garden close by. These four years were pretty amazing—to see a troubled young person so responsive to the Garden.

INTERVIEWER: The key that will make his life successful.

NANCY: Once you have that gift of gardening, you can’t take it away. That will be my last story. (Laughter)
INTERVIEWER: There was a period of time when you wore many Garden hats simultaneously: leading the Horticultural Therapy program, while at the same time assisting with youth and children’s programs and acting as curator of the Herb Garden. Tell us about the history of the Herb Garden and how it has changed and developed over time. Like all aspects of the Garden, the Herb Garden relies on the help of volunteers. How important are volunteers to the maintenance of Garden properties and the overall day-to-day operation of the Garden itself?

NANCY: While practicing horticultural therapy here, there was an opening for the Herb Garden curatorship. It was decided that I would assume this curatorial role and continue the Horticultural Therapy program—a blend of the Horticulture Department and Education Department—as a way of financially supporting the positions. As I mentioned earlier, the Herb Garden provided the elements of a therapeutic garden. During my term as Herb Garden Curator, I also began to encourage the active engagement of children through the development of interpretive materials, an activity booklet, activities in the Herb House, and a prototype of a Children’s Garden. Along with the Occoneechee tribe and help from an Eagle Scout, we build the atti in the Native American Garden and created a guide to Native American plants. We also accepted the National Rosemary Collection. We had at least 20 active volunteers in the Herb Garden, on a weekly basis. It was a wonderful experience. The decision was later made that the Horticulture and Education departments should not overlap, and at that time I became a full-time member of the Education Department, as both a horticultural therapist and as an educator for the Youth and Family Program.

INTERVIEWER: One common thread that runs through your years has been your interest in youth and children. Can you speak in general terms of the importance of providing experiences for children? Aside from the therapy, are there other memories of working with this population?

NANCY: From my perspective, I believe that it is the most important work that we can do here at the Botanical Garden—working with small children. And we do. It is for so many reasons, but how I think about it is that in children from zero to three, the synapses in their brain are building and growing. You are adding to those, between those early years. Then, about age four, if you are not using all of them, you begin to lose them. So, it is so important that we work with the really little ones, from zero to three. We are doing just that. I want us to do more. We can’t do more without the resources and the staff to do it. When I think of the work that we do with kids, the image I have that inspires me is this: imagine a child sitting outside, sitting under a tree with their eyes closed, calm and secure. The wind blows and they hear the leaves in the tree. They feel the bark as they lean up against it, and feel the ground where they are sitting. From these sensory experiences and the knowledge of the natural world, they know where they are, the season of the year, and the species of tree. They are peaceful and calm in nature, and have the tools and the information to be a part of it all.
Research supports the existence of Nature Deficit Disorder. We know that children are spending less and less time outdoors and more and more time in front of all of their devices—and that is a problem. There is a decline in physical fitness and an increase in childhood obesity. Allergies are more prevalent than ever before. More and more children are being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. There is a direct link. So, we have a lot of important work to do. You must first appreciate nature—love it—and then you are ready to learn from it, and prepared to change the world. We are doing this here, providing meaningful experiences like Nature Explorers Summer Camp, the best summer camp program anywhere. I was fortunate enough to run Summer Camp here for a few years.

INTERVIEWER: Nancy, you have done it all. (Laughter)

NANCY: Sometimes, it seems that way. It has been a great experience to have served in these multiple roles. Working with children was incredible. One experience I recall was during Summer Camp. On the first day of class, we asked the kids to draw themselves in nature. We discovered that children would draw themselves with, maybe, a small tree in the background or a bird or sunshine smiley face, or something like that. Then, on the last day of camp, we asked them to, again, draw themselves in nature. And the comparisons were impressive. Added to their portrait and surrounding landscape were lizards, bugs, detailed flowers, trees with life-like leaves, and so much more. It is great fun and encouraging to participate in this type of transformation, this change in perspective.

We worked with Head Start in the early years. These children had limited resources. We worked with teachers and young children for several years, planting seeds and watching frogs and ants in an outdoor space. I can remember that dark classroom with no windows. During that time, in order to financially support the program, we contracted with such agencies. There was no permanent position for a Youth and Family Coordinator.

We also contracted with Glenwood Elementary School and I became the Science Specialist. I would go to Glenwood every week, two or three times a week, to work with Glenwood teachers and students. We initiated a formal partnership in environmental science, with Glenwood Elementary as our neighborhood school within walking distance. I believe that Glenwood students were here at the Garden earlier today; this relationship still continues, after 25 years.

Following this role, I began an outreach program with Glenwood, the Visiting Plant Program. We would take five or six different plants to Glenwood classrooms during the course of the school year. The plant would literally go and visit the classroom, and we learned everything we could about that one plant. Kids were running around the schoolyard seeing all of these dogwood blossoms. We could take the dogwood blossoms into the classroom and learn everything that might be learned about that plant—and there is so much to learn about the dogwood tree, our state flower and the Garden’s new
logo! You learn that what we might think of as petals are not really petals, but bracts. There are 20 flowers in the center of the bracts, and from those 20 flowers come all of these red berries. There are eighty-six-plus birds that feed on these dogwood berries. And the squirrels love them, along with much other wildlife! The dogwood has been used by humans for medicine. One theory is that the Native American name for the dogwood tree—daggerwood—was because they used it as a dagger, a tool, because the wood was so dense and did not splinter. Another story is that they used the bark of the dogwood as a treatment for mange. In the classroom, we would take a dogwood branch and take the bark off of that branch. If you take off the inner and outer bark, you feel the smoothness of the inner bark. It is amazing how wonderful that touch is. If you take a small little twig, peel off the bark, and flatten the twig, it can be used as a toothbrush. It is fascinating.

INTERVIEWER: Well, I’m fascinated. I am learning so much about the dogwood tree.

NANCY: So that was the Visiting Plant Program—now called the Visiting Naturalist Program—a great program. The last program that I will mention is Magic in the Garden, an annual event we have had for many years. It has changed form a little bit, but we still have magic in this Garden for families and children—that will never stop. I was fortunate enough to be part of the first Discover Magic: seeing hundreds of kids exploring the Garden in their costumes, dressed in their magical clothes, and providing opportunities to really get them engaged and involved in plant-based activities that were really magical.

INTERVIEWER: How have the educational offerings of the Garden changed since you became Director of Education, in 2009? What do you think have been the most memorable achievements since you have been director? What goals lie ahead?

NANCY: I think that teacher education is really important. Over the past few years, we have had a partnership with schools. I think that we can’t teach all of the children, but we can teach many of the teachers. We are doing a good job of that.

That all began back in the early days with a program called “Take a Closer Look,” which involved working with early childhood educators. There were new educational requirements that children must spend time outdoors. But, teachers had no tools. They’d get their students outside and then not know what to do with them. So, we did some great teacher training back in the day. I would like to see that come forward again. It requires resources and staff. But, we are committed to that because these early childhood educators, in particular, are not given the resources. They are given the mandate, but not the resources to make the best use of the outdoors.

I remember some of those teachers. They would say: “That dirt is so dirty, we can’t let the children play in the dirt, certainly not the dirt.” If there was a stump in the playground and the stump has
splinters and sprouted mushrooms—oh my! If the children had a boulder to climb on, they might fall! And, oh gosh, that’s such a risk factor! All of those things were concerns for some teachers. We could help by understanding what the challenges were; then, we could help in finding solutions.

Playing in the mud and having fun, I think, is one of the most memorable experiences of childhood. Have you seen kids playing in the mud? We have the Wonder Garden here now. I think that its development is one of the accomplishments since I’ve been in this position. Seeing the Wonder Garden now and remembering its infancy makes me excited about its future. On a day this past week, my colleagues looked out their office window and into the Wonder Garden. There were kids in the “digging place,” digging in the mud. It was such a beautiful sight! There were kids sitting down at the table writing fairy notes, knowing that they were going to get a letter back from the fairies. There were kids in the bird blind having the time of their lives. I think that the Wonder Garden is a major accomplishment.

I think that, as the Director of Education, I have had the opportunity to build a team of strong professionals. I have been involved in the development and growth of programs, including the Horticultural Therapy program, the certificate programs, the Youth and Family Program, adult education, special exhibits, and clustered programming. I am proud to be a part of Wonder Connection in the hospitals, the Carolina Campus Community Garden, and Edible Campus UNC. I have been fortunate enough to oversee the Volunteer Program for the past five years. We have watched that grow; it is filled with incredible individuals. The Greenbriers, who are amazing individuals, are giving back to the Garden in ways that have not been done before. One of them is happening today, with these Oral History interviews. We have a registrar here now and a great receptionist program. Central to the goals of the Garden and to the Education Department—and for me, professionally—is the sustainability piece of it.

Funding is always—and probably always will be—a challenge. I don’t know how to solve that problem, except to continue to be thoughtful, creative, and persistent in fundraising and creative revenue streams. I also hope to continue to diversify the audience. We are good at further educating the educated. I would like to see stronger connections with high school and college students. We truly want to build a garden for all people, one with a state-wide impact that continues to emphasize the importance of reaching a diverse audience.

INTERVIEWER: More than just telling the story?

NANCY: With the help of technology, we can do so much more. We are not doing it for lack of creativity and understanding the need. It is finding the resources and hiring the staff to do it. One other thing that is important to me—and I don’t know how I can influence it very much—is climate
change. We need to understand the impact it is having on the natural world—world-wide. We need to understand the challenge it presents, the solutions it demands, and become much more vocal about this issue and others that are related to it.

INTERVIEWER: (Unintelligible)

NANCY: We can do it, right?

INTERVIEWER: Yes we can. We have covered so much. We have reached our allotted time. Any questions?

QUESTIONER: What can you tell us about the certificate programs and adult programs? How do they fit in to the total picture?

NANCY: The certificate program is two-fold. We have the Native Plant Studies certificate program and the Botanical Art and Illustration certificate program. Both are intensive educational opportunities. We probably have 210 students actively enrolled in these programs, at this time. We have courses and a strong curriculum for each of these programs. We have additional adult programs.

INTERVIEWER: That is a lot of responsibility, Nancy.

NANCY: The greatest gift is the team of people I work with. By working together—as this group knows—you can do so much.

INTERVIEWER: Do any of you have other questions that we have not covered? I know there was a bonus question about your involvement at the national level with the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA). Do you want to talk about that?

NANCY: That was a pretty big deal for me—and for the Garden, I think. I served on the AHTA Board at the national level for seven years. The last four of those years, I was president. Being able to see horticultural therapy through the lens of the greater world was pretty amazing. I was able to travel to Japan for an international symposium. There were people coming from all over the world who were interested in the concept of using plants for therapeutic gain.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much, Nancy. Thank you for your time. Thank you for what you’ve meant to the Garden. We are so appreciative.

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLOTTE JONES-ROE—DECEMBER 8, 2015

INTERVIEWER: Welcome to the North Carolina Botanical Garden Oral History Series, organized and produced in anticipation of the Garden’s upcoming 50th Anniversary celebration. I am Glenda
Jones, a graduate of the Botanical Art and Illustration program and a Garden volunteer. Today, I will be speaking with Charlotte Jones-Roe, a member of the Garden staff for many years and, currently, the Garden’s Director of Development. I am pleased to be meeting with you, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE: The pleasure is mine, Glenda.

INTERVIEWER: The Garden’s early years have been described as a time of “limited resources and unlimited idealism.” How did you happen to come to work at the Garden?

CHARLOTTE: It was a very idealistic time. When I was in college, the first Earth Day happened, and students everywhere became aware that the earth and the environment were very important. As a botanist and a biology major, I was interested in finding some way to do more than just work in a research lab. I wanted to work with people and teach and save the world, you know. The environment suddenly became known to all of us who were paying attention. And I think that is what made my ears attune when I was at a party with some graduate students. One of those students worked with Ken Moore, at the budding North Carolina Botanical Garden. He was not a biology major, but was just on fire about what this Garden was going to become. There was no building on the Garden’s grounds, there were very few collections, but he believed it was a very important thing. He described it and said that he believed that this Garden was about to take off. Never mind that there were only Work-Study students and one paid employee, Ken Moore. He believed that this was a significant place, and I realized that I wanted to be a part of it.

While visiting Chapel Hill, in 1972-1973, I applied for a job at the Garden in every way I could think of. I went to see Ritchie Bell, the director of the Garden, and took him my typed resume. He said, “I am trying to get some money from Raleigh, and if I get some money, I will be sure to hire you.” He probably told everyone that. But, on the strength of that pledge, I borrowed a truck from a friend and she helped me move to Chapel Hill. I proceeded to apply again and again, and was finally hired. In the first wave, there were five positions funded by the State legislature, and I had the audacity to apply for a job that was probably classified as a man’s job, early on. It was right at the time of transition, where they stopped listing jobs separately: jobs for men; jobs for women. And so, I said, “I want to work at the North Carolina Botanical Garden,” and I put in my application. The four other staff members, together with me, all had backgrounds far beyond what the State was going to pay for. But it was a privilege to step in, be in on the ground floor, and be under the tutelage of Ken Moore—Ken Moore and the “bozos.” He couldn’t remember our names, as has been the case for years . . . with the students who worked with him.

Ken made sure that we had a well-rounded view of local flora, that we knew how to teach, how to engage volunteers. He taught courtesy. He made sure that we knew how to treat people who gave
their time to the Garden—with great respect. Ken modeled this behavior. He took care of us, personally. He fed us when we were between paydays. He really went out of his way to make it possible for the first staff to work here and build careers here. And I credit him with the success of the early Garden. He really was the person on the ground doing that. So, that’s the long version of how I came to be here. I had wanted to be in this area and knew that this was the right place for me. There is a story which is actually true: I did climb the fence at the entrance to the Garden and put a little note on the Green Shed: “Don’t hire anyone until you talk to me.” I was very pleased to be part of that first wave of employees.

INTERVIEWER: You have already touched on this, but what are some of your strongest memories of those early years?

CHARLOTTE: Oh, I think the field trips. Ken Moore made sure that we had many opportunities to do more than dig and weed and collect plants. We went to Grandfather Mountain and did plant rescues with Hugh Morton, who was developing one side of the mountain. I remember digging plants and being hosted by Mr. Morton, and being shown the great swinging bridge, and then inventorying these plants when we came back, and building them into the Mountain Habitat, since they represented that part of the state.

Ken was greatly influenced by Dr. B. W. Wells, a person who was, indirectly, very significant in the Garden’s history. Ken, in his wisdom, sent the five of us over to Wake County with trucks, to dig plants when the Wells’ property on the Neuse River was about to be flooded. We did plant rescues there. It only took an hour or two to fill the truck, but Ken said: “Stay and visit with Dr. and Mrs. Wells for a while.” So, on several occasions, I had the privilege of sitting at Dr. Wells’ feet and hearing him hold forth, not only about the natural gardens of North Carolina, but about archeological history, the importance of nature to people, and how geology ties into all of this. Geology is very important at the Wells site; it is the reason that the Neuse River wraps around that area in a big double bend. Dr. Wells planted many seeds and nourished other interests that came to influence my graduate work. Looking at the landscape, reading the landscape, inventorying everything here on NCBG land—all that would affect my education and interpretation of the site. Dr. Wells was definitely a big influence, along with field trips all over the state to dig plants and learn first-hand about their native habitats. It was just the most amazing general education you could possibly imagine. So, in answer to your question, I would say those early experiences.

Ken once borrowed a van from the Biology Department and drove us to Fairchild Garden in Florida, to a meeting of the APGA (American Public Garden Association), our professional association. We stopped at the Okefenokee Swamp. I am sure that Ken did not have a budget for all of this. He just took us there, and taught us, and nurtured us. When you hear people talk about Ken’s importance, this
is part of what they are referring to; these things would not have happened, if he had not made them happen.

Ken’s nurturing presence may have been handed down from Dr. Totten. Dr. H.R. Totten was a botanist who had been a student of Dr. William Coker, another very important person in the history of the Garden: he founded Coker Arboretum, having persuaded the president of the University to allow him to create a great garden in what was once a cow pasture, and to follow in the tradition of other great universities by doing this and more: his research in the Herbarium, particularly that related to mycology; his contributions to the “campus plan” as head of the Building and Grounds Committee; his gift of a statuette by Daniel Chester French, “Spirit of Life,” to Wilson Library; his relationship with UNC Press. Dr. Coker was a very influential person, in all respects.

One of Dr. Coker’s students was H. R. Totten, a very kind and humble man. Dr. Totten was well known to Ken and others who were here at the time, even though Totten was probably retired by then. Dr. Totten had taught every pharmacist and every physician who had gone through UNC-Chapel Hill. Before the development of antibiotics, these students had to study Pharmacognosy, the knowledge of the healing plants. On a Saturday or Sunday, Dr. Totten would lead a hike for the townspeople of Chapel Hill. Some of Dr. Totten’s walking sticks are still here at the Garden; we still have a few of them. These sticks were carried by people from the town as they went with Dr. Totten on those wildflower walks. By the time they returned from the walk, Dr. Totten expected participants to know something about the kind of wood that served as their walking stick. He understood about learning through the use of all of your senses. On these walks, he used the common names for plants, as well as their scientific names. His wife, Addie Williams Totten, was very influential in garden clubs, both locally and statewide. She made sure that people learned the scientific names of the plants. So, it went both ways. Dr.

Totten cared about his students; he was known as a warm spirit. He and his wife would take in students who couldn’t go home for the holidays. Addie Totten set a fine table. She prided herself on having flowers—a little something from from her garden—on the table every day of the year. Dr. Totten was known for his kindness and outreach to people way beyond the academic community. While he was not as recognized in international circles as Dr. Coker, he lives on in the hearts of his students. When my office was in the Totten Center, I remember that, for years and years, people would come by to see the picture of Dr. Totten with the lady slippers—I think it is now in the Bell Seminar Room. They would say, “I want to see the picture of Dr. Totten. He was the most wonderful professor; he is the reason I went into this field,” whether that was medicine, pharmacy or botany—or, perhaps, just the reason they loved wildflowers. They would come here because Dr. Totten had touched them personally. I always thought of Ken Moore as transmitting that same spirit. Ken tried to
make sure that every one of us on the staff, at an early age, had an appreciation for the Garden’s volunteers, an appreciation for the ways in which people learn. Ken encouraged us to experiment, in order to discover how we could best reach out to people and convey important information or things of interest.

INTERVIEWER: That spirit is very evident at the Garden, even today. Charlotte, you have worn many hats during your time at the Garden. In what ways has the Garden changed and evolved, from the time you joined the staff until today?

CHARLOTTE: We are in a room that did not exist at the time I came. We had only the Green Shed, and if you haven’t visited the Green Shed, it might be worth a look. The Green Shed looks the same as it did back then. It has no central heat. Ken brought in a little heater for us, in case our feet were freezing. He would send us on errands, so that we could get warm. He would save office supply purchases for rainy days, and on clear winter days, he would send us to shovel horse manure, as that was a warm task to do. That is one of the reasons that the plants are so large in the shade nursery and over in the mountain area. That’s because of all those cold mornings when he would send a crew out with trucks to get free materials to enrich the soil. That’s a big change from today.

Of course, the Totten Center was dedicated in 1976. And what a grand day that was for the community, as well as for the Garden staff! Then, in 2009, this building—the Allen Education Center—was dedicated. It was another great occasion! Governor Beverly Perdue was here, and I think that everyone was delighted and relieved that we finally had the facilities we needed to hold classes and to reach out in a way that was not possible without this facility. So, physical facilities have changed.

I think, for me, the most satisfying part was my work as Conservation Director, when I was doing land acquisition and working on the part of the Garden’s mission that has to do with land protection. I worked with landowners and was involved with dozens of land gifts, deals, easements and other things related to land conservation and the protection of plants within the sites where they are native. To me, that was one of the satisfying things, and it was a change that added acreage and expanded that portion of the Garden’s mission.

INTERVIEWER: The number of spaces that the Garden manages now has really grown.

CHARLOTTE: It has, both in lands owned by the University, as well as lands that are owned and protected by the Botanical Garden Foundation. In my capacity in Conservation, I was involved with both. From being part of the general crew, from being curator of the Coastal Plain Habitat and curator of Southeastern Ferns—one of my research interests—I was asked to take on Conservation. Well, I didn’t have a budget and I didn’t have a staff.
Conservation included Mason Farm. One of the big things that happened at that time was the need to defend Mason Farm from a highway plan that would have built a large road, the Laurel Hill Parkway, right across Mason Farm. It would have opened up the south side of Morgan Creek to development. The defense of Mason Farm turned out to be a fifteen-year effort. I barely managed to avoid being fired during that period. So, I would say, that was a challenging time, but also very satisfying. With the help of New Hope Audubon and people all over the area, we were finally able to get that plan removed from the D.O.T map and the University’s plans. And I would say that when I reflect on things of significance, there are a handful of activities that I have led or been involved in that proved to be significant, in the long term. That certainly was one of them. There are lots of stories associated with that fight—and with me and my job. But that is a chapter for another day. The important thing is that Mason Farm has quite a following; we have people in this region of the state who believe that natural areas should be protected. The University now is claiming the importance of its nature preserves to the global environment. So, that’s important.

In 1988, Peter White, the Garden’s second director, asked me to become Director of Development. For some years, I had supervised a person in Development. Peter asked me to apply for the position—and I was flabbergasted. Why would I want to do that? I am a botanist and a conservationist. Peter said, “I think you can do the job. And, you know, we need to raise money to do the Garden’s work.” So—after Peter agreed to hire a full-time Director of Conservation—I applied and was given the position. I soon found myself leading a capital campaign for this building, the Education Center. We had all been involved in its planning; staff was always involved in planning for the organization and planning for the buildings. Several of us were allowed to visit other facilities and capture the best we could of the features of those buildings. So, with very little but a drawing in hand, I went to potential donors and asked them if they would help us with this building. We had no public support, no state support for the building. We had a little bit of support from the University, thanks to Chancellor Moeser. But, mostly, it was sponsorship of one room at a time by people who bought into a dream of a very significant place, a place that teaches about things that matter. And, I think, that is something I would say about the entire Garden: It is a place where we teach about nature and the environment and plants and life—things that matter. We try to always be aware of that in our teaching.

One gift that was particularly significant came from Eleanor Smith Pegg. Some of you have heard this story. I asked Eleanor, then 94, if she would make a contribution to the building. She said, “Well, I don’t have much cash, but I do have some land. I have one particularly troublesome piece of land in Chatham County.” Not to expand on the story too much, it turned out that the 80-acre parcel she was prepared to donate was of great interest to the conservation community. It had mature hardwoods and had been proposed as a potential site for a state park. But, we really couldn’t turn real estate into
money, so what was I to do? I remember thinking, “Oh my!” I had a recurring dream in which I was standing on the 15-501 bridge over the Haw River, and there were people coming from the south saying, “No, you mustn’t sell the land,” and people from Chapel Hill saying, “We really need the money”—for what later became the Eleanor Smith Pegg Exhibit Hall. So, thanks to many people from the area— the Triangle Land Conservancy, Haw River Assembly, the Clean Water Fund, and, particularly, Gary Phillips, a mediator and conservationist who is good at helping people find common ground—we were able to come up with a way to actually have the Garden receive the cash; the state receive the land; and the Triangle Land Conservancy take charge of the deal. This all took two years, with several twists and turns that nearly ran it off the rails. But, for me, the project combined my work in conservation and my work in fundraising, and allowed me to be part of something that was very significant. The land is now part of the State Parks system and provides hikers, canoeists and kayakers access to the Haw River. If you are going paddling, the access point is located at the northwest end of the bridge, on 15-501. I would put that land acquisition and transaction very high on my list of accomplishments in behalf of the Garden— right up there with my work with New Hope Audubon, our phone list and persistent efforts to get people to attend the hearings concerning the proposed Laurel Hill Parkway and speak out in defense of Mason Farm.

There have been other land acquisitions that I have been involved with, most related to conservation, but a few having to do with fundraising and development. We saw what we could do with more money, more staff, and better facilities to extend our reach. And that is why I have stayed in this position for a long time. This marks my 42nd year at the Garden. It is a bit of a calling, for most people who work here. I hope it will always be so. Working at the Garden has allowed me to use my background in biology, botany, education, interpretation, horticulture, and conservation. What better place than the North Carolina Botanical Garden to spend your career!

INTERVIEWER: Wonderful! Can you describe some of the traditions here at the Garden that you really cherish and you hope will continue?

CHARLOTTE: There are a few. It is hard to think through some of those. I think one of them is the upcoming Holiday Party. The Garden has a long tradition of potlucks, because when you have very little budget, when you don’t know how many people are coming, it’s good to say, “Bring something along.” So, at our Holiday Party for our members, we supply Nancy Easterling’s wonderful punch and hot cider that is so fragrant, and we have a tree and the decorations. People bring cherished recipes, those things that we don’t cook all year long, things we rarely bake. People bring them and share them. I think it is the spirit of sharing and, of course, the food is good, as well. We still have recipes from people like Jean Stewart, our first volunteer, who was the main organizer for my plant rescue team and who volunteered in many other ways. We still make her chocolate-covered
cranberries—Jim Ward brings those. We warn the children that they are not terribly sweet, but they are so good, and people gradually come to appreciate them. So, that is one tradition: the Botanical Garden Foundation members’ Holiday Party. That spirit of potluck wraps everyone in. There is enough for everyone, if we all bring something to share.

A little bit of that same spirit is evident at the Plant Sale party, a very relaxed occasion that I’m involved with. I hope this tradition continues, because it brings people out. They get to dress in comfortable clothes, eat simple food, talk about plants, buy native plants, enjoy the music, and help the Garden. That is a wonderful combination. It’s not terribly expensive, and it brings people out to do things that are related to our mission.

Another fun tradition that I like, one organized by the Education Department, is Magic in the Garden—known one year as Wonderfest. Children come to the Garden dressed up as their fantasy creature. They can be a wizard, a fairy—anything “magical” that they want to be. To me it is reminiscent of druidic traditions and the idea that children are little bright spirits, something you hear about while traveling in Europe. To see these little “fairy-children” running around the Garden is a wonderful thing! I think it’s fun! People are impressionable at certain ages and we get to deal with a lot of these young children when they come to the Garden for programs or events. Later, they may become very sophisticated and not come here as often when they are teenagers. But, let me tell you, they come back. We sometimes find them in the Herb Cottage. I remember finding one of them there, a boy I had known from middle school, over in Raleigh. Someone pointed to the Herb Cottage and said, “There is a man sitting in there coloring with crayons!” Well, he was a college student. And he said, “Hello Mrs. Roe, I am nurturing my inner child.” He proceeded to tell me that he was studying political science and might run for governor some day, but, for now, he was enjoying the Herb Garden and coloring pictures that Nancy Easterling had put out for children. I don’t think he wanted to wear the fairy wings around the Garden. But, of all the things we do, that is one thing I would like to revisit and bring back: the fairy wings in the Garden. To watch those little children fluttering, in earnest, around the garden was a wonderful thing. I think those kinds of experiences can leave a deep and indelible impression on a child.

The college years also matter. Soon after Director Damon Waitt arrived at the Garden, he asked, “Why are we spending so much time raising money for interns?” Well, internships matter. Interns are the next generation for our profession. Often, if you have a paid job, you get to stay here and work in a way that might work better for your family than if you did not have a paid job. So, internships help the Garden; for the Garden, they are a very good value for the money. For students, that first paid experience serves as an opportunity to try out a career, whether it is horticultural therapy, working at Coker Arboretum, on the trails, in conservation, in the greenhouse—any number of areas. You would
have to hold me back to keep me from raising money for interns, because I think of the number of students here who are given a great deal of responsibility and handle it well. We have some staff members who started out as interns here or at other institutions, got their foot in the door, and soon realized, “This is what I want to do with my life!” So, I think that that is part of it.

INTERVIEWER: Imagine that you have a North Carolina native returning to the area who wants to make a sizable contribution to the community and is considering the Garden. If you could take that person on a tour of various parts of the Garden, what would you emphasize, how would you gain their interest and convince them that they should contribute to the Garden?

CHARLOTTE: Well, I would try to get them out in the Garden and take them for a visit to Coker Arboretum and Mason Farm. There are some people who are impatient with stories, but others let you know that there will come a time when they may be ready for the stories. They may be interested in why we do what we do. I would try to get across that we are “a garden that matters.” We offer education in a way that is different. We do things here in a special way.

It’s hard to make people aware that their actions matter in a much larger context. It’s not to say that gardens shouldn’t ever be focal backdrops. By that I mean, it’s lovely that you can have a wedding in the Garden, but the Garden should be about more than parties and weddings. It should be about the larger context of the environment and the cultural context: the way that plants matter in people’s lives. So, those are the types of things—and with specific stories, I think that sometimes people become interested in a way that they were not before.

For example, when I walk people around, I take them down to the established Garden areas and down to the Paul Green Cabin. Many people are aware of Paul Green’s contributions within the community and his winning of the Pulitzer Prize and his artistic contributions, but what they often don’t realize is that this was a man who invited people of other races into his home, through the front door, when that was not socially acceptable and could get your house burned down, in a southern community. People don’t like to think about that these days. But knowing about the times tells me that Paul Green was a man ahead of his time, and he was very brave. I heard someone recently refer to an artifact we have as “Paul Green’s cradle.” No, it is not Paul Green’s cradle. It is a cradle that belonged to the Davis family, the African-American family that built the cabin, and later sold the cabin to Mr. Green to use as a writer’s retreat. It helps for people to understand how these things fit together. The cradle was given to the Garden as a gesture of respect and affection. It was brought by the people who would have inherited it, but perhaps they thought that Paul Green was not only a friend of the Garden, but a friend of people of all backgrounds, in North Carolina. Paul Green was interested in their plant traditions and cultural traditions. He wrote about these things and he used them in his work. That’s why accepting the Paul Green Cabin was the right decision for this Garden. Also, it’s why he matters.
in a context far beyond his artistic contributions and how he ties in with the plants. I love to tell visitors the story of how different concoctions were used. Of course, they were often tinctures in grain alcohol and ethanol, and, you know, babies were given a teaspoonful and the old men could dose themselves as they pleased. People enjoy hearing about that. It’s just that kind of folksy touch; maybe that’s the simpler time—the “Mayberry”—that touches all of us. I think, in our hearts, we yearn for a time when people connected with each other, when they shared food, they shared plants, and they shared that spirit. So, I think we can still keep part of that alive.

I think of people like Bill Friday, who would come out for North Carolina Botanical Garden events. He was a Botanical Garden member, and one of the pictures I hope we still have around here is one of Bill Friday with Barbara Stiles and Bernice Stiles Wade, the twins on Gimghoul Road, on their 90th birthday, when two benches in Battle Park were given in their honor. Dr. Friday was a person who would always be there for things he thought were important to people and to North Carolina. You might not think of him as being a founder of the Garden, but he nurtured us and supported us. He interviewed people from the Garden and he helped put the Garden out there on a larger stage.

I think that was an important contribution, just like the contributions of our founding botanists, our directors, and other people along the way—people like B. W. Wells, who talked about the “natural gardens” of North Carolina and, by doing so, helped us to see with different eyes. It is very different from going to a botany class and frantically counting the sepals and petals and the hairs on the back of such and such. To be able to look at a plant, to touch it, and to know how it was used—to connect plants to people at different ages. I think there is a very special thing that happens here at the Garden. That is why I chose to make it part of my life, and a big part of my life.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you, Charlotte, for sharing all about your background, the history of the Garden and your wealth of knowledge about the Garden.

CHARLOTTE: Thank you, Glenda.

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE LINDSEY—APRIL 7, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Today, I welcome Anne Lindsey, distinguished botanist, author, publisher, biographer, photographer, educator, and past president of the Botanical Garden Foundation. Let’s begin with the Foundation. As a past president and currently active member of the Foundation, tell us what you know of its history, its accomplishments and future plans, and also its relationship with the Garden.

ANNE: That’s a broad topic. So let me start by saying that my initial experience with the Garden itself was really a fusion of the Foundation and the Garden activity in the early years. I came to the
UNC Botany Department when the Garden was part of that Department, in 1972. Only a few years earlier, in 1966, the Botanical Garden Foundation was incorporated, with a pretty impressive list of folks from across the state. The Garden was envisioned by Bill Hunt and Ritchie Bell, the Garden’s first director, as a state botanic garden. The Foundation had the support of the Garden Club of North Carolina; their president, at the time, was one of the Foundation’s incorporators. Five members of the incorporators became the first directors of the Foundation. In 1966 and 1968, the first president of the Botanical Garden Foundation was Bill Hunt; he was joined by nine directors and three other officers.

From those beginnings, the Foundation started its work, which was a grassroots effort to support the Garden in its early years. The Foundation was the Garden’s only support, initially. This was a garden that had all of the promise, the “Yes, let’s do it,” but there was no money—no state money, no private money. It was a heady time, during those first ten years. It was amazing to witness, as an outsider looking in. Both the excitement and enthusiasm were contagious. There was so much going on all the time.

In the early years, we had the beginnings of an organized volunteer network that over time grew into an impressive volunteer operation. In fact, in 1975, at the dedication of the Totten Center, Ritchie had invited several premier botanists to the dedication, including Herbert Baker from UC Berkeley. Dr. Baker commented on how amazing the volunteers were, with just a hint of envy, and said he would like to be able to replicate that at the UC Berkley Botanic Garden. So, this certainly represented something of the amazing success in those early years.

At about the same time that the volunteer force was organizing, a graduate student in botany convinced Ritchie to begin teaching courses, starting with Winter Botany. The first participants braved sleet and rain to attend. They met in one of the greenhouses, which was the only place to get out of the rain, at the time. From that humble beginning, more classes were added. It was just an amazing, electric time; everyone was working to make this Garden happen.

We should talk about the Foundation at that time. The emphasis on creating a state botanic garden was Bill Hunt’s idea, and it was supported by the Foundation. The first directors represented every corner of the state. The Foundation organized an east and west membership committee, as well as an east and west gifts committee. In other words, they really worked to disseminate information about the Garden throughout the state, and encourage people to support it. In the meantime, Ritchie was trying to get funding through the state legislature, an effort that took 3 or 4 years to finally accomplish. It was the Foundation that paid Ken Moore’s salary, in 1968, when he was first hired. In support of the Garden during those first years—in reality, for the first 20 years—the Foundation hired staff to do the work of the Garden. This included hiring the first development director, in 1988.
Following Ritchie’s tenure as Garden director, the Foundation moved into a different phase. When Peter White took over, it entered a quieter period. The staffing needs of the Foundation came from the Garden staff. Charlotte Jones-Roe become the development director, and Foundation committees that had been very active during the early years, became less so, as we more or less merged with the Garden and became less of a separate presence. This period lasted about twenty years, until the completion of the Education Center, in 2009.

Following the dedication of the new Education Center, the staff was very stressed. The expansion of the Garden and opportunities offered by this spacious new facility brought new and often overwhelming responsibilities to staff, across the board. The Foundation was asked not to further burden the staff. We realized that maybe it was time for the Foundation to emerge from its cocoon-like existence and become a little more proactive. The Garden’s needs were critical. State funding for the Garden had diminished—as was true for many units of the University during this time. The need for a galvanized Foundation was evident. As part of a renewed effort to provide support to the Garden, we initiated the Carolina Moonlight Gala. At the same time, we started professionalizing the Foundation by establishing working committees, a feature normally associated with nonprofits: the Board Affairs committee, the Fundraising committee, and the finance committee. The work of these committees was a critical step in getting the Foundation turned around and refocused on providing support for the Garden’s work. I must say that I think we accomplished a lot during that five-year period. It’s unclear where we were headed from that point onward, but I would advocate for continuing that same process. In 2013, we worked with the Executive Service Corps, ESC, which is a nonprofit that advises other nonprofits so that they better understand what is required in order for them to function in a more proactive way. And I think we have come a long way towards reaching our goal. I hope that the Foundation will continue that process. The needs of the Garden are important. And it is important for the Foundation to rise to the occasion.

INTERVIEWER: We know that you were the coordinator for and an active participant in the Saving Our Pollinators exhibit and courses that went along with that. How did this come about and how long did it take to develop? Do you have any advice for future projects, similar projects? Also did you encounter any stumbling blocks along the way?

ANNE: This was an awesome project. First of all, I would like to credit Nancy Easterling and her Educational Department. The Bartram exhibit, in 2014, Following in the Bartram’s Footsteps, was a model for the Saving Our Pollinators exhibit. My part was to spearhead the inside exhibit, which opened during National Pollinator Week, in June, and continued through October. Nancy Easterling and her staff already had this amazing program in place, planned and coordinated with partners from throughout the state. It was just great.
I really felt strongly that this inside exhibit needed to be focused on our native bees, because there is such profound ignorance, really, about the importance of native bees. There was a lot of news about the plight of our bees, but most people thought this applied only to the honeybee. Certainly the honeybee is an important contributor to pollination and has well-publicized problems—colony collapse disorder being one of them—but we have 500 species of native bees in North Carolina that are also important pollinators. We needed to showcase them. The question was: How do we proceed?

I had a lot of material on the subject, due to a course on pollination that I teach at the Garden, but we needed specific native bee expertise. By a stroke of luck and a Google search for native bee research in North Carolina, I discovered that three NC State entomologists, April Hamblin, Elsa Youngsteadt, and Marguerite Lopez-Uribe, were already promoting native bees in workshops and lectures throughout the Triangle. They were excited to join the effort—and it was an incredible, synergistic collaboration.

Beginning in January of 2015, we got together, began our planning, and over the next three months honed the final content for the exhibit. While the content was being developed, I worked on accumulating photographs and illustrations for the exhibit. April, Elsa, and Marguerite provided photographs of their own, and several of their colleagues helped out, as well. We also had wonderful contributions from Garden staff and volunteers. Barbara Driscoll’s photographs were a particular treasure. I was able to find many photographs, using a site called BugGuide.net, where people submit photographs to identify. Many excellent photographers post photographs on this site and were most generous in providing photos critical to the exhibit. We ended up using the work of photographers from all over the eastern United States.

Once we had the content nailed down, we needed to work the material into the exhibit, which meant that we had to condense and cut out a lot of material. Laura Cotterman stepped in as editor, at this point. Laura and I worked back and forth through many drafts, making sure that everything we said was accurate. It was a necessary but somewhat painful process. Elsa, April, and Marguerite then double-checked all content for accuracy. Then, Gretchen Morrisey, a wonderful graphic artist who designed and oversaw the graphics for the entire Saving Our Pollinators exhibit, began working with Laura and me to finalize the panels. We had a great time getting all of those panels sorted. Elsa helped during this phase, as well. In summary, this was an excellent collaborative process, from beginning to end.

I want to recognize the importance of both Alison Savitz and Gretchen Morrisey to the success of Saving Our Pollinators. Alison is a marketing expert and was responsible for promoting all of the exhibit’s programs, as well as the exhibit itself. Alison worked closely with Gretchen, who was
responsible for the graphics work. I just can’t applaud them enough for the amazing work that they did in making both the *Following in the Bartram’s Footsteps* and *Saving Our Pollinators* exhibits a true success. The other thing I want to mention is that the name of the exhibit was Laura’s idea; BeeHold Our Humble Pollinators was her brilliant suggestion. So, there we are. Stumbling blocks? Not really. It was simply a matter of finding the right people to join in an amazing collaborative effort.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know if it is going to travel anywhere? It is an important message that needs to continue.

ANNE: The news is that Nancy has accomplished the next grant from Burt’s Bees. I failed to mention that we received support for the exhibit from Burt’s Bees. Nancy and I wrote the proposal asking for their support. Because of the success of the whole *Saving Our Pollinators* program and exhibit, they were happy to support the transfer to a traveling exhibit.

INTERVIEWER: Your creative spirit has expressed itself in filmmaking, photography, and led you into the literary world of books and publishing. You are cofounder of Laurel Hill Press, the coauthor of *Fall Color and Woodland Harvests* and *Wildflowers of North Carolina*, along with your late husband and colleague, Ritchie Bell. So what can we expect next from you? Do you have any films or books in the works? Are you headed in new directions?

ANNE: First of all, let me just say that I really loved doing the “Take a Closer Look” videos with Nancy. Laurel Hill Press started, in 1982, with the publication of *Florida Wildflowers and Roadside Plants*, followed by *Fall Color and Woodland Harvests*, in 1990, and the *Fall Color Finder*, in 1991. During the next several years, we experimented with video guides to *Wildflowers of the Eastern Forest* and *Fall Color*. They were followed by *Fire and the Longleaf* and *Plants and the Cherokee*—the “Take a Closer Look” videos.

The Laurel Hill Press publications represented a wonderful collaboration with Ritchie. It was his idea to develop a guide to trees in fall color. It was inspired by the High Hampton program on fall color offered by Garden staff at the High Hampton Inn, in Cashiers, North Carolina. Ritchie felt that fall color was a useful characteristic for identifying trees. The video productions began with *Spring, Summer, and Fall Wildflowers*, followed by separate videos on *Fall Color* and *Woodland Harvest*. We then combined them into two DVD productions: *Wildflowers of the Eastern Forests* and *Fall Color Trees*. I was sorry that we couldn’t continue with the “Take a Closer Look” series, which ended with the 2001 production of *Plants and the Cherokee*. As for the future, I have been thinking about returning to some form of outreach.
INTERVIEWER: We look forward to whatever it is. The next question has lots of parts to it. When you came into the Garden today and were reminded of your other visits here, what memories came to mind? Can you share with us any significant challenges and successes that the Garden has faced during your years of involvement? Are there traditions and values that you hope will continue, any new directions that would lead to deepening and widening the mission of the Garden? That’s a lot.

ANNE: The spirit of the Garden was born in those early, electric years. Peter White understood the importance of the spirit of the Garden and carried it through his tenure beautifully. That is the thing that I hope is cultivated and maintained, moving forward. You see it in the Garden staff. You see it in the volunteers. It is a spirit and an energy that is associated with a love for this Garden and a wish to carry the mission forward. I would like for the Foundation to be able to galvanize its efforts around the Garden’s needs and help compensate for the loss of state funding. The Foundation can spread the word and re-energize the idea that the North Carolina Botanical Garden is “the state’s botanic garden.”

In the beginning, the Garden had no infrastructure. In 1975, the Foundation built the Garden’s first true building, the Totten Center, and turned it over to the University. During those early years, the Garden and its mission was promoted across the state through the direct work of the Garden staff—lectures, workshops, field trips. Nancy Easterling has built a wonderful education program here; its offerings are known and respected by a wide audience. I would advocate for an expansion of these programs throughout the state. Perhaps, the Foundation could help with this.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think the Foundation can help with our statewide mission? We do such a wonderful job locally. How do we get our message out to the state? How do you think the Foundation can do that?

ANNE: I think we need to work to expand the Foundation’s membership so that it reflects and represents the entire state. In the beginning, our Board represented different regions within the state. It is difficult to engage Foundation directors that live outside of the Triangle, but I believe that we can overcome this problem with the aid of current technology. I am hopeful that we can resurrect our membership committee. If we can move from what is currently 3,000 members to 10,000 members, just think what effect that would have on the Garden’s income and strength of advocacy. The Foundation has the ability to help with this need—to move the message out to a larger and broader audience. The staff can only do so much. When you stop and take a closer look: Wow, the staff is doing a lot! It is just amazing. The question becomes one of getting more money into the Garden’s coffers, hiring more people, and expanding our outreach programs across the state. It all boils down to a matter of developing the resources so that we can expand the reach of our mission.
The Foundation can do more. When the Foundation essentially merged with the Garden and took a back seat, there was a loss of potential advocacy and direct contribution. If we don’t have skin in the game to make things happen, if we are sitting and waiting for others to do the work, then we are not really getting the job done. The work that needs to be done to grow the Garden is in all spheres. And to reach our potential, we all need to be pulling together.

I would like to see the same collaborative spirit maintained that was cultivated by Peter White during his tenure. I was particularly impressed with the closure of Laurel Hill Road; taking the time and effort to involve all who would be impacted. Many people were invited to participate in the design of the Education Center; everybody was heard. This project was a major accomplishment of Peter’s tenure. Like Ritchie, I was amazed by the number of courses it allowed to be offered, by the enthusiasm of the volunteers, by the work of the staff. The gardens within this Garden are looking more and more beautiful. It is magic! I would like the Foundation to help preserve and extend this magic.

INTERVIEWER: It is a magical place. Does the group have any questions for Anne?

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Is there anything that did not happen that you wished had happened?

ANNE: From the Foundation’s perspective, the work that I was doing as President of the Botanical Garden Foundation—attempting to get us galvanized and professionalized—is not complete. I worry that that’s not going to happen in a way that would be required to provide the support that the Garden needs moving forward. I would like to see that work completed. I think there is no way, really, to do that without getting some Foundation-related staffing so that the committees can work together, with someone who organizes and oversees them, to better ensure that the necessary work gets done—work that will enable us to move out in a much more energetic way.

INTERVIEWER: Any other questions for Anne? Thank you so much for your time today and for your fierce dedication to this Garden. We appreciate it so much.

INTERVIEW WITH KEN MOORE—MARCH 9, 2016

INTERVIEWER: The Garden’s early years have been described as a time of “limited resources and unlimited idealism.” How did you happened to be given the distinct honor of being the Garden’s first permanent employee? What did you, as the Garden’s superintendent, and Ritchie Bell, as the Garden’s director, determine to be the Garden’s top priorities at that time? What are some of your strongest memories from those early years?
KEN: I got the job by sheer luck. Ritchie stepped out of his office, one late spring day in 1968, and asked: “What are you doing this summer? I need someone to supervise summer work-study students.” Several days later, we went to the Garden and he showed me what is now reverently referred to as “the Green Shed,” a small storage building located in a fenced area of the Garden which was also home to an unobtrusive black snake. You couldn’t walk in. It was crammed full of all kinds of supplies and equipment. Ritchie said, “This is what you need. You have five work-study students and they will be arriving on Monday.” He was leaving the next day to teach Field Botany in Colorado. If I needed anything, I was to contact Henrietta Brant, the secretary of the Botany Department. Ritchie returned at the end of the summer pleased that the work-study students had constructed the second main nature trail, and impressed by the fact that I had managed to secure $15 for supplies from the Botany Department.

William Lanier Hunt had designed the first nature trail, in 1966. It is the one that goes straight up the hill and has had all kinds of erosion issues. You would never design a nature trail to go straight up a hill these days; you follow the contours of the land. But Billy Hunt referred to Laurel Hill as “Little Asheville.” He wanted people walking up that hill to feel as though they were in the mountains. And you do, even today, particularly if you go all the way up to the ridge and look down into the Morgan Creek valley. Wow, it’s as beautiful as anything. The second nature trail, the loop trail constructed during my first summer at the Garden, followed the contours of the land and didn’t require as much maintenance.

As a graduate student in Botany, I continued working part-time for Ritchie during the Fall and Spring Semesters of 1968 and ’69, and full-time during the following summer, all the while supervising work-study students. Ritchie found that I had as much energy as he did, and I went along with him with great gusto.

During these early years, Ritchie and I conducted numerous “plant rescues,” assembling a large collection of native plants in containers near the research greenhouses or in nursery beds in the woods near the Green Shed. Much of that area was filled with research beds, rectangular plots lined with concrete cinder blocks. One was filled with sand for Ritchie’s collection of plants from the Sandhills. The container plants became a traveling native plant garden that was exhibited at the State Fair and set up for a day or two at various regional garden shows, as well as the national annual meeting of the Men's Garden Club, in Roanoke, Virginia, in 1970. Ritchie said “yes” to every request for Garden presence at such events, in an effort to promote the struggling Botanical Garden.

Legend has it that one of Ritchie’s main assignments, after being hired as a Professor of Botany, was to develop the Botanical Garden for the University. At that time, it was somewhat unstated, but supposedly understood, that Ritchie was to accomplish this task without asking the University for

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financial support. Fortunately, Richie was an opportunist, and I fell right in line with that kind of thinking.

The Garden’s first budget was provided by the State Legislature, in the summer of 1971, the result of a direct public “postcard” appeal to the Legislature from friends of the Garden. It stemmed from the University’s refusal to include Ritchie’s request for a budget for the Garden, in the UNC Legislative Request that year. This direct "go around the University" appeal was suggested by enthusiastic participants in one of the Garden’s early wildflower classes. One of them, a retired member of the Legislature from Durham said, “Ritchie, this is horrible. We need to go directly to the Legislature.” So what did Ritchie do? We made postcards, little postcards with, I think, Venus flytraps printed on them. The typed message on the postcard read, “Please give the Botanical Garden an allocation to hire staff.” I remember sitting out by the entrance to the Nature Trails, probably with Jean Stewart, our first volunteer. People would come and go along the trail, and as they passed, we said, “Here, would you please sign this card to get us some money so that we can develop this Botanical Garden?” Each postcard was already addressed. We even had a stamp on it. All they had to do was sign it.

What I heard from Ritchie was that the people at the Legislature had never received such an outpouring of support for something that they didn’t even have in their budget request. At the end of that legislative session, when the University received their legislative allocation for the operation of the University, there was a line item of $70,000 for two years for the Botanical Garden, money the University had not asked for. Ritchie’s success in “going around them” served as a bone of contention between Ritchie and some of the University administrators for a long, long time. During that period, a clear "love–hate" relationship existed between the University and the Garden.

Ritchie had people who loved him to death. But there were some people who said, “Watch out for that son of a gun, because he is going to do what he jolly well pleases.” And, at times, Ritchie did just that. But, we got along. He would come down to the Garden and get in the dirt. Ritchie was married to the Garden, and I soon was, as well. There were times, in the future, when both of my wives would refer to the Garden as “the other woman in my life.”

It would have been helpful during these early years—and even later—if the town of Chapel Hill had offered more financial support to the Garden, but town officials made the understandable but mistaken assumption that because we were affiliated with the University, we had sufficient funding and didn’t need their assistance.

Having the funds, thanks to the “postcard” appeal, for two full-time staff people—a superintendent and an assistant—Ritchie mentioned that I would get the position of Superintendent, if it was turned down by his former graduate student David Dumond, who had supervised work-study students during
the construction of the first nature trail. David had relocated to Wilmington, North Carolina to be with his wife, who had secured a job there. Ultimately, he chose not to leave his wife and move back to Chapel Hill, but to remain in Wilmington and work as a contract botanist. Ritchie remained true to his word, and I was now, finally, in my dream job. It had come my way both as a matter of luck and being in the right place at the right time.

By the time I was hired as a member of the Garden’s staff, I had taken enough classes from Al Radford to become familiar with the concept of plant communities. Ritchie had been given a number of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers by Watts Hill, of Central Carolina Bank and Trust, who had hired Ritchie to establish a native plant garden at Quail Roost, his estate near Rougemont that was later donated to UNC as a conference center. Unbeknownst to me at that time, many of these wildflowers had been dug from the wild. I was told by Ritchie to plant them alongside the Nature Trails. But, unlike Quail Roost, the Nature Trails didn’t have an irrigation system; the “irrigation system” was Ken Moore and his work-study students. We would go down to Meeting-of-the-Waters Creek, get water out of the creek, and water the plants, all up and down the Nature Trails. We had planted hepaticas and trilliums—wildflowers of all kinds. After awhile, these wildflowers began to disappear. Little holes were left in their wake—people were digging up the wildflowers we had so carefully planted and watered! So, I said to Ritchie, “This is not working. If we are going to protect these plants, we need to plant them behind the fence. The Nature Trails will have to become Nature’s own garden, the Piedmont Garden. We don’t have the resources to create a garden on the Nature Trails.” Fortunately, Bill Hunt also supported this idea of “a garden behind the fence,” and it soon came to be.

You asked about top priorities—good question. I don't remember anything even resembling priorities and goals. There was no official master plan at the time. Efforts were directed at making improvements to the Nature Trails, seeing that the area inside the fence was attractive enough to interest the very few visitors who appeared, and keeping plants alive—remember, most of them were in pots of varying sizes.

The fenced-in portion of the Garden at that time consisted of a five-acre area that had one very modern greenhouse, a dilapidated greenhouse, and then a big plastic greenhouse that Cliff Parks used for overwintering plants for his research. It was truly a research area for Botany graduate students and staff—and very, very messy and unsightly. The students just left stuff around. When they returned to campus or graduated, we would have to clean up after them. That is what I had to contend with in those early days.

In the early 1970s, when we had five staff members in addition to myself—Charlotte Jones-Roe, Alan Johnson, Jim Ward, Rob Gardner, and Harry Phillips—the modern greenhouse served as our office. The Green Shed was a little tight for five people, and the Totten Center had yet to be built. The
greenhouse was equipped with a phone and an electric heater. We went through winters with that as our only shelter.

One of my first recollections, even before I became a full-time employee, were the notes that Ritchie left for me on the Garden’s gate. Ritchie lived right up on Sourwood Drive and would arrive at the Botany Department at 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning—at that time he was working on *Wildflowers of North Carolina*, as well as the *Manual of the Flora of the Carolinas*. Most mornings, I would come down to the Garden and find a note on the gate that Ritchie had put there, probably at 6 o’clock in the morning, sometimes earlier, sometimes later. It might say, “Ken, take the truck and go to the landfill because there are some refrigerator cartons that we could use as trays.” My supply source was the landfill—seriously! I would go and collect stuff and bring back whatever might be useful. At that time, I could crawl into the landfill and retrieve anything that we could put to good use. The town won’t let you do that now—you can’t even jump into a dumpster.

We really made use of everything, in the early years. When the Herb Sales began, we didn’t have a budget to buy little pots. So, we took a Styrofoam cup and punched a little hole in the bottom—and there you have it, a little pot! Our “dumpster diving” turned up plastic bags filled with Styrofoam cups. Many times, they would contain the leftovers of bean soup, and we simply washed them out and put them to use again. Photos of the early Herb Sales and Wildflower Sales show plants potted in little Styrofoam cups. It might have been an unprofessional and unconventional approach, but we had no choice but to be enterprising. Now we are doing everything we can to keep Styrofoam from ending up in a landfill. How things change, given time!

Other Memories:

- The first flat of cardinal flower seedlings, the beginning of our Conservation through Propagation program
- The first garden tours for school children from Binkley Preschool and third-graders from Durham, all in one week

**INTERVIEWER:** One of the many features that makes the Garden unique are its network of “habitat gardens.” The notion of “natural gardens” or "habitat gardens" was introduced, in part, by B. W. Wells, but how did this concept come to be incorporated in the Garden’s landscape so early in its development? What challenges were involved in creating the Sandhills, Coastal Plain, and Mountain Habitat Gardens?

**KEN:** The concept of habitat gardens was not a deliberate or conscious effort to plan and execute something unique. It was more the result of opportunism and a situation where I simply followed
what seemed like a logical direction, when there was no real direction prescribed. The concept behind
the establishment of our habitat gardens also goes hand in hand with a practice soon introduced and
strongly advocated by the Garden: Conservation through Propagation. It was first mentioned in an
article in Garden Trails, an early publication of the BGF that was sent to members. The article
discussed the idea of “conservation through cultivation,” the precursor to Conservation through
Propagation.

The author of this article, and someone who had a great influence on my career, was William Lanier
Hunt, an independently-wealthy “gad-about-town” who wrote a weekly garden column for fifty years,
designed landscapes for many a Chapel Hill garden, and was a friend to many people, including
Ritchie Bell and Hugh Morton—the man who developed Grandfather Mountain. It was William Hunt
who, to a large extent, rescued me from remaining closeted in the dark archives of Wilson Library,
where I had spent so much time while working on my Masters in English. [The Garden Trails article
referred to in this and the previous paragraph was written by Ritchie Bell, but based on ideas
previously presented by Bill Hunt in a paper that is among his memorabilia]

I realized, at the late age of 21, that I really wanted to spend my time outdoors, and Bill Hunt said,
“You can.” He took me under his wing; he adopted me, as he adopted many other students, helping to
launch each of us into careers all over the Southeast. It was he who introduced me to the possibility of
outdoor work in the fields of Horticulture and Botany. Even as early as 1964, before I left Chapel Hill
for the military, I remember Bill Hunt talking about Ritchie Bell and the Botanical Garden.

Two years later, in 1966, William Lanier Hunt would establish the Botanical Garden Foundation, a
tax-exempt foundation whose primary purpose was to hold land. It held land far beyond the reaches
of the Botanical Garden. For instance, I believe that they eventually transferred a portion of the
Okefenokee Swamp to the National Park Service, after it was gifted to the Foundation by Roland
Harper, who had lived there during his final years. William Hunt served as the Foundation’s first
president. During my early years at the Garden, my salary was paid by the Botanical Garden
Foundation, and, quite frankly, most of that money was donated by William Hunt.

I remember, as if yesterday, when I returned to Chapel Hill to begin my study of Botany. My Botany
and Garden mentor, William L. Hunt, placed in my hands a copy of B. W. Wells’ Natural Gardens of
North Carolina, with the comment: "If you are going to learn the plants of North Carolina, you need
to be acquainted with B. W. Wells.” That book established in my mind the notion of grouping native
plants as a collection of naturally occurring gardens. This notion was furthered by field botany classes
with Dr. A. E. Radford, who took his students to visit plant communities all over the Southeast.
Later, I began joining Ritchie Bell on plant rescue trips—most notably the ones hosted by Hugh Morton, on the slopes of Grandfather Mountain, where he was building a condominium and golf course. We dug plants from the mountain’s slopes and used an old step van to transport them to the Garden. The van had been used by the University to transport research mice, and had shelves and a little refrigeration unit that sometimes worked. The Garden inherited it from the University when they no longer wanted it, and it became the “plant rescue” van. It was amazing! Dot Wilbur was involved in many of these Grandfather Mountain rescues, along with Frank Parker.

We returned to the Garden from these rescues with an assemblage of plants. At first, having no background in horticultural landscape design, I didn’t know what to do with them, although I had learned a lot about horticulture by working with Cliff Parks and his class, and from running around with Bill Hunt. Then I thought, “These plants were rescued from ‘habitats,’ Let’s just put them back the way we found them. We dug them off the mountain, put them in the van, took them out of the van. Let’s just plant them here at the Garden in a way that replicates, as much as possible, the setting from which the plants were collected.” That was the beginning of the Mountain Habitat.

Bill Hunt mapped out the main trail through the Mountain Habitat, a little loop, and suggested that we line the trail with little evergreen wildflowers. On one side of the Mountain Habitat, we built up the soil and rocks, so it was this high off the ground. Nowadays, this area is flat, because over time everything settles. If you don’t keep building up the beds, you lose part of the original design. We returned from some of these plant rescues with big boulders—the boulders that we could move—and they remain an important landscape element in the Mountain Habitat today.

The mountain laurel section of the Mountain Habitat included big rocks, the result of many plant rescues in the Falls Lake State Park area before the steep slopes of the Neuse River were cleared, prior to the flooding of that river. Some of the mountain laurel extending from that large population remain along the lake’s edge today, below the retirement home of B. W. Wells, Rock Cliff Farm, now a part of Falls Lake State Park. It is a small world.

The same reasoning accompanied the various plant rescues from the Coastal Plain and Sandhills areas of the state. In my mind, though, there is a big problem with the location of the Habitat Gardens: they are backwards. What happened is that the first big collections of plants came from the North Carolina mountains; they are generally shade-tolerant plants, at least the spring flora. At that time, the only entrance to the Garden was what is now known as the lower gate, immediately opposite the entrance to the Nature Trails. The area surrounding the greenhouse and research beds was fully forested, and thus it was logical to place these plants from the mountains in the forest located next to what was then the entrance gate.
When we began to bring in plants from the Sandhills and Coastal Plain, plants that obviously required sunlight, it was a matter of “sneaking” trees out of the area. During this early period in the Garden’s history, the attitude of the Botany professors was that no trees were to be cut on Garden property. My dilemma, then, was how to grow sun-loving plants in a forest. Whenever Ritchie Bell was out of town for a day or two, I, with help from work-study students, cut down some of the big pine trees—and quickly got them out of sight—to provide much-needed sunlight. I remember one particular occasion when Ritchie walked through the gate and up the roadway between the Mountain and Coastal Plain Habitats and said to me, “Ken, I know you are cutting these trees down when I'm not in town.” That seemed to be his unofficial approval of what I was doing.

More dramatic was the relocation of the Herb Garden from its original square, brick-covered cinder block bed, near the corner of the old “Victorian” greenhouse, to its present site, in front of the Totten Center. Ritchie and Mercer Hubbard had agreed that that area would be the site of the new and larger Herb Garden, with the specification that no trees should be cut. My response was that the area needed to be clear cut if we were to develop an herb garden. Most herbs are sun-loving, except for the shade-tolerant woodland herbs. So, there followed several long years of big pine trees dying because of cultivation around their roots, or trees being removed because they stood in the way of planned herb beds. The history of the Herb Garden is another entire long story to tell. And the history of the present Sandhills Habitat is a rather detailed story involving special financial support from the McCoy family of Fayetteville, as a memorial to a daughter who was killed in young adulthood.

The bottom line here is that the Habitat Gardens should be comprised of a Mountain Habitat located north of the Totten Center—a slightly but significantly higher portion of land—and a Coastal Plain (Sand Hills) Habitat to its south. The Herb Garden is located where it is because the Herb Volunteers were so successful in providing funding and other support for the Herb Garden that it really got ahead of the effort to provide funding for the less popular native plant habitat gardens.

INTERVIEWER: Who are some of the people from the Garden’s first 50 years (1966-2016) who need to be remembered and recognized during this anniversary celebration? Choose a few who had a strong influence on both you and Garden. Describe their contributions to the Garden and what you consider to be their legacy.

KEN: This list is endless.

Botany Department: C. Ritchie Bell; A. E. Radford; Clifford Parks; Tom Scott; Jim Massey; and Julie Moore (my first wife, an important member of the Botany Department, and someone who trained the early Tour Guides and, alongside me, came up with the idea of the Garden of Flowering Plant Families).
Botanical Garden Foundation: William Lanier Hunt (hosted many BGF lunches and dinners, and provided substantial financial support through the Foundation, during the early years of the garden); George Stevens (donated designing and printing of the Garden’s earliest maps and interpretive materials); Hugh Morton (hosted Garden staff on several occasions during overnight plant rescues, provided statewide promotion of the Garden, and was influential with legislators); Charles Wheeler (as a vice president in the UNC General Administration, provided, on many occasions, valuable financial and administrative expertise in support of the Botanical Garden’s federal grant requests and reports); R. B. Fitch (provided design and construction of an entire Herb Cottage for use by Herb Volunteers in their first-place award in a Southern Living show); Jenny Fitch (provided inspiration for and hosted a number of special Garden events); the Wilson, NC Ladies: Linda Lamm, Teeny Stronach, Gretchen Cozart, Pat Ross; Mercer Reeves Hubbard (visionary and leader of the Herb Garden); Wilson McKerrow (10-year treasurer and financial advisor who established sound financial policies for the Botanical Garden Foundation).

North Carolina Wildflower Preservation Society: B. W. Wells; Roland Totten; Gordon Butler; Tom and Bruce Shinn; Herbert Hechenbleiker; Lionel Melvin; Elizabeth Lawrence. The Botanical Garden and the Totten Center became the "home base" for the Wildflower Society. Their 25th Anniversary (an outdoor potluck celebration held prior to the construction of the Totten Center, with B. W. Wells, Roland Totten and others present) and the 50th Anniversary (a potluck inside the Totten Center) were both held at the Botanical Garden.

Other: Lytton Musselman (Ritchie Bell’s graduate student who suggested that we teach classes, which, in 1970, spawned such offerings as Winter Botany and Spring Wildflowers. Other classes soon followed, together with field trips and Habitat Hikes, much-loved walks in the woods); George Pyne (Durham architect and prominent wildflower photographer, who was a primary supporter of the Eno River Association and the North Carolina Botanical Garden); Jean Stewart (one of the first participants in garden classes and tours, who then became the first garden volunteer, leading wildflower walks for adults and, on top of that, being a primary plant rescue volunteer); Mary Garren (manager of the University’s Work-Study program, who looked out for providing the Garden with students for years and years); Larry Trammel (Superintendent of UNC Buildings and Grounds, who provided significant logistical support for many years and purchased the first heavy-duty garden tractor from extra funds in his department).

INTERVIEWER: As a university-affiliated botanical garden, one of our most important roles is to educate—to open eyes, increase awareness, encourage action that will make the world a better place. What programs at the Garden did you help develop, support, or become actively involved in, to
encourage the use of native plants in home landscapes and raise awareness of an interest in the need for native plant conservation?

Plant Rescues: Plant rescues provided a primary source for plants when there was no budget for such. There were countless plant rescues, beginning with Ritchie Bell going out on his own, my joining Ritchie on several planned rescues in the early morning, before his afternoon botany labs, and many overnight excursions with three or more staff, work-study students, and volunteers. Some of these were true adventures that make good stories in and of themselves.

Volunteer Program: The Garden was in the forefront when it came to the use of volunteers. Hospitals and libraries may have had volunteer programs at that time, but the use of volunteers on the grounds of botanical and zoological gardens was uncommon or not widely known. We started volunteerism. I first learned about it on my first honeymoon, when I dragged my first wife, Julie, to D.C. to study at the National Herbarium—I was working on my research project in Botany. We met people at the National Arboretum who told us about the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta, and we soon became members.

In 1972, I believe, Julie and I attended our first AABGA conference. It was held in either Chicago or Milwaukee, and was a joint meeting with the American Horticultural Society. One of the many people I spoke with at the conference was Catherine Bradley of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, another native plant garden. Naturally, we had a lot to talk about. When Catherine began describing all of the programs at her garden, I asked about the size of her staff, and she answered, “Two and a half: a part-time secretary and a superintendent.” Surprised, I asked, “How do you do all of that, with so few staff?” And her answer was simple, but clear: “We use our volunteers,” leading me to ask, “What’s a volunteer?” Catherine then proceeded to tell me about the important role volunteers played at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.

When I returned from the conference, I went right up to Ritchie’s office and announced, “We need to develop a volunteer program,” to which he replied, “What’s a volunteer?” At that time, Jean Stewart, inspired by Ritchie and Lytton Musselman’s wildflower walks, had already been offering to lead walks in the woods. But, once we established an official volunteer program, the number of volunteers grew larger and larger. Quite frankly, it evolved very differently than I originally thought it would; it had its own life about it, which was great. I believe that no other garden or museum in the area had an active volunteer program at that time. We set the standard for the use of volunteers to support our work and mission.

Labor Day Open House: The first Labor Day Open House took place in 1971, the year I became Garden Superintendent. The number of days the Open House spanned varied over time. It began as a
three-day event, was scaled down to two days, and eventually to just one. It began as an effort to encourage public visitation: to help the public become aware of the struggling Botanical Garden and see amazing wildflowers such as fringed orchids, along with an interesting collection of other native plants in containers—particularly carnivorous plants. Labor Day was selected for the purpose of attracting folks who were looking for something of interest to do, but who did not have the time and/or resources to enjoy the big end-of-summer holiday in some other fashion.

The Open House was a huge effort. It took staff members a full three months—the entire summer—to nail down the logistics and coordinate things among all the people and groups that were involved in the event. Every year, we rotated the responsibility of specific planning among the curators. We had a few volunteers. A group of women we called “the Fern Ladies” were very helpful at these open houses. Pauline Buckner was one of them; Reb Lappi was another. Roy Underhill helped out in the early years—1972 or 1973. He had just graduated, along with Frank Parker, from what is now called Duke’s Nicholas School of the Environment, and was just getting into the craft of woodworking. That first three-day event was sparsely attended, but it did begin to get the word out among the community about the Garden.

Succeeding Labor Day Open Houses are now legend. They continued for over fifteen years and became too heavily attended (3,000 visitors!) for Garden facilities, staff, and volunteers to safely execute. Even though we paid for shuttle services from parking lots on Manning Drive and Highway 54—near what is now the Friday Center—to curtail dangerous parking along the NC-54 bypass, visitors continued to park close to the Garden rather than use this shuttle service. We had to hire an off-duty policeman to manage traffic and assist pedestrians in crossing the bypass. Even so, the potential for a serious accident involving a vehicle and pedestrian was real.

The Open House had definitely served its original goal: to encourage the public to get to know about the Garden. The word was now out, and the Garden had made "lots of friends" by hosting a forum for many conservation organizations and providing activities for kids, music and dancing for all, and free apple cider and watermelon giveaways. Charlotte and other staff members silk-screened T-shirts—this was before the days of T-shirts printed with various designs. Finally, though, it was clear that this annual Garden event had simply become too large to handle.

One day, Peter announced to the Botany Department that we were no longer going to have the Open House. Some members of the department couldn’t imagine this and expressed how much they looked forward to it every year. So, for three successive years, we held an unofficial, scaled-down Open House, with all of the staff in attendance. We welcomed everyone who came, served cider, and explained why this grand tradition had finally been forced to come to an end. It required three successive years of Labor Days to finally end this "too large to handle" annual public event.
Teacher Education: The Garden was also among the first natural science institutions in the area to offer classes to teachers. In the early 70s, Ritchie Bell, Julie Moore, and I taught extension classes in Wilson and Wilmington. Not long after, the NC Museum of Natural Sciences said, “We want to teach. Give us some pointers.” We had nowhere near the money and resources of the Museum of Natural Sciences. They had substantial grants to implement their teacher training classes; we didn’t. But, once again, we had set the standard.

Conservation Through Propagation: Lots of lessons were learned during the Garden’s early years. One of them confirmed the wisdom behind our belief in Conservation through Propagation.

One day, during those early years, a man appeared at the Green Shed who had been told about us from someone at the Botanical Gardens at Asheville. The back of his pickup truck was loaded with burlap bags filled with, among other things, bare-rooted pink lady slippers. He said, “The folks in Asheville told me that you folks here were good people, so I wanted you to have a first chance at these.” I can’t recall whether we purchased them, whether they were cheap enough that Ritchie just paid for them, or whether he just outright gave them to us, but, in any case, we now had several hundred bags of lady slippers. I knew that lady slippers were hard to grow, but naively believed that we could find a way. Hah! We planted them carefully in the piney woods, right near the entrance to the Nature Trails. We watered them with buckets of water. The next year, they came up, and a few of them were blooming! Ah, how exciting! Three years later, there was nothing. What did we learn? That some plants simply do not transplant well, and are next to impossible to propagate.

One August, soon after, I was driving the Garden’s pickup truck around the Mason Farm loop and passed a wet ditch. I saw a brilliant red flower! “What is that?” I asked myself. I keyed it out and learned that it was a cardinal flower. A bit later, I went back to that spot and collected some seed capsules. Back at the Garden, I sprinkled some seeds into a flat filled with potting mix, and they appeared to germinate overnight, like petunias. It was at this point in my thinking that Bill Hunt’s notion of “conservation through cultivation” evolved into a practice and process fundamental to the Garden: Conservation through Propagation. This program essentially evolved simultaneously with another related Garden program, Wildflower of the Year.

In the mid- to late-1970s to early 1980s, Harry Phillips took the Conservation through Propagation show on the road; he became the primary spokesperson for the Garden. Charlotte gave talks, as well. Many times, I joined Harry, as he gave programs on this approach to plant conservation. We actually snuck into the Gardens of the Blue Ridge and took pictures to prove that they were digging from the wild. When we presented our findings at a meeting attended by garden directors from all over the U.S. and Canada, they were shocked. Our message: Know the source of your plants. One director
from a Canadian garden confessed that he had just purchased $500 worth of trilliums from Gardens of the Blue Ridge and added, “We won’t to that again.”

Garden staff began offering programs for garden clubs, civic groups, state meetings of garden clubs, as well as giving lectures and presentations at other botanical institutions. A good example of this was our presentation at the Wildflower Symposium at Callaway Gardens, in Pine Mountain, Georgia. Our "Conservation through Propagation" presentations were often followed by planned giveaways—notably, hundreds of 3-inch pots of cardinal flower. It was deemed a smart idea to hand people attending such events a beautiful wildflower propagated from seed, after pleading with attendees not to purchase plants from nurseries that "dug from the wild.” It caused them to remember our message and take it more seriously.

And, fortunately, this approach made a difference; several keen “plants people” took up the cause, and native plant nurseries such as Niche Gardens and We-Do (North Carolina), Woodlanders (South Carolina), Native Gardens and Sunlight Gardens (Tennessee), and Virginia Natives (Virginia) were soon up and running, providing a source of nursery-propagated native plants and a true alternative to native plants dug from the wild. Garden writers across the nation began ending their columns about native plants with the words, “… make certain the nurseries you use are propagating the plants they offer.” “Conservation through Propagation” was the stated motto of at least one of these native plant nurseries.

Three Notable Garden Presentations, each of which made a national impact with the Garden’s “Conservation through Propagation” theme:

1. My presentation for students of the Longwood Gardens program demonstrated that too many current sources of native plants sold stock that was wild-collected. Showing physical evidence during the presentation of dozens of trays of seedlings—wildflower and carnivorous plants from the NCBG propagation activities—impelled students who became future botanical garden professionals. One such student was former nursery staff member Bill Brumback. Bill, as a member of the American Nursery Association, went on to extend this conservation theme throughout the country. Bill is now the Conservation Director for the New England Wildflower Society.

2. My presentation with Nancy Doubrava, graduate student of J. C. Raulston of NC State, at the annual meeting of the AABGA (American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta), in Denver Colorado, in 1980 or 1981, described to attendees the process of developing wildflower meadows and roadside gardens, and pointed out that the prominent native plant nurseries of that
time were wild-collating and not propagating. This literally shocked garden directors from U.S. and Canadian gardens.

3. The following year, at the annual meeting of the AABGA, in Atlanta, Georgia, the staff of the NCBG presented—“back by popular demand”—the Garden’s 10-minute video Saving a Tar Heel Heritage, which featured dual photos, a story line, and James Taylor’s Carolina In My Mind playing in the background. It was the capstone of the Garden’s Conservation through Propagation program; it took off like wildfire.

The Wildflower of the Year program: By the early 1980s, we had inspired at least half a dozen nurseries in the Southeast to propagate native plants and assisted them in the process of offering to the public an incredible diversity of native species. This led, in a quite natural way, to the Wildflower of the Year program. It began as a collaboration with the Garden Club of North Carolina, an organization that continues to contribute financially to this ongoing effort.

During the early years, volunteers from the local Chapel Hill Garden Club served the Garden by receiving and filling orders for thousands of requested Wildflower of the Year packets. This attempt to spread the word about native plants, far and wide, almost got out of hand during the first year: the program was described in Southern Living, and the Garden received approximately 4,000 requests for free seed from gardeners living in seventeen southeastern states. The word was definitely out! The NCBG was now recognized by many as “the garden of native plant conservation.”

Public Service Hour: I don’t recall exactly when this program began, but it was a logical program to initiate for the purpose of informing local gardeners about any and all matters concerning native plants. It also included a large dose of general horticultural advice, since that was what was most on the minds of the gardening public. This program presented yet another opportunity for both Garden staff and volunteers to describe the wisdom behind and offer advice on native plant gardening and conservation.

Weekly Public Service Native Plant Stories on UNC Radio: This 10-13-year run of three-minute scripts was written and recorded by Dot Wilbur-Brooks and became very popular with the radio audience. It, most likely, was the offspring of a series of shorter radio spots initiated by Ritchie Bell for the purpose of promoting the Garden.

Overnight “Natural Gardens of North Carolina” Bus and Van Trips: Trips to both the coastal and mountain regions of the state were initiated by Ritchie Bell and Lytton Musselman, during the very first years of the Garden. If there was anything that Ritchie could do extremely well, it was getting people excited about being in the outdoors. These group trips were continued for many years by Dot Wilbur-Brooks and myself. They were very popular with Garden volunteers and Garden members.
They required significant logistical planning and execution, and finally became too much for staff to manage, especially on top of the work and responsibility required on-site at the Garden. There are some wonderful stories that Dot and I can share about these trips.

Sculpture in the Garden: This ongoing special event was begun in 1988, as a request from Kathy Buck, my second wife, who was a student in the UNC Art Department. Faculty and students realized that many of their sculptural works on exhibit at the Durham Art Council would be much better displayed in an outdoor setting. Sadly, the UNC campus was not a safe environment for the display of outdoor art, due to the possibility of vandalism. The Garden, with its protective fencing around the Totten Center, seemed a possible venue. With support from Peter White, I made this happen—although it was not without much controversy and disapproval during the first couple of years. Happily, it continues and attracts a new and more diverse audience to the Garden—with these visitors frequently returning to the Garden for both art and plants. During the first years of Sculpture in the Garden, many visitors expressed wonder: Why had they never before known that the Garden existed? You may call this a bit more of the Ritchie Bell opportunism, if you'd like.

Tours for School Groups: The first two school tours of the Garden took place in October of 1971, during the same week. They were a preschool class from Binkley Baptist Church and a third grade class from one of the Durham public schools. I have a story about both groups that demonstrates that environmental education begins as soon as kids are encouraged to go outdoors.

The Herb Garden: In an indirect way, I do take credit for the development of the Herb Garden. This is a story of vision, frustration, opportunism, loyalty, and sheer drama that cannot be told in a few minutes.

In the 1970s, herbs were taking the country by storm. As for native plants and wildflowers, people couldn’t have cared less. Our intent was to create a garden of native plants, but Mercer Reeves Hubbard said to me, “Ken, we are not interested in wildflowers, we want to propagate herbs.” I looked at it this way: If we had an herb garden, people would visit the Garden to see the herbs, but we could say to them on their way out, “By the way, come and take a look at the wildflowers.”

Mercer Reeves Hubbard had her own volunteers, her own resources, and with her vision, their combined energy and passion, they got ahead of the Garden’s more narrow focus on native plants. For years, I struggled to keep Mercer in check, but my efforts were often futile; she was an indomitable force. I will say that the Herb Garden should remain somewhere on Garden grounds and include significant signage about traditional herbs from around the world, as well as the renewed importance of our own American native herbs. The name Mercer Reeves Hubbard must remain connected with this garden.
Horticultural Therapy: I'll offer a few possible additions to whatever has already been said about what is likely the longest-lived such program at a botanical garden. I remember coming back from an AABGA meeting in the early 1970s, impressed with how significant Horticultural Therapy was considered to be in the Philadelphia area; it was supported by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. In the mid- to late-1970s, one of the first, if not the first, grants procured by the Garden, thanks to Frank Parker and Helen Doerpenhouse, provided the first funding for the NCBG Horticultural Therapy program and allowed Judy Carrier to be hired as our first horticultural therapist.

INTERVIEWER: Looking into the future, how should the Garden go about maintaining and building upon the strong foundation you and others have helped to establish? What Garden traditions and values do you cherish? What is your hope and vision for the future?

KEN: I believe that with Damon as our first full-time director and directly involved here, on the ground, with the staff at the Garden, that the Garden is moving forward in positive ways to develop more programs and display and demonstrate gardening with native plants, along with expanding protection of more natural areas.

Here is a list of things I value and believe would benefit the Garden:

1. Presenting a friendly and welcoming face to all visitors and people who come into contact with the Garden.

2. Arranging to have two people at the Education Center Reception Desk, in order to insure that visitors are properly oriented to the Garden and that all questions are answered.

3. Nurturing a staff that is dedicated to being available at all times to serve visitors and respond to phone inquiries; public service is an essential role of all Garden staff. (Note to self: tell the story about the lady with the azalea questions, as well as Patrick McMillan’s story about visiting the Garden as a kid.)

4. Returning to having a weekly radio and newspaper presence.

5. Developing funding to send staff to regional and national meetings of professional organizations such as the American Public Garden Association, International Plant Propagators Society, and the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference. This should include all staff, not just the head curatorial staff. Each staff person who attends such a meeting will return with a new and/or renewed vision and commitment, as well as new-found knowledge that can be applied to their work at the Garden.
6. Taking the lead, as a “Conservation Garden,” in influencing good horticulture, one which promotes the use of native or regional flora in all local landscapes, including town-owned, commercially-owned, and residential landscapes. It would be great for the Garden to take the lead in persuading the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro to commit to using only local and/or regional flora for all town-owned and town-approved commercial landscapes. By taking such a step, the towns would be setting a precedent and hopefully influencing municipalities across the state.

7. Playing an active role in bringing to an end such horrible horticultural practices as the increasingly common practice of mutilating crepe myrtles and creating "mulch volcanoes" at the base of trees. Local homeowners see this horrible practice in parking lots, town offices, commercial developments, and residential communities, and think this is the way it should be done. The Garden must educate town officials, property owners, and developers, so that they understand that these practices are wrong and must be discontinued in favor of practices that benefit plants and landscapes as a whole. Otherwise, it will grow worse.

INTERVIEWER: You were instrumental in bringing the Paul Green Cabin to the Garden. Why did you see the Garden as an appropriate home for the cabin? Tell us about visiting the cabin with members of the NCBG staff, raising funds for its renovation, and moving the cabin from the Greenwood neighborhood to Laurel Hill Road.

KEN: The story of the Paul Green Cabin’s move to the Botanical Garden is one of sheer luck, opportunism, and the hard work of fundraising by members of the Botanical Garden Foundation Board and volunteers.

One day in the late 1980s, I passed Rhoda Wynn on the steps of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro YMCA. I asked how she was doing and Rhoda responded, "Oh, terrible. I think we are going to lose the Paul Green Cabin."

Rhoda had been Paul Green’s personal assistant during his last years and was, at that time, the executive director of the Paul Green Foundation, as well as a member of the Board of the YMCA. I did not know Paul Green personally, although I remember one or two occasions when he visited the Herb Garden, at the request of Mercer Hubbard. I also had heard enough about Paul Green from William Hunt to appreciate that Paul Green was indeed part of the historic fabric of the University and of Chapel Hill, and that anything about him should be preserved and honored.

Rhoda explained that Paul Green’s former home was going to be sold and that the cabin that had been his “writer’s retreat,” where he had worked on many of his writings—his plays, essays, letters— was about to be bulldozed. The University apparently had no use for it; there was no significant
endowment for its preservation. I knew nothing about the cabin, but immediately thought: “Well, the Botanical Garden is part of the University, and we could potentially use it as an orientation center at the entrance to the Garden, in front of the Totten Center.”

Our conversation was soon followed by a meeting with Rhoda at the site of the cabin. Peter White, Charlotte Jones-Roe, Dot Wilbur-Brooks, Jim Ward, myself, and, possibly, Sally Vilas inspected the cabin, and found that its roof was leaking and that the cabin itself was in serious disrepair.

Nonetheless, this meeting was followed by a serious fund-raising effort led by Rhoda and Sally—Jim Ward was the staff member working as the liaison between the Garden and this group, and will have more of the fund-raising details. In 1991, the cabin was moved to its present site, put on a higher foundation, and restored by the Todd Dickinson Restoration Company. I can't remember why the decision was made not to have it serve as an orientation center—Jim or Charlotte or Dot or Peter will have that fact. However, I believe that the choice of its location, adjacent to the Fern Collection and the Mountain Habitat, is far better than somewhere near the Cattail Gate, where it may have been situated.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHNNY RANDALL—APRIL 7, 2016

INTERVIEWER: What led you to accept a position at the Garden, in 1998?

JOHNNY: I had been in academia for ten years, and wanted to do applied research, not just teach. I had an association with the Garden dating back to the mid-’70s, due to a good friend who was a staff member here. It was a natural fit for me—and I still feel that way today. Active conservation work is who I am, so I’m always at work—I can’t get away from it. Chances are, I will follow in the footsteps of Ken Moore and remain active with the Garden, even after my retirement.

INTERVIEWER: How has the Garden’s conservation mission evolved over the course of the past 18 years?

JOHNNY: The Garden’s conservation mission has always been strong. Now, it is simply more enhanced. There is more ecological management of the Garden’s properties today, a greater effort paid to controlling invasive plants. There is also a greater use of controlled fire, where appropriate, at Mason Farm and Penny’s Bend, for example. 100 acres per year are now burned. Greater attention is now paid to rare species work. The Conservation Department’s staff has grown over the years. When I came, there was just me. We started small—with only so many hours of daylight to chop privet. We now have five staff members in the department, some paid through grants, others through state funds. Volunteers play a larger role in our work than ever before. The Green Dragons are a working volunteer group focused on controlling invasives, planting natives, and helping with prescribed fire.
INTERVIEWER: Can you explain the various land arrangements that you oversee?

JOHNNY: There are high-quality natural areas owned by the State that are managed through the University, by the Botanical Garden, and maintained in their natural state. All of these natural areas have an ‘A’ rating with the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program. Some lands that we manage are owned by the Botanical Garden Foundation, or they are conservation easements—on private or public land—that are held by the Botanical Garden Foundation. A unique example is Penny’s Bend, 84 acres with many rare plants, owned by the Army Corps of Engineers, leased by the NC Division of Water Resources, and managed by the Botanical Garden.

INTERVIEWER: What collaborative projects have you been involved with?

JOHNNY: We have collaborated with a variety of government and conservation organizations, some in an effort to establish and maintain wildlife corridors. For Seeds of Success, a Federal program, we have collected and conserved native plant seeds used in coastal restoration projects. We also received grants from and worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and have partnered with the U.S. Army, particularly at Fort Bragg, where we’ve introduced seven separate rare plant species. We advise and support the Botanical Garden Foundation, a land trust focused on conservation within the Chapel Hill area. The Triangle Land Conservancy is able to do things on a much broader scale, of course, both in terms of acquiring land and holding conservation easements. We exchange ideas and resources with Triangle Land Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy in North Carolina.

INTERVIEWER: Looking back, what do you consider to be some of your major achievements as Director of Conservation?

JOHNNY: First and foremost, building up the Conservation Department, enlarging its staff from one full-time employee to five. This includes an in-house fire crew. I am fortunate to be surrounded by smart, opinionated people who work very well together. Also, raising funds for the addition of six acres to the Stillhouse Bottom Preserve. Our hope is to eventually create a 100-acre nature preserve.

The addition of the Parker Property to Mason Farm was a big step forward. This effort took at least 16 years. The NCBG now is responsible for the administration of this land, an addition of 125 acres to the Mason Farm Biological Reserve. We continue to work with other property owners whose land abuts Mason Farm, in hopes of expanding the boundaries of Mason Farm. These lands will provide an important wildlife corridor, connecting State Game Lands to the south with Morgan Creek easements.

INTERVIEWER: Who do you consider to be among the people from the Garden’s past whose contributions to the NCBG need to be acknowledged and remembered?
JOHNNY: Rob Gardner: Rob was inspirational, had both a good sense of humor and a true vision for landscape design. Janie Bryan: Janie was another dedicated and inspirational staff member; she developed the Seed Program. Alan Johnson: Alan was the “go-to” person if something needed to be done; he was great to have at the Garden. Ken Moore: Ken was “our spiritual advisor.” And, Francis Allen: Francis worked in the Business Department and was critical to staff morale; she had a knack for having the best interest of the staff at heart.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any humorous stories that you’d like to share?

JOHNNY: I can’t share them! But, I will say that the staff shares humor and experience like good friends. The staff works so well together. Laughter is commonly heard. No one takes themselves too seriously. I have always felt that I was working among friends. I can truly say that I enjoy coming to work each day.

INTERVIEWER: What is your vision for the future?

JOHNNY: Generally speaking, I would like to be able to fulfill the Garden’s wish list, in terms of facilities, land, staff, and resources, so that we can do what needs to be done. More specifically, I would like to see the Herbarium become the premier center for the study of biodiversity in the southeastern United States. The Herbarium project has good momentum at the moment. It would become the new home for the Conservation Department. Needless to say, I would like to protect more land adjacent to Mason Farm, to link it with other natural areas. And, lastly, I would like the Garden to retain a clear mission and keep moving forward, in order to maintain the respect of fellow conservation groups.

INTERVIEWER: Are there other new adventures on the horizon?

JOHNNY: Just business as usual. But no two days are the same; there are always new challenges.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: You are the staff person most associated with Darwin Day. How did this Garden tradition come about—one that needs to be continued?

JOHNNY: Darwin Day at the Garden is now 12 years old—it was started in 2004. I wanted to have a speaker come to the Garden and talk about Darwin’s contributions to natural history, and learned that there was already an international organization promoting Darwin Day. Evolution is a fact, not a theory.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Can you elaborate on the Milkweed Project?

JOHNNY: The Milkweed Project was founded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is a two-year project whose purpose is to increase habitat for the Monarch butterfly. The key is to establish large
patches of milkweed throughout the Monarch’s range. Thousands of milkweed plants are given away, with specific planting instructions, to partners of the program—organizations identified by the USFWS. Many are planted along highways, at welcome centers and rest areas. The Department of Transportation (DOT) consults with the NCBG; they are aware of plants that are essential to pollinators.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: What are the various seed projects the Garden is involved with?

JOHNNY: One is Seeds of Success. Seeds of Success is a federally-funded reintroduction and restoration project, within the Department of the Interior, that is managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Its purpose is to collect seeds that can be used on federal lands that have been damaged by natural or man-made causes. Because most BLM lands are in the West, Seeds of Success has a longer history in the western half of the country. It is currently being piloted in the East, due largely to the tremendous damage resulting from Hurricane Sandy in areas of the Outer Coastal Plain, and is a collaboration among three gardens: the New England Wildflower Society, the New York Botanical Garden, and the NCBG. Four interns, for two years, will collect and clean seeds. They scope out plants in the spring and collect in the fall. The goal is to collect 3.5 million seeds in that 2-year time period. The halfway point was reached in April of 2016.

Another involves our partnership with the Center for Plant Conservation. We became a founding member of this organization, in 1985. Together with 45 member gardens, we collect seeds of the most imperiled plants. The NCBG currently holds the seeds of 42 species. We must follow restrictive protocols while collecting seeds from imperiled plants, in order to conserve wild populations.

The Horticultural Seed Program was formerly overseen by Janie Bryan. It is currently headed by Heather Summer. The purpose of the Seed Program is to provide seeds of native plants to plant enthusiasts. Seeds are collected, cleaned, packaged, and distributed to gardeners. Heather prepares the annual Seed List and the packets of seeds. She also provides seed for in-house propagation, as well as special requests from conservation organizations.

QUESTION FROM THE AUDIENCE: Can you tell us about the award that was received by Andy Walker, during his time at the Garden?

JOHNNY: Andy won the first-ever Collectors Award from the Bureau of Land Management. It was for his work—and that of NCBG interns— on the Millennium Seed Project, which was started by Kew Gardens. The goal of the Millennium Seed Project was to collect 10% of the world’s plant seeds and store them in a seed bank at Kew. When Kew asked for seeds from North America, the Bureau of
Land Management stepped in, initiated the Seeds of Success Program, and asked that seeds collected in the United States be kept here.

INTERVIEW WITH DAMON WAITT—JANUARY 12, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Welcome back to the continuation of the North Carolina Botanical Garden’s oral history series. I am Glenda Jones, a volunteer at the Garden. Our guest today is Dr. Damon Waitt, who was the former senior director and botanist at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, and since April of this year, the Director of the North Carolina Botanical Garden. I am very pleased to be speaking with you today, Damon

DAMON: Glad to be here.

INTERVIEWER: Most of the people we have interviewed for this series came in on the ground floor and played key roles in developing the Garden, but you are a newcomer. Can you give us an outsider’s perspective of the Garden and its influence on the wider world?

DAMON: Oh, definitely. Even though I am a newcomer, having been here for only nine months, I have known about the North Carolina Botanical Garden throughout the course of my career, especially in the area of working with Johnny Randall and plant conservation. I attended some meetings at the North Carolina Botanical Garden—I think it was over 10 years ago. Even more recently, before I came here, the Center for Plant Conservation hosted a meeting here. So, I have been aware of the Botanical Garden for a long time and have always felt that the Wildflower Center and North Carolina Botanical Garden were kindred souls. They have many of the same kinds of programs and activities.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you decide to accept the position here, as we look into the future?

DAMON: There are several things about the NCBG that really appealed to me. One of the biggest things was the way it embraced its university affiliation. I have a real career interest in trying to increase botanical capacity in the United States. By that, I mean professionals who are trained in botanical disciplines and exposing students to such disciplines and programs. So, university affiliation is very important to me. The history of the Botanical Garden and the history of the University of North Carolina are so intertwined; that was a big draw.

INTERVIEWER: The most important draw, you think?

DAMON: I think it was that, and the fact that this was a conservation garden and a native plant-focused botanical garden—at least at the main garden. All of those things combined were the main draw.
INTERVIEWER: The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is one of the country’s most credible research institutions and also an effective advocate for native plants. So, its mission appears to be very much in common with ours. What similarities do the gardens share?

DAMON: They share similarities all the way across the board, especially when I look at the programs at the Wildflower Center and compare them to the programs within our Education and Conservation departments, for example. It is not within the usual operations of botanic gardens across the United States to have a department focused on conservation. That is amazing. Those were two similarities. With the UNC Herbarium being part of this Garden, the NCBG is stronger in the research arena. The kind of work that Dr. Alan Weakley is doing adds a much greater academic component to the botanical research here. Lots of similarities. There’s a bit of difference in how the two gardens originated, which I think is interesting. Lady Bird Johnson was a national figure, and the Wildflower Center is her legacy project. Whereas, UNC’s garden originated out of academia, out of the University of North Carolina. So, the scope, in terms of their origin, is a little bit different. But I will say that the Wildflower Center has not quite fully realized its national potential, given its origin.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it will become more research focused?

DAMON: I think it will probably continue to be more of a public service, general public wildflower information kind of organization.

INTERVIEWER: What initiatives at the Lady Bird Johnson Center, as well as programs and practices at that garden, were helpful in advancing its mission, and can you see any of those being adopted and cultivated here?

DAMON: Definitely. In fact, some already are. For example, the North Carolina Botanical Garden has just started teaching Landscape for Life, an offspring of the Sustainable SITES Initiative, which came out of the Wildflower Center. It embraces and promotes the idea of gardening sustainably, whether you are talking about soil management or plant selection or the kinds of materials you use for your hardscapes. That’s a direct transfer from the Wildflower Center to the North Carolina Botanical Garden. Another initiative I’d like to transfer—and I think I can help with—is a technology transfer. As we look to the future, we know that people are increasingly going to rely on technology for information. They already do. What kind of resources can this botanic garden provide for members of the public who may or may not come to the Garden, people who might be living in the southeastern United States and are looking for information about native plants or native plant gardening?

INTERVIEWER: We have a real link there, along with the Herbarium, for that kind of information.
DAMON: We do. We are sitting on oodles of content that is, right now, sort of, refined for an academic audience. Also, very big floras that we could easily translate to the public in the form of apps. This, actually, is something that has been done already. Websites and things like that.

INTERVIEWER: So, you would like to see that expanded?

DAMON: I would. It is a way of expanding our reach to a much broader audience and, in the process, finding new converts to our cause and our conservation mission.

INTERVIEWER: You touched on this somewhat, but what are some success stories from your past professional experience that can serve as models for us?

DAMON: Definitely the Native Plant Information Network, which would be the Wildflower Center’s equivalent to what I just talked about. Citizen Science is something that we did quite a bit with at the Wildflower Center. The idea is that we can’t employ all the botanists in the world here, but we can use the few botanists we have, and then leverage their expertise by training citizens to go out with boots on the ground and eyes in the field for scientific research and public participation in scientific research. Public participation in scientific research is really on the upswing these days. When you look at the Audubon Society’s Christmas Bird Count, which has been going on forever, more and more researchers are finding ways to engage citizens in research. I think that is a good direction for us to head in.

INTERVIEWER: Can you talk a little bit more about what Citizen Scientists did at the Wildflower Center?

DAMON: In that particular case, we used them in a program called Invaders of Texas, which was a statewide program to detect and report invasive plant species. Over time, we did workshops and trained, basically, the entire state of Texas—which is like trying to train a small country—to go out with their cameras and GPS units and report back to a central database the occurrence of some really bad invasive species. We were able to build a knowledge base of the distribution of invasive species in the state, something that didn’t exist before. This, in turn, informed land management professionals who would go and do something about it. Boots on the ground: very effective.

INTERVIEWER: One point you made in your recent presentation to Garden volunteers was the uniqueness of the Garden due to its affiliation with the University. Can you tell us about this—the combination of the university-affiliated garden with the conservation mission? Can you expand on this as something at the real heart of our identity or, in marketing terms, the heart of our brand?

DAMON: Definitely. This is what makes us unique. You like a marketing brand to say that you are unique in some way, I think. I did the calculations. If you look at the 500+ botanic gardens across the
United States, about 13% are university-affiliated. And if you look at those same 500 botanic gardens, about 9 or 10%, I think, have a conservation focus or are native plant gardens, in some way. So, when you actually look at the odds of having a university-affiliated conservation-focused botanic garden, it’s like winning the lottery that everyone is buying tickets for. So, it is a very small percent. That makes us very unique, very mission driven. But, at the same time, we wear this mantle of academic credibility that would lead most botanic gardens to say, “Whoa, we wish we had that kind of stature in the botanical and academic world—both at the same time!” If you can’t market and brand that, what can you do?

INTERVIEWER: What do you think are the challenges, then, in our marketing?

DAMON: Well, you know, the challenges are much the same just about everywhere. There are resource challenges in trying to accomplish a such a goal, even when you’ve got the greatest programs in the world—which we do. I looked across the board programatically at the volunteer program and the educational programs, and they are spot-on excellent. But then, at the same time, you have to upkeep the facilities. And, in this case, it is not just one facility; it is nine different facilities and 1,000 acres of conservation land. So, you know, there is quite a bit on that side of the Botanical Garden, as well.

INTERVIEWER: So, financial resources?

DAMON: Financial resources, human resources. You know, all of those kinds of resources.

INTERVIEWER: Do you anticipate a need for directing more resources towards marketing?

DAMON: I would love to. I feel like our story is being told, but not being told broadly or in a compelling enough way, one which would generate a positive feedback loop to bring those resources back into the Garden. In fact, we are working on a marketing rebranding effort—a team effort—with the group here at the Garden and some professionals from outside the Garden. Our intent is to try and give the Garden a new look and feel that might be a little more contemporary. Why? In part, because we want to continue the transition of reaching out to families, to younger people. There is a large public out there that is interested in sustainability and conservation issues, an audience we are not tapping into quite yet.

INTERVIEWER: Particularly in this area, if we can expand it statewide, that would be good.

DAMON: You mention statewide. I have heard a lot of talk about the North Carolina Botanical Garden as “the State’s botanical garden.” You don’t see that anywhere in our marketing. It is not our tag line: We are not seen as the State’s botanical garden, but we could be. It could be inferred from
our logo—there are any number of things that we could do. Sometimes, it’s about perception and how people perceive you, and that’s controlled by how you market and brand yourself.

INTERVIEWER: Soon after you assumed the directorship here, you addressed the staff and made the statement that you do not have plans to merely lead Garden to the next level, but as you see it, your role is to lead it beyond the next level. Could you expand on that?

DAMON: Yes, the next level is making sure that the place runs right. The next level involves preparing procedures and protocols and policies that have to do with the management of the Garden: how staff are organized and things like. And that—the logistics, the management of the Garden—is not very interesting. What we really want to be focusing on in year two—which is coming up—is the leadership of the Garden: How is this Garden going to continue to distinguish itself from other botanic gardens, to put us out there on the edge of that envelope of what it means to be a botanic garden in the 21st century? And it goes well beyond just having a beautiful display garden and native plant gardens—things like that. It is about changing the way the public and people think about plants, and how they use them and how they interact with them. I don’t plan to have the answer to that. You know: the pill that everyone takes. But, I think, with the leadership team here at this botanic garden, we can figure that out together.

INTERVIEWER: At the volunteer appreciation event . . .

DAMON: What else did I say at that event?

INTERVIEWER: Your quotes are coming back to you. You mentioned that you wanted to build botanic capacity locally, regionally and nationally. Can you expand on that?

DAMON: Botanical capacity is defined as the botanical resources of the nation. That could be anything from herbaria to faculty in botany departments, programs in botany, botanical garden resources—just a broad description. And what we have been seeing is a decline in botanical capacity in the United States, over the last 15-20 years. It’s best exemplified by universities who have dropped their botany programs. I think about half of them have cut such programs and reorganized around other biological themes. As a result, what we see is, for example, federal agencies that don’t have botanists to go out and do the work needed in national parks, or do ecological assessments—basically having someone who can go there and, if they don’t know what a plant is, figure out what it is by using tools like floras and field guides. A lot of things are tied up in losing that botanical capacity—food security, for example, and environmental issues that plants might be the solution for. I think the botanic gardens of the country need to pick up the gauntlet that was dropped by universities and carry the torch for increasing botanical capacity. That is a long-winded way of saying that I think a university-affiliated, conservation-focused botanical garden is perfectly positioned to do that. And I
could see, down the road, that this botanic garden, through its affiliation with the university, eventually begins teaching more college classes in taxonomy and systematics and plant ecology—the list goes on. Then you start to reach that capacity.

INTERVIEWER: How are research dollars involved in that effort? Is the decline in botanical capacity because the research dollars are not there?

DAMON: Some say that might have been what caused it. In the ’70s and ’80s, there was a transition in what research dollars were going to. Increasingly, they were going to DNA, genetics, and molecular level work. So, that’s where the grant money was. As a result, a lot of university departments redesigned or reorganized themselves along those lines. Traditionally, a university might have had a botany department, and a zoology department, and a microbiology department. What they have done is to lump all of those fields together, as one, then to pull out all of the molecular biologists, and create a separate department for them. All the other biologists are in one department. When you do that, you end up with 30 zoologists and 4 botanists. So, very quickly, the botanists are overwhelmed and outvoted, and their programs tend to decline.

INTERVIEWER: What could turn that around for botany?

DAMON: I think the botanic garden world can pick that up and start to offer more formal educational opportunities—start to offer career opportunities for botanists and actually place botanists in careers outside of the botanic gardens. This is something we do, with internships and things like that.

INTERVIEWER: In the Garden’s early years, the UNC president and trustees were very active and supportive and demonstrated their confidence in the initiatives of the Garden as they were put forth. What is your understanding of the historical relationship between UNC and the Garden, and how can we build a stronger relationship with the University?

DAMON: I think it is a very strong relationship. I think what exemplifies that best is that the University is constantly coming to us for botanical help, whether it’s to help manage some land that the University has acquired—in the case of the Parker Preserve, for example. Or, more recently, expertise in initiating and developing Edible Campus UNC. Just as we value the University connection, I think they value us for our plant and botanical expertise. I think the relationship is a great one. I am amazed at how far back the history goes. I thought it started in 1903. Then I started picking up stuff from 1884. So, they really have been intertwined, since the Garden’s inception.

INTERVIEWER: What about the Texas landscape, do you have favorite plants?

DAMON: Oh, yes. Favorite plants. I’ll tell you one thing: the plants here are a lot more friendly than the plants in Texas. Every plant in Texas has a thorn or a spine or some toxic substance to survive the
climate, to survive getting eaten. It is not very friendly, but it is beautiful. Of course, the wildflowers are beautiful. I miss the openness of it, just being able to see forever. The small trees give the feeling of being in “big sky country,” something which is quickly making winter my favorite season here.

INTERVIEWER: Because you can see the sky again?

DAMON: I can see through the landscape further than in spring and summer, when I can’t see past 10 yards beyond.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have a favorite plant in Texas?

DAMON: That is a Lady Bird question: “What is your favorite wildflower?” I guess it’s probably Phlox drummondii or Drummond’s phlox, which was my dissertation plant. It’s a beautiful little Texas wildflower, in central Texas. It comes in different colors and was domesticated in the Netherlands. You can treat it kind of like a fruit fly. It was something we could cross and breed, to study the genetics pretty easily. That is probably my closest thing to a favorite plant.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any new favorites here in North Carolina?

DAMON: That’s a good question, too

INTERVIEWER: It could be more than one.

DAMON: You gotta love the Atamasco lily; it’s a very cool plant. That was one of the first ones that I was exposed to in a big way. I love Quercus alba, the white oak. It is just a spectacular tree. Each one takes on a different shape and form. I am partial to oaks, by the way. Do you like oaks? It is probably my favorite tree.

INTERVIEWER: You are in a good place for oaks.

DAMON: Definitely. Then, as far as shrubs are concerned, hearts-a’-bustin’. We had plenty of beauty-berries, so that’s nothing new to me. And all the rhododendron! In fact, I have to learn all of the different ones, still. And the carnivorous plants just blow everything out of the water, because they are so unusual and unique, with crazy shapes and forms. That is my family of favorites right now.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you for sharing your knowledge about the Lady Bird Wildflower Center and for your thoughts about our future here. Does anyone have questions that you would like to ask Damon?
MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I was wondering, there was an article several years back in *Nature* that talks about botanical capacity. Is there anything in the literature about the relationship between botanic gardens and universities regarding botanical capacity?

DAMON: It has been published in several places. In fact, I have a nice piece that this group would be interested in, one that I could share with you that looks at actual data on botanical capacity.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: You have talked about making the Garden more contemporary in its marketing message. I was wondering, what do you think that would be?

DAMON: It’s true. I think we are in a transition period, in that we need to be able to accommodate those who have not embraced technology. There are ways to do it. I like the fact that the botanic garden is not in your face with signage everywhere—lots of text on a placard. I think that with good interpretive maps, a good master plan, with designers, you can do it in a way that is elegant and fits in with the aesthetics of the Garden—to suit the audience that visits the Garden without their smartphone to scan the QR code. Publication is where you spend a lot of money. Someone starts a new exhibit and you say, “Well, we need a brochure for that exhibit,” and that’s great until that brochure runs out and you have to reprint. Someone asks, “Where is that brochure of the Nature Trails that we had from 1987?” You are probably digging these up, hundreds of old brochures and things like that. That is a hard one. I’d like to think that we eventually will be more paperless. But I think we are still going to have to accommodate this audience at some level. Maybe the way to do that is with a very comprehensive guide to the North Carolina Botanical Garden. A book for $6.95 in the Garden shop. And it is all in one place. It could be a Greenbrier project. [Laughter]

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Is one of your goals to increase visitation?

DAMON: Typically, a goal of increased visitation is tied up with increased revenue for visitation. We don’t really have that one-to-one relationship. It is a little bit more diffuse because we don’t charge admission. There’s a lot you can read about blockbuster exhibits at gardens that attract huge numbers of people. Chihuly, you’ve probably heard of—and Big Bugs. They are wonderful and serve the same purpose as our Sculpture in the Garden for bringing in lots and lots of people. They are very expensive to host. Before we do that, we have to figure out what the connection is between that increased exposure through visitation and our finances. It has to be puzzled out.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: [Unintelligible.]

DAMON: It is being done on a national level. The US Department of Agriculture has an initiative to increase botanical capacity and there is actually a group called Native Plant Advocates, which is shepherding national legislation to increase funding for botany. It is not coordinated beyond that. I
don’t belong to a group of botanic gardens who are actually collaborating and coordinating our efforts to increase botanical capacity. I know who those other people are. But that might be an opportunity. I don’t think just one garden can do that on a national level. But, by working with the Wildflower Center, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, and some of the other conservation-focused, university-affiliated gardens, we could begin a national initiative.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Would you talk about the master plan?

DAMON: Coming up shortly, in February, we have scheduled—and will need some volunteer representatives—a Master Planning 101 workshop. This is so that we can all begin to wrap our heads around the idea that we are, in fact, going to start master planning and need to understand what’s involved with that. You will get more information about what that workshop entails. It will be a 3 or 4-hour workshop in the morning of February 12. So, that is really step one. There will be stakeholders from different groups: staff, university, administrative folks, the Botanical Garden Foundation. Leading us through to a master plan is hard. We have to get everyone in the same boat together, moving in the same direction. This is the first step, the one to identify what is involved. Then the next step would be to issue a request for proposals to get a landscape design architecture firm in here that we like. We need to raise money to pay them, and then engage in an outreach of a 6- to 8- or, maybe, even a 12-month master planning process. The product of which, at this stage, would probably be a nice conceptual, design—ideas which we could then do fundraising around, to actually implement the Master Plan. I think they are looking at one or 2 years of planning, plus 2 more years of fundraising. So, we are probably looking at breaking ground on anything major in probably five years, if we are lucky and the fundraising is successful. Then, years 5 to 10 would be putting the master plan into effect.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Do you see more land being needed?

DAMON: Is there more land in our future? Is more land needed? It is definitely needed for conservation purposes, for conservation corridors, for maximizing the ability of these plants and animals that we are trying to preserve to have a good chance of survival. It is great that Johnny Randall has that all mapped out. He knows which parcels will make the most conservation sense for the Garden. And, actively, either through the Garden or through the Botanical Garden Foundation, which properties to pursue. So, yes, there is more land in our future, for conservation purposes.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I would be interested in knowing how you distinguish between a master plan and a strategic plan?

DAMON: Typically, a strategic plan is one where you set out your vision, your goals, and your objectives for the next 5 years. Then you program-plan around those and you check them off as you
accomplish them. Then you start your strategic process again. When I came in—even before I came in—I knew enough about this Garden that there was already a strategic plan in place. It had been refurbished, not too long ago. Do you remember the year, Nancy? Was it 2013? Yes. More important than that, it was clear. It was evident from the way the programs here supported the conservation focus of the Garden, the notion of our being a “conservation garden.” That does not really need to be tweaked. The strategy, the vision and goals, mission, objectives and the programs were really spot on. It was the facilities that needed to catch up to all of that. So, hence, jumping over the strategic plan straight into the master plan. If I felt that the Garden was going down the wrong path strategically—that it was becoming the garden of pansy propagation or something—that would be a different story. But it clearly is not.

INTERVIEWER: Any other questions? Thank you.

DAMON: Thanks for having me. That was fun.

INTERVIEW WITH JIM WARD—JANUARY 12, 2016

INTERVIEWER: In continuation of the North Carolina Botanical Garden’s Oral History Series, we will be hearing today from Jim Ward, whose long association with the Garden, particularly as Director of Horticulture, has contributed very much to its success. Jim, it’s a pleasure to be interviewing you today.

JIM: Thanks for the opportunity.

INTERVIEWER: The Garden’s early years have been described as a time of “limited resources and unlimited idealism.” Can you tell us how you came to work at the Garden and about some of your strongest memories of those early years?

JIM: I’m not sure how much time you have, but I’ll start with the longer version, and you can cut me off if you’d like. My route to the Garden was circuitous. Not to give you my whole life story, let me begin by saying that after graduating from Wittenberg College, I was a hippy for a year and ended up in San Francisco and Boulder, Colorado. Then I joined my parents in East Africa, where my sister was a nurse and her husband was teaching English. My parents were there just for a month, but I ended up being overseas for a year. I didn’t think that an upper class white boy knew much about the world or the way the rest of the world worked. I have said many times to many folks, that I wanted to feel life. So, I spent 6 months in Africa and 2 months in India, traveling overland from India back to England before I flew home—and that was just under a year. So, living as close to the way the average native lived was a tremendous experience for me.
I had just gotten home from this journey and was staying with my parents in northern Delaware. They invited some young people over, people my age, and one of them happened to be Alan Johnson, who was up at Longwood Gardens visiting a girlfriend at the time—Mary Love May. We talked about this and that. I was a biology major. My parents were great birders and naturalists, so I had a lifetime growing up with plants and animals, and, I believe, knew more than the average young person about these subjects. I had a girlfriend who had just graduated from PT school at Duke, and she was an instructor here at UNC. So, this all started to knit together. I came down here with some sense that there might be a job opening, and six months after arriving in Chapel Hill, Ken Moore hired me. The rest is history. I really have my parents and their birding interest to thank for this because that is how they got to know Mary Love May, who was an avid birder, even as a young person. Their knowing her led me to cross paths with Alan Johnson, who was my first great friend in Chapel Hill.

INTERVIEWER: When you were hired what was your first job? What were your first responsibilities?

JIM: Working for Alan and helping him with things he was doing. At the time, I think we were all called “grounds maintenance” people or “grounds men.” I don’t think Charlotte particularly liked that title; I think she was called the same thing. I had another job opportunity that came up at about the same time, one that paid about twice as much as the Garden. But, I’ve never made a better decision than to forgo the better pay and go with the unknown opportunity, something that sounded a lot closer to what I was personally interested in doing.

INTERVIEWER: How have the Garden’s horticultural practices changed over the years? In particular, can you talk about plant acquisition, site selection, planting methods?

JIM: Horticultural practices. We had no budget, essentially. There were four or five of us employees. I’m not sure that we had any budget to speak of. We would scavenge and reuse Styrofoam coffee cups, and punch holes in the bottom of them to make containers for propagating plants. We would go dumpster diving or chat up our friends and volunteers to send us used pots that they had at home. So, it was all very low key, in that respect, but it was fine. I think we didn’t know how poor we were. We had to be opportunistic; that was our main way of seeing things. There was an old Victorian greenhouse, a glass house that we used for propagation and display. One of the botany professors had an interest in camellias, so he had his camellias there. They weren’t really part of our display, but we were able to use some of his resources. His name was Cliff Parks. I don’t know why, but we propagated poinsettias—we would sell poinsettias!

INTERVIEWER: You were trying to make money!
JIM: We would go after whatever was interesting to the general public. If there was a group of plants that volunteers and the public had interest in, we saw it as a way to meet demand and make money. If you look at it from the perspective of today’s market, why would you ever do that? Those plants are everywhere! But 30-40 years ago, they were much harder to come by. It was a resource that we were bringing to the community: plant acquisitions.

Plant rescue became a tremendous activity for us, as well. We did a good job. Charlotte, in particular, led many of these plant rescues, but all of us ended up doing it. It was a matter of having the eyes and ears of other native plant lovers around the region, locally and statewide: finding out where development was taking place, getting there ahead of the bulldozers, and bringing back plants that we could use in our re-creation of North Carolina’s native habitats. The Mountain Habitat Garden came first, then, later, the Coastal Plain and Sandhills habitats. When landscaping around the new Totten Center, we counted on plant rescues. One took place at a park that was being built on the north side of town. Christmas ferns were probably one of the most attractive plants, because they are easy to rescue and have evergreen interest, so they were something that had a lot of value for us.

INTERVIEWER: Are you still doing rescues today?

JIM: A little bit. I think we have gotten to a point where we think that the quality of the plants that we can get through our own propagation efforts is probably stronger—and we have a greater variety. With plants that you get from the wild, it is a tremendous shock to them, and the survival rate isn’t all that great.

INTERVIEWER: And we have the capacity now in propagation?

JIM: Yes. We had plant rescues at Grandfather Mountain several times. Also, in the mountains of South Carolina, where there were Shortia galacifolia, Oconee bells. In the area where Shortia grows naturally, there was going to be a lake created for power and storm mitigation. It was going to inundate an area where Shortia grew. So, we went in ahead of the rising waters and rescued much of the Shortia.

INTERVIEWER: When was that?

JIM: That was back in the ’70s, I guess, mid- to late ’70s. We went down to the coast, wherever we had friends who knew something was available. We had opportunities to go into the state forests in the Sandhills area, where they were converting natural areas to tree plantations. That’s all they did, so when the trees grew up, there was still a lot of vegetation underneath them. They would allow us to go in there and get plants for the Sandhills habitat.

INTERVIEWER: Have you changed your methods of weed control or fertilization over the years?
JIM: Most of it was by hand. That’s the way we did it back then, and it continues to be a labor-intensive operation here at the Garden, especially in the native plant habitat gardens, where things are planted in a naturalistic way. There are no clear areas between plants, which means that you can’t easily identify the weeds from the wildflowers.

INTERVIEWER: What about the use of fire, prescribed fire? Have you been doing that since the beginning? How recent is that?

JIM: It is not very recent. As soon as we had enough plant material that dried out enough in the Coastal Plain habitat, we employed fire. It was a natural element, although our early attempts at fire were more for educational purposes. We wanted the public to see fire in a positive light, instead of a negative light. Even in our early carnivorous plant displays, we would burn those—although there was often more newspaper ash than plant ash, because there was not too much to burn. The same was true of the Coastal Plain Habitat Garden; it was pretty sparse, until it started to grow in.

The Coastal Plain really took off when we had the opportunity to have a plant rescue down in the one of the coastal counties and brought back squares of sod about a foot to a foot and a half square. We would take the soil, along with the plants. We removed all the native vegetation that was there, excavated the soil, and put it all back in place at the Garden, in jigsaw fashion. So, we had all this fine plant material above the soil. The first attempts at establishing the Coastal Plain Habitat Garden were not very successful, because we could not cut down any healthy tree. So, we had some years of disappointment in trying to grow these sun-loving plants. Eventually, we did cut down about a dozen loblolly pines that had grown up. Their removal let the sunlight in, and we were successful.

INTERVIEWER: It’s not that easy to work with the longleaf pine, is it?

JIM: Well, our clay soils are different from what Longleaf usually grows in—the deep sandy soils of the Sandhills and the Coastal Plain. It took some learning to figure out how best to grow it. But really, as mentioned earlier, the soils that came in with that plant rescue were a critical part—and continue to be a critical part—of the success of that display garden. As far as fire is concerned, we use it, once again, for reducing the weed load, as well as being able to have visitors come in and see the charred landscape; it provides an opportunity to educate the public. Early on, we got the permission of the town fire department. They were cautious about giving us this permission, so they would linger awhile after we started the fire, to make sure that everything was in hand. Then, after a couple of years, they would come a month ahead of time. We would get a permit and we would call them the day of the prescribed burn, so they wouldn’t be alarmed by people calling to report billows of smoke. We would let our neighbors know, as well. It got to be pretty routine. To the extent that we could—if there was a wide period of time when it was dry and not too windy—we would coordinate with the
science teachers over at Glenwood School and they would march their twenty and forty kids over here to be first-hand observers of the fire. I think people now aren’t very supportive of bringing little kids to a fire, but we thought it was a good time for them to learn about the benefits of prescribed fire.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe that is one of the changes that have occurred over the years. That was the next question that I was going to ask: What are some of the changes that you have seen in your department over the years at the Garden?

JIM: There are lots. You also asked a question about using fertilizers. I think it would be interesting for you to hear that there was a period of time when we were worm farmers here. If you haven’t heard that story, there are a number of us who have been here for a while who remember this being the case. This was typical Ritchie Bell. He was always looking for the next best idea to make money or advance his cause or the Garden’s interest. There was somebody up on Franklin Street, in the basement of some University building, who was growing worms. We went up there and brought out these trays of worms. The plan was to sell worms for fishing bait. The worm castings were going to be used for fertilizer, so this was all going to be a win-win-win. One problem was that the worms kept escaping, so we had to devise more and more elaborate containers to house these worms. The worm castings did made wonderful, rich soil, but, fortunately, it wasn’t a project that lasted too long.

INTERVIEWER: You didn’t make a lot of money off of the worms?

JIM: No, just good stories. It was a good source of fertilizer! Another thing that we don’t do any more, or at least not quite this way: the town collects leaves all over the community. So, we would have them bring multiple trucks to Mason Farm—15 trucks full of leaves. The leaves would be composted over there and we would then use them to amend the soil. Some of the leaves would be deposited over here, in the parking lot. Over time, we started to notice that all the leaves that came from the town contained shards of glass and other kinds of debris. We shifted our focus to leaves that came from campus, because it was a little cleaner source. For a while there, we would get in our little tractor and pickup truck and drive across town to a couple of homes on the north side of Chapel Hill whose owners had horses. We would muck their stalls and bring back a steaming pile of horse manure. We would add that to the planting areas.

INTERVIEWER: You’ve done it all.

JIM: They make wonderful stories now, but it was hard work back then.

INTERVIEWER: A significant milestone in the history of the Garden is the completion of the James and Delight Allen Education Center. You played a valuable role overseeing that construction project.
Can you tell us about the challenges that were involved in that project and the building features that you are most proud of?

JIM: Thinking back, when we envisioned this building, it was something that we all thought was a good idea, but I don’t think any of us thought that we would live to see the day. It is a miracle, in some respects, to be able to have the kind of support that you and others have given the Garden, to allow us to have this building.

Fundraising was an obvious challenge. I was tangential to that, but was very aware that it was a multi-year process that we kept pushing at and pushing at. Finally, we got close enough that the University gave us a bridge loan, so that allowed us to start the bid process before we had all the money.

One of the best outcomes, beyond the building itself, was that we were able to close Laurel Hill Road. We used to have a Garden that was divided by a public street. When we invited kids and school groups here, it was always a concern that we might have an accident out there. Fortunately, that didn’t happen. But, the existence of the road did degrade the Garden experience. So, Peter and I spent about two years talking with the neighborhood, to find what we could do to get their support. We, eventually, did achieve that. Everybody in the neighborhood was not supportive of it, but the vast majority were. We went to the town council to ask for permission to close a city street—something which was unheard of. We were able to have the neighbors beside us, and they were supportive of it, as well. That is an element of the new building that is not part of the building itself, but was critical to improving the site.

It was frustrating to identify all the needs of the building. You start by seeing the architect draw these big squares on the floor plan for mechanical space. We were constantly trying to chisel away at the mechanical space. But we came to learn that it is critical to the design of a well-functioning building. We were trying to achieve LEED Platinum status—Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—while ensuring, in the overall process, that the mechanical spaces where we put equipment were adequate for the people who would work on those pieces of equipment and later service them. If you have a filter that needs to be changed, but you can’t get to the filter, the filter never gets changed and the equipment deteriorates. It was frustrating to see all the space that was taken up by an element that didn’t have any actual function on a day-to-day basis.

We were lucky to get started when we did. Fortunately, when the “crash” occurred, funds for this project were not tied to the stock market. The second downturn presented a problem for some of our subcontractors. We lost our electrical subcontractor in midstream, right when they were supposed to be wiring the building. The sheet rockers wanted to cover the walls. There was some sheetrock that
had to be taken down because they had gotten ahead of the electricians. There is one area in the
building that is still not working right. That can be attributed to the shift in subcontractors midstream.

The challenges involved in “green building” practices were new to this part of the world. In Germany,
it is fairly commonplace; but North Carolina, Chapel Hill, UNC were new to this game. When we
started out, we thought that the urinals would be flushed with rainwater. Then the University got on
the bandwagon of waterless urinals. They said, “You have to have waterless urinals.” So, we changed
the plans. The process was long enough that, before we were done, the University had enough
experience with waterless urinals that they eventually reversed their thinking and said, “No more
waterless urinals,” and were taking them out of all of the campus buildings. And they said, “You
can’t have them here.” So we had to re-plumb the urinals for water. By that time, the University and
OWASA, our water provider, had gotten together and now had reclaimed water—water that has gone
through the sewer treatment cleaning process. There is a 24-inch pipe filled with reclaimed water that
now runs from the OWASA water treatment plant back up to campus; it goes right past us. So, we put
a 4-inch straw in that pipe, and now use this reclaimed water, rather than potable water, for the
urinals. This allows us to use much more water from our cisterns for the landscape.

So, it was a very dynamic time. That is just one example of the shifting technologies. LED lights are
another one. I remember having conversations with the powers that be at the University and they said,
“No, no, no, that’s a new technology and we don’t want anything to do with that.” By the time we got
to the end of our project, we one had one wiring issue that was an add-on. The University’s thinking
had changed; they were willing to pay the difference between regular lighting and LED—it was seen
as a proven energy-savings to the University, over the bulb’s life cycle. Now, I think, the University
only allows LED lighting.

INTERVIEWER: A 180.

JIM: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Have the cisterns provided what was anticipated?

JIM: Yes. They have been very successful. It has taken us a while to get the landscape in place. It is a
complex system. There isn’t just one pipe that you tap into like the city water, with one source
providing all the water you want. There are seven cisterns and they are broken up into pods that are
disconnected from each other, for the most part. So, you have four different water sources, and the
question is: How do you connect those different water sources to one irrigating system? It took us a
while to figure out how best to do that. It is all interconnected now. We try to be frugal and, for the
most part—I think, with one minor exception—we don’t use potable water for any of the landscape.
That is what we are dedicated to. It is still a work in progress: how to devise a kind of irrigation system that isn’t more work than hand watering.

INTERVIEWER: In addition to the Education Center, what other major events do you consider to be very important to the development of the Garden?

JIM: Before I answer that question, let me just add something related to the multi-pronged question concerning what I am most proud of about the building. Obviously, achieving LEED Platinum status was our goal, and we were able to succeed in this achievement. It was rewarding to have accomplished that. It was the first public building of this kind, at this time, in North Carolina. We have a mother’s room for nursing mothers. We worked really hard to have a high level of accessibility for people confined to wheelchairs or with strollers. I think that this building—and all of us who pitched to make this happen—have demonstrated multiple times over the years that we value people in all stages of life. I think that is one of the embracing elements of the Garden that has nothing to do with horticulture or conservation, but is something that makes this place special.

INTERVIEWER: It is a wonderful building, and a wonderful place to volunteer and work.

JIM: So, your question was other milestones?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, other major milestones.

JIM: The building of the Totten Center. It was the only covered, heated, air-conditioned space for people who liked plants and nature in the Triangle, for years and years and years. If you lived in Raleigh, you had your meeting over here. If you lived in Durham, you had your meeting over here. That is why they had daffodil shows here; that is why we had bonsai collection displays here. None of these organizations had access to a better meeting space than the little humble Totten Center. It served us well for a long time and continues to serve us well. So, that was a major milestone: going from probably a 10x15-foot Green Shed, under 150 square feet, that Ken and Charlotte, Rob, Harry and myself occupied for the first year of my employment here—maybe a little bit less than that. We felt like we were living pretty high on the hog, when we moved into the Totten Center. An equal transition was when we were able to move from that facility to this one. It isn’t a milestone, but I think it shaped us for a long time. We had a chip on our shoulder, I think. We had been overlooked, to a degree, by the greater University, forever and ever. Whether it was the Botany Department, we were seen as another entity that was trying to share limited resources, one that didn’t share the support of any of the professors. It was a struggle to get their support—financial or other kinds of support from them. The leadership of the greater University didn’t know anything about us. That has changed now. I think we are very much in their mind, and they see that there is tremendous value in what the
Garden does, in many different ways. But that kept us working hard for a very long time, in order to gain that respect that we didn’t have initially.

Summer interns. We had a really strong internship program, stronger in some ways than it is now. An internship, to me, is an educational opportunity for the person. While our interns today learn by working, there isn’t too much more than that for most. It is a learn-by-working experience. In years past, we worked harder to expose any one intern to all aspects of the Garden, not just having them work for one department or one person. We would take them on multiple tours to other gardens and to conferences, to expose them to other parts of the state. Over time, that has just gotten eroded because we are so desperate for labor support that we—all of us—felt like that was a luxury that we couldn’t afford. I think we are getting back to a point where we are trying to do more of those things. The intern program, after all, provides us with more hands to accomplish the many things that we want to do.

INTERVIEWER: Was this erosion because of the funding?

JIM: Yes, funding and increased Garden responsibilities. We had more elaborate gardens to take care of. That meant that we had more on our to-do list and couldn’t be as generous with our time or their time. And the Labor Day Open House was something that we did every year on Labor Day. It was for a couple of days, Saturday and Sunday, I believe. We may have even done it 3 days. It was a way for us to become better known to the local community. It was quite an activity for us to pull off. It was around the building and down on the nature trails. It attracted several thousand people over the course of the two days. Those of us who were at the Garden at the time would rotate responsibilities for that. I think it characterizes one of the things that has kept me here all these years, in that my job here was varied. I had opportunities to work inside and outside. I could write brochures. I could write interpretive material. I could design gardens. I could speak to kids. I could speak to garden clubs. I could dig ditches. In almost all of those cases, it was plowing new ground, so it was exciting to see—I could see how I could do, and how we could do as a team. These open houses were, in many respects—at least when you took over the leadership role—a new challenge. I am sorry to say that I haven’t seen a copperhead here recently.

INTERVIEWER: You are sorry to say?!

JIM: It is a part of where we live. I don’t want anyone to get bitten, and I don’t want to get bitten myself. I remember clearly when I was in charge and we had this program for Open House down on the Nature Trail bottom area. We had chairs set up in audience style. Somebody was playing music, or Roy Underhill was making a handmade rake, or something like that. Somebody said there was a copperhead going between the legs of the chairs. That happened about three times that day. So I
would, as unobtrusively you can, extract a copperhead from a group of a couple hundred people, saying, “Lift your leg up.” We would relocate the copperhead. I was glad we were able to escape that situation without anybody getting hurt.

As I mentioned before, another milestone was getting rid of Laurel Hill Road bisecting our Garden; it was a tremendous milestone.

The addition of the Coker Arboretum. For years and years, the Arboretum was a thorn in the side of the University. They had grounds people who wanted to mow and blow. That particular area cried out for more attention than that, and we were eager to step forward and be the entity to do that. Coker Arboretum is a tremendous front door for the Garden. Battle Park and Forest Theater are other examples, as well as Mason Farm Biological Preserve. All of these places weren’t part of the Garden when I started. They have helped us grow in importance to the University, and in visibility to the greater community.

It is not because Nancy is behind the camera here, but let me say in public that the Horticultural Therapy program, for many, many years, I thought, was such a wonderful program, and I’m glad it is still here and on sounder financial footing than it ever has been. It has always struggled for a home and we have always found a way to keep some manifestation of it going, even if it was not very much. I think it has a strong possibility of becoming an increasingly important element in how we reach people through interaction with plants and the natural world.

INTERVIEWER: That leads us to the next question. Who are some of the people from the Garden’s first fifty years who need to be remembered and recognized? Choose a few that have had a strong influence, particularly on you.

JIM: First and foremost, that first cohort of folks: Ken, Charlotte, Alan, Rob and myself, under the leadership of Ken Moore. At that time, Ritchie was pretty much absent—and nobody was particularly eager for him to come down to the Garden. We didn’t have a building. He was sort of an absentee landlord. When he did come down, we were given instructions, even though we already knew what we had to do. There was always a concern that Ritchie might change our course of action He was a strong personality, one of those kinds of people you don’t always agree with—and vice versa. That having been said, he was a tremendous asset to the Garden for many, many years. I had the opportunity, for 25 plus years, to team teach with him up at High Hampton Inn. Every spring and every fall, the two of us would teach a three-day workshop up in Cashiers, North Carolina. He and I got to be really good friends and work colleagues. Eventually, Peter, when he became the director, joined Ritchie and me. When Ritchie’s eyesight began failing him and his balance became a concern, Peter and I continued the High Hampton program for another several years. That was a tremendous
opportunity for me to interact with some of the leaders of the Garden, an opportunity others did not have.

Ken Moore was, and continues to be, a wonderful personality here at the Garden. Early on, he provided an environment that was very accepting. He was eager to teach us and others. He was willing to take chances with our ideas and let us go forward with them, not knowing what the result might be. He created an atmosphere that I flourished in, and I thank him for that opportunity.

Bill Hunt—William Lanier Hunt, Jr.—was somebody who was larger than life when I came to the Garden, and for many years after that. He needs to be remembered. I’m not quite sure what acreage belonging to Hunt was a donation to the University on behalf of the Garden, but most of the Nature Trail. The Nature Trails make this a special site here. If we were limited to this landscape within the fence, the Garden would not be the same. Having the Nature Trails is a tremendous asset. Hunt was a character and just fun to be around.

I remember lots of our volunteers, two in particular. A couple that bring tears to my eyes are Jean and Pearson Stewart. I’m sure that you have heard their names. They were so devoted to the Garden staff; they were our family. Every year, I make chocolate-covered cranberries from Jean’s recipe, which came from some Boston cookbook half a century ago, or something like that. Pearson was so strait-laced, in some respects, but every April Fools’ Day, he would bring cookies. Have you heard this story?

INTERVIEWER: No.

JIM: The Stewarts would bring cookies throughout the year, so it was no surprise for Pearson to bring cookies. He would bring cookies that looked like chocolate chip cookies, but without very many chocolate chips. Inside of them, he would place cotton balls or, sometimes, Band-Aids. So, if it happened to be your first interaction with Pearson, it was quite a surprise; he was so serious and quiet and unassuming. But, he enjoyed that trick. So, when new staff or volunteers or new folks were around, he would make sure that they were the first to taste his cookies!

INTERVIEWER: And he would watch them?

JIM: Yes, the joy of being part of the Garden family! Jean and Pearson were fantastic folks. Mercer Hubbard was the leader of the Herb Garden contingent. She was a force to be reckoned with. She was focused and driven, and that meant that she got a lot done. It also meant that she sometimes ruffled people’s feathers, including my own. We didn’t always agree. Again, the bottom-line is that she was a tremendous benefit to the Garden. Mercer brought a contingent of, primarily, women, but some men as well, all who had little interest in native plants—but they became introduced to native plants as
part of their exposure to the Botanical Garden. Many of them are lifelong supporters of the Garden, as a result of Mercer’s interest in getting them to be involved in the Herb Garden expansion. Before becoming Director of Horticulture, I was responsible for a number of plant displays: the Coastal Plain, Mountains, Sandhills, Plant Families Garden. All of these gardens within the Garden attracted a dedicated group of volunteers. For many of those years, I was the only staff person that these volunteers interacted with. Many of these women had sons my age; it was a mutualistic relationship that we both enjoyed. Our relationship often went well beyond the Garden to other social engagements; we became good friends.

INTERVIEWER: You had lots of moms.

JIM: Yes, lots of moms. Bill and Mary Joslin stand out. You couldn’t find better people. They continue to show their love of the Garden. Carol Miller, Gertrude Howell, and Edith Boyer are are some of the long-time volunteers who worked with me over the years. They were, together with other volunteers at the Garden, tremendously important in making this a fantastic place to work. The staff may not have been paid a lot, but there are other things that are more valuable to one’s life that the Garden can provide.

INTERVIEWER: You oversee one of the largest departments at the Garden and your dedicated staff have the most grueling job—the weed pulling, battling invasives, hauling heavy equipment around. What do you think explains the Garden’s ability to attract and retain these very dedicated and knowledgeable people?

JIM: I think it is the same thing that attracted me and kept me here. It is a place where you can learn and teach at the same time. The volunteers add richness to your every day; most places don’t have that. The people who have been here and are here place a high value on quality of life, valuing people beyond what they do here at the Garden. It’s been a place that has embraced the families of those of us who work here. Not that we run a day care, but I think all the kids of the employees of the Garden have spent multiple days here at the Garden when that needed to happen, in order for their lives to work. We did that graciously and warmly and people didn’t feel that they were doing something that they shouldn’t do. At least, that is the way it felt. We are doing work that makes a difference. At least, that’s the way I choose to look at it, and others do as well. The goal is not working hard so the stockholders get rich; it is working hard to demonstrate to yourself and others that the financial bottom-line is not the most important thing in life. We have to be cognizant of the need for sufficient funds to support the Garden’s mission, but there are so many other bottom-lines that we work to achieve. It’s been a tremendous place for me. I think the same reasons that attracted me to the Garden influence staff today.
INTERVIEWER: The Garden gives back.

JIM: It is a place where people of all strata feel welcome, and it is wonderful to see that. It’s not just the wealthiest, it’s not just the down-and-out. People of all nationalities come to Chapel Hill and find the Botanical Garden, and they feel welcome here. We work hard to make that happen. It is a place where people look for solace. It is rewarding to provide such a place to people.

INTERVIEWER:

Thank you so much for sharing your memories. I didn’t really mean to make you cry.

JIM: You didn’t make me cry.

INTERVIEWER: Memories of those wonderful people did.

JIM: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for sharing that with us.

JIM: Thank you for the opportunity.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: The Stewarts were special and wonderful. I wonder if you would summarize how the concept of the North Carolina Botanical Garden as a “conservation garden” began and how it has evolved to include, for example, that building and the cisterns, etc.

JIM: To paraphrase your question: How has the concept of conservation, as it was seen 40 years ago, changed in relation to how it is seen today? This Garden has its history in the first Earth Day, which happened shortly before I arrived here. I think it was when Ken was here, back in April of 1970. It broadened the group of people who starting to think that way. It also has its origins in the Endangered Species Act, which looked at one species at a time. That piece of legislation was politically motivated. You could get support for protecting a single species of animal; you couldn’t get support for protecting an ecosystem. Even now, it is a challenge to protect an ecosystem, because it is bigger and takes up more space. So, it is a maturation of what it takes to conserve something, going from trying conserve the red-cockaded woodpecker or the Venus flytrap to realizing that you need to protect the longleaf pine habitat of the Sandhills or a river basin or things like that. We, I think, as individuals and as a group, also realized that we needed to do things differently in order to be true to a mission related to conservation. We went from being fairly good about being careful about where we collected plants and where we didn’t, to being extremely conservative about where we would collect plants. It reached the point where we chose to grow our own plants from seeds that we collected ethically, rather than collect a plant that might be abundant where we were collecting—taking one or a few from a site where we had permission, to not feeling comfortable doing that. We have become
more sophisticated in our approach. When you talk about the building, these things are all tied together. If you reduce the carbon footprint of the building, you are doing things to help protect the environment and that’s what this building can be identified as doing. Having a smaller footprint on the land, however you can do it, is a good thing. Having natural daylight light spaces, instead of using electricity to light the rooms, is a significant characteristic of this building: there is excellent daylight wherever there is someone doing some task on a regular basis.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Are you the person to ask about the concrete troughs that had originally been used for mushroom propagation? Or is that a Ken story?

JIM: Not mushrooms, mosquitoes!

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I thought that they were originally built to accommodate mushroom propagation. I thought that was one of Ritchie Bell’s ideas for bringing money to the Garden.

JIM: Have you seen these concrete troughs that you are talking about, over by the Green Shed?

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: No, not now.

JIM: Those were for mosquito research. They were tanks that were about 3 feet above ground, about 6 feet wide and 20 feet long. There were two of these things, divided into 3 portions. At some point, there was a sophisticated way of moving water from one to another. They were built for research back in the early ’60s; it was not ongoing in the early ’70s. But that is how they came to be down here, and we used those for our aquatic plant collections. The troughs were about 8 feet deep. Most aquatic plants want to grow in about 2 or 3 feet of water—maybe 4 feet, at the very most. So, we would have to put cinder blocks in there to balance pots of plants. Sometimes they would slip off and we would have to reach in and retrieve them. My sons were toddlers back when these were still existent. I have pictures of them walking around the top of these troughs. I held them with one hand, but it was a safety issue that we would be uncomfortable with today, much more than we were back then.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: To follow up on pictures. Do you have pictures of the copperheads slipping around?

JIM: I had my hands full!

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Pictures of eating the cookies?

JIM: I don’t remember cameras being around on any of those occasions. You know, back then, we didn’t have cell phones with cameras.
MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: I know.

JIM: It was much more inconvenient to take a picture. You had to be on a mission as a photographer, rather than simply pulling a phone out of your back pocket to snap a photo. Many images from those times are just stored in my own head.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Jim, several years ago, when you were informed that there was a bear in the Garden, what was your first reaction?

JIM: Fantastic! I guess, it was probably 5 years ago, something like that. Take my estimate and double it; that’s usually more accurate.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: There was a bear in the Garden?

JIM: Yes. The bear was first seen on Finley Golf Course. We had heard about it, and people were excited about that news. Most of us were wonderfully excited and pleased. I think there were a couple of staff members who were worried about this bear. We thought we had heard the last of it when word came that it was over at Finley Golf Course. Then someone in the upper floor of the Education Center said, “There it is!” It came through the picnic area, a portion of the parking lot, passed through the Cattail Gate, under an old section of chain-link fence, and eventually worked its way down to the stream. Unfortunately, I was not able to catch a glimpse of this guy.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Genie Jansen and I were talking in the parking lot, after leading a third-grade Mountains to Coast tour, and saw the bear as it made its way through the picnic area and the Cattail Gate. Fortunately, all the children were safely on their way back to school. What a sight!

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Was this before the fence was put up? Or did the bear climb the fence?

JIM: The fence was up, but every day we put a fifty-foot hole in it to let cars go in and out. So, it’s pretty permeable. The bear climbed under the chain link fence on the far side of the Totten Center. It was a black bear. I think Johnny got a footprint cast of it.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Just a point of information. I guess the Garden was originally not open on weekends, but an open house was held one weekend each year. Was this a way for the working public to get an opportunity to see the Garden?

JIM: The Labor Day Open House?

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Yes.
JIM: You’re right. We worked Monday through Friday and were closed on weekends. It is the same problem that we have now, to a much lesser degree. We were closed when most people had the opportunity to visit the Garden. So, it was only through programs like tours and hikes and classes that people could come to the Garden on the weekends. We had a community that had a day off, and everybody didn’t travel. So, we had an eager audience and seized on the opportunity to let them know that we were out here, and let them have a big ol’ time.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Was there a noticeable difference in awareness and interest in the Garden, once it became open on weekends on a regular basis?

JIM: I can’t say that there was. I think our growth was slow and steady. We continue to have the problem of gauging attendance. Our access is broad. It is hard to follow everybody to one spot and count them as they come and go. So, we would extrapolate and try to get attendance figures over the course of a year, based on some snapshots that we would take. These attendance estimates were based on class attendance and participation, use of the Nature Trails, and so forth.

INTERVIEWER: Any other questions?

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Early on, what was the Garden’s relationship with Coker Arboretum and how has that evolved over time?

JIM: The relationship between Coker Arboretum and the Garden early on. Coker Arboretum has been a feature of the UNC campus, I think, since 1903, when Dr. Coker is attributed to having created it. I am not sure if that was the first day he put a shovel in the ground or whether that was when he had some finished product. The Arboretum was always a special part of the University. It had some academic purpose and value. That was the motivation for him to put effort into it—in terms of showing early medical students the plants that were used for medicine or whose active ingredients were the source of medicines used in the early 1900s. This was a place where he could grow those plants within easy access to the medical students. The Arboretum, I would imagine, soon had a strong following and support from a community who now had this wonderful garden for the UNC campus to enjoy. Over time, UNC became more institutional in terms of how they took care of things. They had to cover more property with fewer resources, so, out of necessity, they started turning it into a landscape that was easier to maintain, one that took less time to mow, when they mowed. Less time and care was spent on its maintenance. They had staff that didn’t know the difference between various plants. If they ran over something that was small, they were just getting their job done. It was a growing frustration for those who enjoyed that part of the UNC landscape and some of those who took care of it. Conflicts bubbled up, and every once in a while the University’s higher leadership would hear about it. They didn’t want to irritate these folks. The Garden expressed an interest in the
Arboretum. At some point, we said we would like to take care of it. So, it was sort of taken care of by both of us. The University would continue to do the mowing and leaf gathering, and we were doing everything else. Then, because they were doing that poorly in our eyes, we said, “Stay off this area. We’ll do everything.” That has led to a much better relationship with the Grounds Department. They were happy to get rid of responsibility for the Arboretum and we were happy to take it over. And the general users of the Arboretum were pleased with that outcome, as well.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Has there been any effort to encourage the Grounds people on campus to use more native plants?

JIM: Yes, I think that effort has grown over time. Part of the problem is availability; it always has been. We can have slides or PowerPoints, images of wonderful native plants that you could use in the landscape. And then the next question would be, “Where can I get these plants?” That is one reason why we have a Plant Sale. It began as—and still is—one of the early sources of native plants that we can direct people to. There were just a handful of nurseries in the eastern United States that you could point people to that provided anything more than the bare minimum of native plants—especially when you are talking about perennials and shrubs. So, as things have become more available, gardeners are eager to find plants that work in the challenging landscape settings where they grow plants. When you have 30,000 people walking across a section of campus, cutting corners, it becomes a challenge to grow plants of any sort. Sometimes, natives are the best answer. The idea of invasive plants isn’t a strange concept anymore. I remember when it first came to my attention and that of others. People thought you were talking about something esoteric when you mentioned an “invasive plant.” Now, that is a term that nearly everyone is familiar with. Still, it may not be high on their list of concerns. So, that issue has trickled down to the University’s Ground’s Department, to the people who are directing the maintenance of the landscape. Getting rid of invasives—and not planting more of them—helps push people towards native plants. There are so many more opportunities now to get our message out. That plant pile is much richer than it used to be.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much. I believe that is all we have time for.

INTERVIEW WITH PETER WHITE—FEBRUARY 24, 2016

INTERVIEWER: In continuation of the North Carolina Botanical Garden’s Oral History Series, we will be hearing today from Peter White, director of the Garden for 28 years, from 1986-2014. It is my pleasure to interview you today.
PETER: I really appreciate you coming up to my office here in Coker Hall to do this. I am anticipating that this will be fun.

INTERVIEWER: What led you to accept the position as director of the North Carolina Botanical Garden and what held your interest until retirement?

PETER: I had done a post-doc at the Missouri Botanical Garden and, as a grad student and post-doc, I loved the plant kingdom, the idea of working every day within the walls of something that represented the plant kingdom. I felt that way in Missouri, with the work there. So, the idea of a botanical garden always attracted me. I am a kind of a hybrid of plant taxonomy and plant ecology—but mostly ecology. Ritchie Bell was very much a field botanist who was sort of on the taxonomy side, but also on the ecology side. Both of us shared an interest in conservation issues. As a result, the Garden, at the time I came to interview, was very much a conservation- and ecology-focused garden. So, it was a perfect fit. Of all the many, many botanical gardens across the country and the world, this one definitely was “right on,” in terms of my interest and holding my interest through time.

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe what the Garden was like in 1986, and how you went about setting a course for the future?

PETER: I will always say that the Garden’s heart was in the right place, even back in 1986. Ritchie Bell and Ken Moore—and others who Ritchie had accumulated there, including Jim Ward—were very much the heart of the Garden. And, to me, it felt exactly right. The soul of the Garden had been defined in the right way for me. I entered the Garden by crossing a paved public street that separated the parking lot from the display garden. I walked down a gravel path that was, simultaneously, a pedestrian and vehicle entrance. There was parking separating the Herb Garden and the Totten Center. The Totten Center, which was built on the cheap, was already pretty run down, even by 1986. Even so, it was interesting. Basically, my feeling was that the Garden had great potential and was doing the right thing, but that the physical plant and the layout were not measuring up to the Garden’s mission. In some ways, I feel like I am speaking to the future here. There were times when I sensed that the Garden staff felt that I was not happy with the Garden—because I did appear critical. I saw the soul, but also felt that the outdoor garden and the indoor exhibit space, the staff space and the work space were just not right, yet. We had rotary phones, for example. That is something I will always remember.

INTERVIEWER: You had a lot of growing to do. Can you speak in general terms about how the Garden grew and changed during your leadership?

PETER: A couple of things come to mind. First of all, we did a master plan, starting in the late 1980s. That was the result of a board member, Mercer Reeves Hubbard, who was very keen on the idea that
the Garden move forward, and that, fundamentally, a development plan was necessary. The University felt that way also; the faculty advisory committee felt that way too. It was clear that we needed to decide where we were going. There were many issues in front of us—issues that we wanted to solve—that the staff already had on their list. The staff also wanted to do a master plan. So, we got rolling on that. And, I think, that process resulted in a really great vision of the Garden. But the other thing that I will mention is that the staff, in the early 1990s, had this wonderful grand plan . . . but we needed to make short term improvements right now. I always remember the voice of Rob Gardner, at staff meetings, arguing for more benches and more water fountains and more hardscape to brighten up and professionalize the Garden. That eventually led to something in the 1990s that we called the Bridge to the Future plan—lower cost improvements that we could make even before the grand things included in the master plan. So, that is how we got started.

INTERVIEWER: What values have remained constant throughout the Garden’s history?

PETER: I think, an interest in native plants of the Southeast and of North Carolina. Also, the expansion of that idea to a focus on plant conservation in general. Ritchie was passionate about those issues. I always hoped that people could see the same spirit today that they saw back then, what fueled people’s enthusiasm and support for the Garden even before I came. I hope that same spirit is still with us. I know that the new director of the Garden, Damon Waitt, is the perfect person for that mission. I hope that the spirit within the Garden remains the same. I hope it stays a welcoming place for volunteers and for folks who want to come and learn about native plants and plant conservation, and enjoy the Garden.

INTERVIEWER: You once remarked that there were times when the lead staff of the Garden took on challenges that required stepping out into the darkness and not blinking, or threading a camel through the eye of the needle. What were some of those challenges and how were they met?

PETER: It seemed like every time that you turned a corner there was something to do that seemed impossible. I had never been the director of a garden before. I was 38 years old, and there were a lot of things that seemed like big challenges. We knew that we needed to start a fundraising program. We knew that such an effort would cost us money, but we didn’t know how long it would take to pay for itself. The staff had a long list of funding needs, so we would set aside money for some new program, and not fund some of the longstanding needs. So, that was a risk. We got the director of the Atlanta Botanical Garden to come and give a speech to the board of the Botanical Garden Foundation. She brought her fundraiser, and that discussion led to, “Yes, we need to hire a fundraiser.” So, that is an example of a risk, but one that paid for itself very rapidly. There are many other examples like that. The one I think of, something that was the first to inspire in me the belief that we could actually reach a better future, was the Paul Green Cabin project. Sally Vilas and Rhoda Wynn were concerned
about the legacy of Paul Green and knew that his cabin—his writer’s retreat—was falling down and about to be destroyed. They came to us and asked, “Won’t the Garden take it?” Paul Green used the cabin as a retreat to remove himself periodically from campus issues—and write. I did a little research and found that Paul Green was really into botany; he consulted with botanists all the time, trying to accurately portray the cultural use of plants in his plays.

INTERVIEWER: So, that made it a fit for the Garden.

PETER: Yes. On our master plan we had referenced ethnobotany, the cultural uses of plants by Native Americans, European settlers, and Africans who came as slaves. People from these various cultural backgrounds recognized uses for plants native to our landscape. Paul Green was very interested in those things. The cost estimate for restoring the cabin was $40,000, which, at that time, sounded like an impossible sum.

INTERVIEWER: Was that to move and restore it?

PETER: Yes. And the University was really skeptical. I walked into the provost’s office, and the provost—my boss—would say, “You don’t want that cabin.” That was because the head of planning at the University had told him, “You don’t want that cabin.” It really was Sally who then went to the chancellor. It was Sally’s campaigning and her work, together with Rhoda Wynn’s work in fund raising, that led to enough money being raised to move and restore the cabin. The cabin came down 15-501 on a flatbed truck and got put in the Garden. So, to me, it was the first inkling that we could find the support. Throughout time, there were many examples of that.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes, there just needs to be a cause or issue, and the asking of money.

PETER: Another philosophy I evolved over time is that you have to be active. You can’t just wait for donors to arrive and write a check. You have to actually engage and encourage and ask specifically.

INTERVIEWER: Under your leadership, the Garden partnered with numerous institutions, from local to international. What relationships formed between the Garden and other groups who had a similar focus on plant conservation?

PETER: The Center for Plant Conservation is a network of gardens across the country that holds the most endangered species as sort of a germplasm Noah’s Ark—a last resort against extinction in the wild. Ritchie had gotten us involved with that organization two years before I came. We became one of the founding members and, I think, a leader in that nationwide program. One of the things I am happy about looking back on, is eventually creating departments within the Garden to assume responsibility for certain important parts of our mission. The Education Department, headed by Nancy Easterling, is a good example of that. But the one most related to this question is the
Conservation Department, led by Johnny Randall. Under Johnny’s leadership, the Conservation Department just took off. Not only did we continue—and become a leader—in the partnership with the Center for Plant Conservation, but we also developed a partnership with the Millennium Seed Bank project at Kew Gardens, in England. We developed many partnerships in terms of funding for projects related to conservation.

INTERVIEWER: What about your involvement with Discover Life in America and the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI) in Great Smoky Mountains National Park?

PETER: I had left the Missouri Botanical Garden and done a post-doc at the University of Tennessee, one that was funded by the National Park Service and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. So, I had a number of years of experience working in the Smokies. All this time, I was director of the Garden, but I was also a half-time faculty member, so I had grad students. I encouraged those grad students to work in the Smokies. So, I had formed this long-term relationship with the National Park. In 1999, I got a call concerning an inspiring project: starting an all-taxon biodiversity inventory of the Smokies. In other words, making a list of every species of living thing in the National Park. It was one of the only places on earth where such a list would be compiled. Great Smokies National Park had been attracting researchers from a wide halo around the National Park, including Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio, as well as from states in the Northeast and down here in the Southeast. There was a lot of interest. One of my colleagues, Keith Langdon, had been to observe an all-taxon inventory in Costa Rica, and he came back and said, “Let’s start one here.” So, he invited me to come and help with the first meeting concerning that project.

INTERVIEWER: That was for the Smokies?

PETER: Yes. It has been a very delightful experience, and it still goes on today.

INTERVIEWER: Given the large area of the Smokies, it will probably go on forever.

PETER: One of the questions we are asked is, “How many species are there and when will you be done?” One of the answers I love is one the assistant superintendent of Great Smoky National Park gave. He said that it reminded him of a question he used to get when he was the assistant superintendent of Mammoth Cave: “How many miles of unexplored cavern are there?” Great Smoky National Park is famous for its biodiversity.

INTERVIEWER: It is such a popular park and people are so interested in everything about it. Like Ritchie Bell, the Garden’s first director, the job requires that you divide your time between the campus, as a professor in the Botany Department, and the Garden, as its director. How were you able to balance those two?
PETER: That was really tough, especially in the years before I got tenure and was promoted to full professor. After that, I learned to treat each week fluidly. My efforts and energy would flow from one place to the other, depending on the circumstances. Before that, I had to pay a lot of attention to the faculty-end of things. So, when we started planning and finally starting the construction of the Education Center, all of my energy flowed toward the Garden. But I had achieved those milestones. I was, sort of, in charge of my own schedule.

INTERVIEWER: You were still teaching?

PETER: Yes, always teaching, and I had grad students throughout that period, as well. It was definitely difficult. And it definitely required a constant energy, early on, to figure it out. After that, I sort of became used to it and, as I say, I learned that I was, in a way, “the boss” now, and I could regulate the experience. But the position and responsibility it carries really required a full-time director and so, thank goodness, it finally achieved that.

INTERVIEWER: But, it probably could have used a full-time director when you were going through all that building, because that was difficult.

PETER: Yes. Maybe everything would have happened faster if we’d had a full time director from day one, from the moment Ritchie was appointed director of the Garden.

INTERVIEWER: We talked about the James and Delight Allen Education Center and how significant that was. How important were Bill McDonough’s Hannover Principles in designing sustainability for that project?

PETER: Bill McDonough’s principles felt like a big transformative event for me. He came and spoke at the Garden. He handed out copies of Hannover Principles, which is a little book about like this. I still have mine here somewhere, over there on the shelf. Bill McDonough is a very charismatic, inspirational person. He is an architect and, I think, a landscape designer, as well, but he does “green” development. In the 1990s, we developed a concept called “a conservation garden.” That was a label for what the Garden was. In a way, it replaced an earlier label: “a native plant garden.” The problem, to me, with “a native plant garden” was that we were so much more than an outdoor garden of native plants. Another problem with the use of the word “native” is that species always move around; they have in the past and will continue to do so—due, in part, to climate change. What I thought was important was to enlarge that concept. When someone says “native garden,” they mean much more than “native garden.” They mean “conservation,” “pollinators,” “environmental issues,” and setting aside wild tracts of land for the purpose of conservation. The phrase “conservation garden” evolved in the 1990s to represent all the things the Garden did.
INTERVIEWER: It really encompasses all of that.

PETER: Right, we never were exclusively a native plant garden anyway. Look at the Herb Garden or the Plant Families Garden or Coker Arboretum. So, as it happened, I developed this talk I used to give called “The Conservation Garden.” I think I ended up with eight categories within this concept. They were the very descriptions of things that the Garden did. One was the Seed Bank project; another was natural area protection; and another was not planting invasive species. So, I had these eight categories. But then, Bill McDonough came and he talked about the Hannover Principles, which said that all human endeavors should be discussed under these five medieval headings: earth, air, fire, water, and spirit. That became what I called the top-down definition of “the conservation garden.” Instead of talking about what the garden was doing in all these programmatic areas, these were the organizing principles. I hope that everyone who was at that talk remembers that night, because we all rushed forward to get our copies of the book signed. To me, it was one of those transformative moments. It was before the Education Center was fully designed, so I think it sort of cemented the idea that, as part of that project, we should build a leading-edge environmentally-sound building.

INTERVIEWER: He came to speak on a broader topic, not just for the Education Center, right?

PETER: He came to give a presentation that might have led to his being hired as the designer of the Education Center.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really?

PETER: It was part of that period of recruitment for a firm that would work with us. It wasn’t about the Education Center, and yet it was a philosophical statement to show how he would approach a project like that.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us about the challenges involved in building the buildings.

PETER: The foremost challenge was fundraising, putting all the money together to start construction. The University had a requirement that you have to have raised 85% of funding in order to be awarded a construction contract. Getting there was difficult. We had to cut a few things out of the building and out of the budget. We ended up, I think, at 83% funding. Thankfully, I had the support of the provost’s office to move forward anyway. Meanwhile, folks had gotten excited about having a LEED Platinum building on campus. So, we started construction. I honestly felt at that moment that we had to do it. Some of our donors were getting antsy. Some had come on board early on and they saw that nothing was happening. The Chapel Hill Garden Club was antsy about raising the money and questioned whether we would ever have a building.

INTERVIEWER: What was the time frame from when you started raising money?
PETER: The beginning of that project was made possible by an estate gift. It was a gift from the estate of Olin and Kay Mouzon. Olin had died first; Kay died second. When her will came to be known, it called for a very generous gift towards the Education Center. That was a magic moment. I think I have described it before: her executor actually hand-wrote a two million dollar check paid to the North Carolina Botanical Garden—two, comma, zero, zero, zero, comma, zero, zero, zero. Two million and xx/100. It came in an envelope with a regular postage stamp. I went to my mailbox, opened the letter, and out floated this check.

INTERVIEWER: Not even certified mail?

PETER: Right, I was amazed. So, that got us going on the design. Two million dollars, plus some additional funds from her estate. There were other gifts that were coming on board. One of the earliest was from the Reeves Foundation, in New Jersey; that donation supported the auditorium. Some of the early folks were wondering if we would ever proceed—would this ever be possible. I used an analogy from cards, you know, from poker. I said to the Board, at one of the Board meetings, we are going all in. We are doing this at 83% funding. We are taking that risk. So, everybody got in line, and we started. That fundraising occupied many, many years of effort. But, finally, we did get going. As the building developed, of course, construction became a huge management issue. The contractors did make occasional variances from the plans. We had to go back and fix things. Materials that were supposed to be available turned out to no longer be available when construction began, so we had to switch. There were a lot of decisions that had to be made.

INTERVIEWER: Balancing all of the scheduling.

PETER: Ironically, we had to cut the landscaping portion of the budget, as well as the furniture portion of the budget.

INTERVIEWER: And the fence. We didn’t have the fence for a while, so we couldn’t plant.

PETER: Yes, the deer fence. In retrospect, it was risky to start without full funding. On the other hand, as I have said, I felt like our whole team was going to fall apart, unless we started and moved forward.

INTERVIEWER: And when you see actual building taking place, it makes the fundraising easier.

PETER: Everything just came out so well, in the end. I wish it had come out well earlier and during every step along the way. In the end, though, we got through it!
INTERVIEWER: It’s a wonderful building. In addition to the building, what other events, as well as policies and practices adopted during your years as director, do you consider to have been important milestones?

PETER: When I first arrived at the Garden, the staff fit around one table in the old Totten Center. I should say that another very important aspect, during the 1990s, was becoming successful in obtaining federal funding. There is a federal program that supports museums, including botanical gardens and zoos and aquaria. We had a period where we received more funding from that agency than any other garden in the country. We were really doing well. That’s how we were able to expand.

INTERVIEWER: Was that through grants that you had to apply for, someone writing really good grants?

PETER: The whole staff pitched in. Just before I arrived as director, we had submitted a grant that was rejected. I took a look at that grant and I called the institutions that had been successful and asked what their trick was. How had we messed up here? What sections of our proposal were weak and which were strong? We made a study of it. We decided, moving forward, that we would strengthen those proposals. We got that accomplished. We did not have a grant writer at that time. So, Charlotte drafted a section and Ken drafted a section, as well as others at the Garden. So, that was important. Another very significant thing was developing a friendship with Bob Eaves, who eventually became the husband of Beverly Perdue. Back when they were courting, the Botanical Garden was one of their places to visit on a date. As a result, from that sort of contact, other legislators took an interest. Circa 1998 or so, Howard Lee, a Democrat, and Virginia Fox, a Republican, sponsored a bill to increase the Garden’s funding. That was an important step forward, as well. Now I’ve forgotten your original question.

INTERVIEWER: The milestones.

PETER: Yes, the milestones. The federal grants, the increased funding from the legislature, the expansion of the Board. Back in the early 1990s, it was recommended that we expand the Board—which was, at that time, made up of 9 board members and 5 officers, a total of 14. The Board studied that idea and concluded, “Let’s increase.” The proposal at the Board meeting was to increase the number to 15 board members and 5 officers. Jim Massey, who was then secretary of the Foundation, made a spontaneous proposal to expand, and added: if we were going to expand, why didn’t we go to three sets of seven—or 21 board members and 5 officers. So, we went from a total of 14 to a total of 26. When I think of all the folks who became involved in the Garden who would not have had a slot prior to that expansion, that made a huge difference. Bob Eaves was one of those folks who took one
of those expanded slots. I am sure I’ll remember other really important landmarks, but those stand out
in my mind.

INTERVIEWER: We have some bonus questions here for you. What memories do you have of Lady
Bird Johnson’s visit to the Garden, when she came to help launch Celebrating Wildflowers? Was that
the first fundraising campaign in your term?
PETER: Yes, it was.

INTERVIEWER: That would have been in 1988. Right?
PETER: Right.

INTERVIEWER: What are your memories of that?
PETER: That was really interesting. Lady Bird arrived accompanied by Secret Service agents and we
gave her a tour of the Garden. Then I rode with her in a black fancy car with Secret Service agents
down to Fearrington, where her speech took place. She and Carlton Lees, who was then living in our
area, were also doing a book signing. Their book was called Wildflowers Across America. On the way
down, I’ll always remember a remark that Lady Bird Johnson made, one she repeated many times and
also put in writing. Looking out the window, she noticed, I think, goldenrods and said how lovely
North Carolina goldenrods were. But she added that she was thankful that North Carolina had its
native plants and that Texas had its own native plants. She said that her goal was for North Carolina
to continue looking like North Carolina and for Texas to look like Texas. Little did I know that I
would ever in my life be riding in a car with Lady Bird Johnson!

INTERVIEWER: Her appearance must have been a big draw for attendance for that event.
PETER: That is one reason we held it at Fearrington, of course. At the time, we didn’t have space at
the Garden for a very large crowd. A lot of politicians came and hung around and were part of the
dinner that evening, down at Fearrington.

INTERVIEWER: You delivered the keynote address at the meeting of the Native Plant Conservation
Initiative at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. What memories do you have of your visit to
that Wildflower Center?
PETER: That was, in a way, part of my experience of leaving the Garden. I had made the decision to
move full-time to faculty in July, but didn’t leave until December 2014. I had eight different devised
speeches for different groups. It made me think about what the Garden was and what botanical
gardens, in general, should be doing in the future, for society. Then I was invited to give two talks—even after I left the Garden—one of which was at the first ever native plant conference of the
American Public Garden Association at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Last April, I think it was. The other was a similar celebration of conservation in gardens at the Santa Barbara Botanical Garden, last November. That gave me the opportunity to continue thinking about the Garden’s mission and what it had become—and to give that general talk as part of the symposium at the Wildflower Center. It was fun for me. I talked about the eight different ways we defined “the conservation garden,” the history of that concept, and Bill McDonough’s Hannover Principles. The same things we have been talking about were in that talk, as well. There was a keynote that launched the session, and that was me. At the end of the conference, the speaker was Darrel Morrison, a wonderful landscape architect from Georgia who has visited the Garden. He has been one of our speakers, maybe either as part of the Fitch lectures series or, perhaps, the Sims lecture series.

INTERVIEWER: What are the similarities between our garden and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center?

PETER: I think there are a lot of similarities. There are a handful of gardens that are a part of this “conservation garden” world for public gardens in North America. The Wildflower Center is certainly a leader. We hired one of their best to come here and be a leader. The other thing I should say about the Education Center that was really, really neat was that we gave every member of the staff the opportunity to go on a field trip to see a similar project in another part of the country. I think we had four teams. Everybody got to serve on at least one of those teams. One of the places one team went was the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. They saw many features in the Wildflower Center’s building that provided us with things to think about when we built the Education Center.

INTERVIEWER: You are well known as someone who loves literature, music, and poetry—especially poetry. We were hoping, before we sign off, that you would recite one of your favorite poems.

PETER: OK. I am going to choose one that has a relationship to the Botanical Garden. The story is that my mother was an English teacher, and she brought us up on poetry, a lot of which remained ingrained in us. I had to memorize them from the beginning, and they always pop to mind.

We have a cabin in Maine that I have visited since I was a child—and still go to. When we arrived at the cabin in rural New England, my mother would launch into Robert Frost poetry. The New Yorker ran a story on a poem about one of Frost’s poems, a poem titled “Come In.” It caused me to become interested in Robert Frost as a natural historian. It turns out that he had a great interest in being scientifically accurate. For me, a scientist, it is really fun to read Frost’s poems. This poem struck me as interesting. I had a discussion with Haven Wiley, who is a retired ornithologist here. The poem “Come In” is about the wood thrush. Haven brought my attention to some of the science that is in that
I posted that poem on my bulletin board at the Garden, and Bill Hunt, the founder of the Botanical Garden Foundation and its first President, saw it. He said, “Did you know that Robert Frost came to what is now the Garden?” Robert Frost used to read poetry at UNC every spring. Frost, eventually, got an honorary doctorate from Carolina. Bill Hunt was in line to shake his hand and invited Frost to what is now the Garden, to come look at birds and wildflowers. Hunt took Robert Frost across the area where the Education Center now sits, and up and over the Nature Trail hill, to Morgan Creek. Bill Hunt told me that story. The poem that set that it all off is called “Come In.” And it goes:

As I came to the edge of the woods,
Thrush music -- hark!
Now if it was dusk outside,
Inside it was dark.

Too dark in the woods for a bird
By sleight of wing
To better its perch for the night,
Though it still could sing.
The last of the light of the sun
That had died in the west
Still lived for on song more
In a thrush’s breast.

Far in the pillared dark
Thrush music went—
Almost like a call to come in
To the dark and lament.

But no, I was out for stars;
I would not come in.
I meant not even if asked;
And I hadn't been.

What is interesting is that the poem is called “Come In,” and what Frost hears is the thrush singing in the dark forest, as a call to come off the trail and into the woods. He calls the poem “Come In,” and yet, Frost says: “I would not come in, not even if asked, and I hadn’t been.” He understands that the wood thrush is a bird of deep patches of woods, and that they need a certain sized acreage, in order to successfully nest. They like that core inner-habitat of woods. You need a place like Mason Farm or
Battle Park or the Nature Trails to have a wood thrush population. Once they are there, they might sing in our back yards because those woods are so close. But they belong in the dark woods, in a place where there are no people. Frost sensed that. He was outside at night to star-gaze, but wasn’t invited to be part of that inner-domain of the wood thrush. So, combine my mother’s interest in poetry, my cabin in Maine, Bill Hunt, Haven Wiley, a poem about a wood thrush with two additional facts—that wood thrushes live on the Nature Trail hill and that Robert Frost had, at one point, come through the Garden—and you have it all. This poem contains many stories, many memories.

INTERVIEWER: No wonder that poem speaks to you.

PETER: Yes. I eventually developed a talk called “The Natural History of Robert Frost,” and that poem was one of the inspirations to develop that talk.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for your time today. We really appreciate everything you have done for the Garden, and we appreciate you sharing the memories.

PETER: It is a fabulous place, and I have nothing but good wishes for the Garden.

INTERVIEW WITH DOT WILBUR-BROOKS—DECEMBER 8, 2015

INTERVIEWER: As a continuation of our Oral History series, we will be hearing today from Dot Wilbur-Brooks, who has contributed much during her long association with the Garden. I am Glenda Jones, a graduate of the Botanical Art and Illustration Certificate Program and, also, a volunteer at the Garden. Dot, it is my pleasure to be interviewing you today. The Garden’s early years have been described as a time of limited resources and unlimited idealism. How did you happen to come to work at the Garden?

DOT: First of all, the use of the phrase “limited resources and unlimited idealism” is perfect, because it so accurately describes the very early years. I was an undergraduate and went to Mountain Lake Biological Station one summer. There, I took a class in biosystematics from Ritchie Bell. I got to know him really well. Then, 3 years later, I went with my husband, who was also taking classes as a graduate student. Beforehand, I wrote to Ritchie, told him that I was going to be at Mountain Lake, and asked if he could use any help. He said, “Sure, you can be my assistant.” So, I went to work for him. It was 1967, and we were working on *Wildflowers of North Carolina* by Bell and Justice; it was lots of fun. That was my job, trying to fit things into the format, into the layout.

Soon after that, in ’73, I moved to Chapel Hill—my husband was a professor at Duke—and I came to one of the early open houses. Ritchie said, “What are you doing here?” I said, “Well, I live here now. Can you use any help?” And he said, “Yeah, can you start tomorrow?” That happened to be Sarah’s first day of kindergarten. But I said, “Yeah, I’ll just put her on the bus and go to the Garden.” There
wasn’t much here at that point. Everything worked out of the Green Shed. Some of you know where the Green Shed is; well, most of you know where the Green Shed is. I also worked on campus, in Coker Hall. I was really the supreme gopher, at that point, doing whatever Ritchie wanted me to do. He paid me out of his pocket—two dollars an hour. And that was how I began here.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of your favorite memories of those early years?

DOT: Just the beginnings of the growth of the Garden, starting from virtually nothing. I remember when Ritchie very proudly told me, “We are going to have a trailer out here soon, for an office.” That didn’t happen until 1975, of course. We moved into the Totten Center in November of 1975, although it wasn’t dedicated until ’76. Even though there were all these “beginnings” that we could go into, the move to the Totten Center marked a “new” beginning, a chance to get more people involved. The Volunteer Program had already started. There were already Weekend Volunteers—in fact, one of the most important of the early volunteer groups was the Weekend Volunteers. Then, there were the Plant Propagation volunteers. And there were the Tour Guides. Those were the very earliest volunteer programs that we needed to get up and running. Plant Propagation was in the greenhouse. At that time, there was nothing out here, compared with later years. So, if you wanted to do an on-site program, that was it. There are old pictures of Ken conducting Plant Propagation in the greenhouse.

INTERVIEWER: Who are some people from those early days who you want us to remember, people who were influential?

DOT: Well, probably Ritchie—Dr. Bell—would be the keystone of the entire group. The Garden was his dream. You know, Bill Hunt had a lot to do with the land and getting the land set aside, and he was very interested in the development of the Botanical Garden Foundation. But Ritchie was that real spark of getting everyone enthused about what he saw as the Garden’s mission. Of course, what is now the Garden started as a research area for students and professors. That was in the ’50s. It was not until 1966 that the first nature trails opened.

INTERVIEWER: So the early involvement did not involve the public?

DOT: The first tours were, of course, tours along the nature trails—there wasn’t much to see or do inside the fence. When you talk to Ken, you’ll hear about the early people who brought plants and gave plants. Some early staff went and dug plants at Grandfather Mountain, from Hugh Morton’s golf course and places like that. The first tours were all on the nature trails.

INTERVIEWER: And you were instrumental in starting that? You wore a lot of hats here!

DOT: Anne Benson Harris was first. I got here in September of ’73. Ann was here until that winter, in January, when she decided to go back to graduate school. So I, quite literally, would run to the
processors, run back, and prepare mailing stickers for Helen Crockford—she was the first membership coordinator; she took care of the mailing list. We did not even have 200 members at that time, but I remember how excited she was by this number. I don’t know what year that would have been. It was probably ’75 or ’76 before we had even 200 people on the list.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us about the certificate programs. I know that you were very instrumental in starting those programs. Tell us about their history, how they began, and your involvement in that.

DOT: In 1978, Ruth Brunstetter moved to Cary with her husband, who was working for IBM. She was a botanical illustrator and had done some very fine work—all over the United States, really. She asked if she could have an exhibit. Well, Jimmy Massey at the Herbarium said, “Oh, you can bring your work here.” He knew of her. So, that was great. And then Jim Ward came in one day and said, “Let’s have an exhibit of her work in the Totten Center.” That would have been, I think, probably in the fall of 1978; if not, it would have been during the winter of ’79—somewhere right in there. Soon, she started teaching classes. I even took time out, joined her class, and learned from her. We had this pool of people, at that point, who were interested in botanical drawing and illustration.

Ruth came in ’78. It was in the late 90’s—I think about 1998—when her health began to deteriorate and she could no longer come to the Garden. But she taught during that entire time. There was nobody else; it was just Ruth. And when she was no longer able to teach classes, I started doing it. By that time, we were aware of other botanical illustration programs around the country. We looked at Chicago. We looked at Garden in the Woods, outside of Boston. We looked at Denver and the New York Botanic Garden. We sent away for information; you know: “Tell us about your program.” Peter White was very interested and said, “I think we ought to do that.” And I said, “OK, cool.” And Ellen Powers, who was then president of the local chapter of the GNSI—the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators—helped me a great deal. She compiled all the notes, and we got together and said, “Will this work for us or will this not work for us?” and we came up with our own program.

INTERVIEWER: So, your program was unique to the Garden, but drew from others. You wanted to have your own stamp on it.

DOT: We wanted it to mean something. They are not accredited classes. They are not college classes. You don’t get any college credit for being involved in the certificate program. So, we had to have it meaty enough so that it would be valued when looked at by some other institution. If you wanted to go and find a job doing illustration, we wanted you to be able to say, “Look, I have this certificate from the North Carolina Botanical Garden and it really means something.” So, that worked very well. As we were developing the illustration program, Peter said, “What about native plant studies?” So, we went to Johnny Randall and he helped us put together that program.
INTERVIEWER: So the two programs started at the same time?

DOT: We started in the fall of 2001.

INTERVIEWER: Were you the first instructor in the program?

DOT: Yes, I was. That is an interesting story. I was struggling with doing all the other things that I did here. And, one day, Sue Aldworth came into my office and said, “I have just moved here. I am a botanical illustrator and I want to teach.” She had no teaching experience at that time. And I said, “Bring in your portfolio.” My name was already listed in the newsletters as the teacher for the botanical illustration watercolor class, but I said, “I am taking my name off of there and letting Sue do it.” Our earliest instructors were many of the same people that teach here now: Emma Skurnick and Patricia Savage, for instance.

INTERVIEWER: How have these certificate programs changed since the beginning? I know they have evolved.

DOT: They have evolved. There are just more choices. I think it has become a little more stringent. We didn’t have that much experience.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think that these programs contribute to the North Carolina Botanical Garden?

DOT: I have always felt that if we are going to be famous, if our mission is conservation, if our mission is the propagation of native plants, if we are serious about promoting native plants, what better way to describe that than through illustration? It is a part of the whole. And to me, it has always been a very important part. And I wanted it. It is something that I personally wanted. I wanted us to have one of the good botanical illustration certificate programs in the country.

INTERVIEWER: And we do.

DOT: And we do. And I am very proud of that.

INTERVIEWER: You are among the Garden’s earliest staff members, and remain involved today. In what ways has the Garden changed and evolved from the time that you joined years ago? Do you think that the mission has changed its focus at all?

DOT: I don’t think the mission has changed. I think it encompasses more than it did originally—because we were young and naïve, you know. Now, it includes so much more. It includes more of a variety of people than it did. When we started, the Garden had 100 or 200 members. The people I am talking about were mostly academics, husbands and wives, UNC graduate students, and townspeople
who had moved here because of the academic community and cultural resources of the area. We didn’t do anything with families—except tours; and all the tours were for kids. We didn’t have a kids program per se. I think the first camp that we had wasn’t until . . . Well, we had an early version of camp that started in the ’70s, when we had no facilities. I remember going in and using things in the unfinished Totten Center—laying out a piece of paper or something; we couldn’t use the unfinished building for camp. So, we did start early. But we didn’t have that many things for families, nothing that compares with today’s program.

INTERVIEWER: And also school involvement.

DOT: Oh, no, we had plenty of involvement; there was plenty. We did a lot of going into local schools. Rob Gardner and I did a lot of school programs. Charlotte did school programs. Jim did school programs.

INTERVIEWER: So the school programs were there, initially.

DOT: Oh, yeah, from the get-go. As soon as we had the Totten Center, we started getting these little grants, little bitty mini-grants to do programs. Glenwood was always great. Their PTA always supported us very strongly. We did programs with every grade level at Glenwood. And even when I got here, Anne Benson Harris had set up programs for every 4th grader in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro school system. They came to the Garden for a program on Poison Plants. And that’s why our numbers . . . it was hard to match the numbers that we had during those early years. We had 4,000 kids come through our program— because we had them all. I don’t think that the programs were as sophisticated as they are now. I’m sure they were not. But we sure had them, and we worked hard. The Tour Guides here can tell you how hard we worked in those early years.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that helped to expand the Garden’s membership?

DOT: Absolutely! We had students who came and said, “I came here in the 2nd grade and brought my mom and dad.” And they’d be in the 7th grade at that point. Absolutely!

INTERVIEWER: Can you describe some long-standing Garden traditions, ones that took root at the Garden during those early years? Are there any ones that you think should remain?

DOT: My first experience at the Garden was coming to the Open House—the Open House on Labor Day. It was a monumental task for the staff. We just knocked ourselves silly trying, and we had thousands of people, thousands of people.

INTERVIEWER: When did it start?
DOT: It was going on when I came. My first experience at the Botanical Garden was on Labor Day of 1973. I think there had been two open houses prior to that. Check with Ken or Jim; they would know. I think there had been at least two.

INTERVIEWER: Describe the Labor Day Open House.

DOT: Oh, my goodness. Before it was unacceptable, we had balloons that said NORTH CAROLINA BOTANICAL GARDEN—and escaped into the atmosphere. We had a clown. We had conservation groups that were always a big part of it. New Hope Audubon Society always came. The Triangle Bonsai Society was always big. We concentrated on information. We had activities for children. There were lots of things. I remember a big felt board. It was two pieces of plywood—a huge felt board thing. It had a pond and a forest. The kids were supposed to put the turtle in the pond and the squirrel in the forest. We did programs. I remember doing one on dried foods, of all things. We were trying to pull the public in, let them know that the Garden was here. We gave away plants. We had a treasure hunt, and at the end of it, if you completed the treasure hunt, you got a Venus flytrap or a cardinal flower—something that had been grown here. So, that was my Open House experience.

1978, once again, was a big year program-wise. That was the first year we did the holiday tree decorations, the natural ornaments. We had been having—even when I first got here—the annual meeting, on the second Monday in November and, at that time, it included things to do. We didn’t have the Holiday Party at that point. But in the ’70s, Virginia White—when you talk about people from the early years, she meant a lot to me. Virginia White was a super volunteer; she could do everything. She had gone to the Smithsonian and they had a variety of Christmas trees, one of which was covered with pressed Queen Anne’s lace as an ornament. She came back and said, “We can do this.” So, that’s when we started the holiday tradition. And it was a big point for Virginia. She was in charge of it, thank goodness. Every year had a different theme. So, we had a gold tree, we had a nut tree, we had a leaf tree, we had a blue tree, a red tree, a white tree, a critters tree—all kinds of things. It was a big draw. People came to see the tree, every year.

DOT: So, the Holiday Party—that was a big thing. You know, I don’t remember when we got into . . . There were lots of people who wanted us to get into radio and TV. People who had video businesses wanted us to get into radio and TV. And we tried a few things on television, but we just didn’t have the resources.

INTERVIEWER: Is that something you think we should look at in the future?

DOT: I think, North Carolina—and I am thinking public television now—has that covered. I think that is not anything that we need to mess around with. That’s my opinion. Radio. I did radio. I did a radio spot for 13 years.
INTERVIEWER: What did you do? What did you talk about?

DOT: Whatever was outside that I thought you ought to know about. *Bidens*! You know, *Bidens* in the fall, the yellow ditch daisies. Ok, once the *Bidens* bloomed, I was sure to have a program on the yellow composite that you are seeing everywhere, making these swaths in the ditches—*Bidens*! Or I would talk about the sea myrtle, *Baccharis halimifolia*—is that it? Pretty close. Is that right, Paula? I would talk about that. I did that radio spot for 13 years. And then I did, I think, another six years of turning those radio programs into newsletter columns.

INTERVIEWER: Was that on WCHL?

DOT: No, that was WUNC. You didn’t know that?

INTERVIEWER: I think that should be resurrected.

DOT: It was a lot of fun. I pride myself on the fact that I never missed a week, in 13 years—except for 2 weeks when I was gone on a trip and Ken said, “I will do it!” And I got back, and he hadn’t done it! (Laughter.)

INTERVIEWER: That is probably the only time that Ken let you down.

DOT: The only time.

INTERVIEWER: What is your hope and vision for the Garden?

DOT: I think everything is doing very well. There are always new things that are going to happen, but I think the current administration is doing a great job.

INTERVIEWER: You think everything is going the way it should, that we are going in the right direction?

DOT: Yes. And I think that we—in the early days—were mission driven. But, we didn’t exactly understand the parameters of the mission. I think that is much better understood today. For instance, we wouldn’t have balloons today. That was terrible. It was not conservation-focused.

INTERVIEWER: Thanks so much for your memories and your contribution to the Garden over the years. We appreciate your spending this time with us.

DOT: You are very welcome.

QUESTIONER: If you have a little more time, I would be interested in hearing about how you found yourself at the Garden.
DOT: If you had asked me, when I was 16, what I wanted to do with my life, I would have said that I wanted to direct the camp that I was involved with as a kid. It was an environmental education camp. And that is what I wanted to do. And then, when I got into college, I wanted to be a park ranger. Well, I tried that avenue, but they didn’t accept women at that time. I applied to be a ranger at Yosemite. They said, “We are sorry, we have no bathroom facilities for women, and so we couldn’t have you.” That is what I wanted to do. If you talk to anybody, who would say that they are doing what they started out as a kid to do? I came as close as anyone I know. That is what I wanted to do. I was teaching wildflowers and fern identification when I was in high school. And I grew ferns for a garden when I was 13.

QUESTIONER: So you found your calling really early?

DOT: Yes, and I really never veered very far from it. There are things about the job here that I didn’t like. I didn’t like doing publicity. I didn’t like having to deal with the inaccuracies of reporters and deadlines. I was very pleased when Sandra Brooks-Mather took over the newsletter, because that was just one more tedious thing that wasn’t fun to me. I have to admit that I have always gone for the fun things. Coming up with a theme for the holiday tree is a lot more fun than dealing with a reporter from the newspaper who called the Garden one October and asked, “Are there any daffodils blooming right now?” He is a good example of the kind of uninformed people we had to deal with many times.

QUESTIONER: I remember your radio programs. They were lovely.

DOT: Thanks.

QUESTIONER: You helped me to look around and see what I might not have noticed.

DOT: I did. I told you to get out there and fertilize your daffodils!

QUESTIONER: When was your radio broadcast?

DOT: For many years, it was on Monday morning. And I think that, after a while, it varied. But for a long time, it was on Monday.

INTERVIEWER: What else did you do at the Garden? Were there other jobs that you had here?

DOT: I organized all of the exhibits. I did the Weekend Volunteer training. I started that program—not the original Weekend Volunteers, they were already in place. You haven’t been here long enough to know about the time when we had the three-sided log cabin. Ma Bell—Mary Edith Bell, Ritchie’s mom, when she retired from being a dorm mom at UNC-Asheville—came down here so Ritchie could watch out for her. She had this cadre of people, male and female—it was very mixed. They went up to the Glen Lennox pharmacy, which was gone by the time you got here. They got a key to
the Garden’s gate. These people would come down, open the gate, and sit there year-round, greeting visitors as they came in. And they kept records, which we put in the annual report. They kept track, for instance, of how many people from how many countries came for a visit. They were wonderful emissaries for the Garden.

INTERVIEWER: So that was before you were responsible for training Tours Guides?

DOT: No, it was at the same time. And some people volunteered for both programs. Ellen Walker was both a Weekend Volunteer and a Tour Guide. That was also true of Annie Leigh Broughton. If I spent time, I could probably remember quite a few of them.

INTERVIEWER: You are still involved today. What are you doing today? In the library, I know.

DOT: Oh, yes, that’s fun. I love that. We are taking care of the library. Over the years, as people have downsized and passed on, they have given us their books. Some of them turn out to be quite rare, which is a great find. We are cataloging them. The Garden’s library collections are now part of the UNC library system. We are not a lending library, but we are part of the library system. And it’s been great fun cataloging those books. And then, the extra books we can sell at the Fall Plant Sale. And that money could be used for repairing some of the rare books that are not in good shape. They really need to be enclosed in archival boxes. We want to put everything that is really valuable in such a box.

INTERVIEWER: And will they stay here or go to Wilson Library?

DOT: Oh, no, they will stay here.

INTERVIEWER: Nancy, are we missing other things that Dot does or has done in the past?

NANCY: She grows all the ferns!

DOT: From spores.

INTERVIEWER: Really?!

DOT: All the ones that are in the Plant Sale. Lady fern, I don’t bother with. Sensitive fern, I don’t bother with.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Tell us about the Cattail Gate.

DOT: It was made by Jim Gallucci, a local sculptor. He was invited to be in the Sculpture Show, one year. And then we said we wanted a gate. It was unanimous that Jim should be the one to make it.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Describe life in the little Green Shed. We have heard a little about the Green Shed. Also, life in the Totten Center.
DOT: The early Weekend Volunteers, organized in 1971, were a hardy bunch. They picked up a key to the Garden gate at the local pharmacy, pulled a card table out of the trunk of their car, set it up by the gate, and warmly greeted visitors. There was no true restroom, but have you heard of “Mr. King,” who arrived in the late ’60s or early ’70s from King’s Sanitary Services? He was our porta-potty. In 1975, two years after I started at the Garden, Ritchie built a rustic three-sided log structure as a gatehouse. It was constructed with wood from an old tobacco barn. Ritchie shingled it himself.

The staff office at that time was the Green Shed. Ken had a desk, a phone, and an electric heater—a little electric heater. We were uptown! (Laughter) If we had problems with the children, I could call him and say, “Help!” If you needed running water, there was a spigot and a hose outside the shed. If you wanted to make a cup of coffee, a tree stump in the Green Shed served as a stand for our coffee pot. You got your water from the spigot and made your coffee.

Then, in the fall of 1975, we moved into the Totten Center. And I have to tell you about the windows. You know how there are windows? They were not in the original plan. I said to Ritchie, “I am not going to work at the Botanical Garden, if I have to work in a cave.” So, we had windows. By the time we got into the building, there was no money for furniture—no money! We had a piece of plywood and legs, and that was your table. That’s what we had in the building. There was a University Surplus where we got things; also, a Coker Hall surplus. We went down into the basement of Coker Hall, found things, and brought them down to the Totten Center. My desk was a surplus desk from the Coker basement. It was great. I loved that desk. We started having programs, at that point, although we still had many classes in the greenhouse.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: (Unintelligible)

DOT: Are you talking about programs? Oh, we had the most marvelous art exhibit, in 1976. We invited all the big artists in the community at that time. Two- and three-dimensional art filled both of the classrooms—there was a big classroom and little one. Sculptures were included. That was the very first exhibit. Mrs. Totten had a collection of prints—those Williamsburg 4-seasons prints and 12-month prints. We made an exhibit out of those prints. Tour Guides and others brought things from home. We had exhibits featuring anything I could think of. Then, people started catching on and calling up and saying, “I am an artist. Can I show?” We started having other people come in. But—talk about “mission driven”—I wouldn’t accept anything for an artist exhibit, unless it clearly fit the description of “botanical illustration.” I didn’t care whether it featured German irises, or not, but the subject had to be plants. We had this one guy come in who was a was fantasy illustrator; his work didn’t make the cut.

INTERVIEWER: Did you allow invasive plants?
DOT: Yes, because we just didn’t know any better. Not to tell stories out of school, but Jim Ward, at one point, when he was an outside worker, a gardener, brought bittersweet into the Garden and planted it. That story doesn’t need to leave these walls. But, later, he also removed it.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: For many years, there was a daffodil show.

DOT: Yes, the Garden Club was great.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: (Unintelligible)

DOT: Camellias, and then he got into primulas

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: We had a lot more than native plants, initially?

DOT: Forsythias, redbud . . . Forsythia, redbud, and blueberries.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: (Unintelligible)

DOT: Yeah, we didn’t know any better.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: (Unintelligible)

DOT: That's right, and that was very important. You have to go public.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: One last question about the wildflower T-shirts.

DOT: OK, that started in 1981. There had been some before that. We had the original T-shirt, a Venus flytrap. Charlotte was the first T-shirt maker. We decided that we were all going to buy goldenrod T-shirts. Everybody was responsible for doing his own T-shirt; you could do it on anything. People brought old T-shirts. It was one of the big attractions during the annual Open House. You could bring your T-shirts to the Garden and Charlotte would put this design of the Venus flytrap on it. She had three screens: a green screen, a red screen . . . No, she dropped the white in by hand, on the flower of the Venus flytraps. Richard Schrader was a kid—he might have been a teenager by the time he did that. He designed it—he and Charlotte. Charlotte went absolutely looney with the fumes. They did the silk-screening of the T-shirts in the garage of the Totten Center—this tradition didn’t start until the opening of the Totten Center. Open House before the Totten Center centered around Ritchie Bell and his apple cider press.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: (Unintelligible)

DOT: Speaking of the T-shirts, we did that same design—maybe Charlotte remembers how many years that went on. And then Betsy Birkner did one. I started doing them—whatever I felt like. The Wildflower of the Year did not determine the design, until 1981. From the mid 70’s to ’81, it was
whatever. You see the design of the maidenhair fern? That was an early T-shirt design, a very nice one. It was a good T-shirt! [NB: Wildflower of the Year T-shirts did not actually start until 1985, with butterfly milkweed; the cardinal flower WFOY T-shirt is from 2001, when cardinal flower repeated as WFOY.]

INTERVIEWER: Who chooses the Wildflower of the Year?

DOT: The team. Right now, it is Heather Summer, Matt Gocke and Chris Liloia—the Horticulture Department. They get together and ask: Is it native? Will it grow in all the geographical regions of North Carolina? Are the seeds mailable? Is it an herbaceous perennial? None of the Wildflower of the Year have been annuals. Is it showy? Can we convince the public that this is a good thing to grow? So, cardinal flower was the logical first choice—a no-brainer, absolutely a no-brainer. We chose it for two years, ’81 and ’82. [NB: It was also WFOY in ’82 and ’83, not ’81 and ’82.] Then we said, “Well, gee, this is boring. Let’s do something else.” That’s when we started on the whole sequence. Has anyone looked to see if they still exist—those early ones?

INTERVIEWER: We could go on for hours. So much knowledge here.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: (Unintelligible)

DOT: If you’d asked me twenty years ago if that is what I wanted—for the country to recognize this little place? It is not a metropolitan area. When we looked at the Guild of Natural Science Illustrator hot spots, they were in metropolitan areas. And here we are with a really great representation.

INTERVIEWER: That was incredible.

DOT: That was a lot of history. And you know, at the time, you never know that you are setting an example with things that you’ve done. Then there comes a time when you look back and say, “Wow, I didn’t realize that I was actually playing a part in something that had not been done before.”

INTERVIEWER: And what an influence it will have down the road.

DOT: I consider this a fantastic, viable institution. I always will.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Did you teach any of the botany students?

DOT: I only did Tour Guides, I think. Tour Guides and some botanical illustration classes.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: How about interns?

DOT: Oh, well, I knew them all. When you are in one building and the only way to the restroom is down the back hall . . . (Laughter) That’s one reason why I volunteer on Fridays. I work with the Horticulture Department because for 30 years, when I walked down that hallway, I would think,
“Look at all those people having fun.” I wanted to be part of that, to talk with them. I made some big mistakes. (Laughter) I was wondering, do you know who Laura Martin is? She wrote a wildflower book. Here’s a story: I thought that I had arranged for her to come and do a program. Everybody was sitting patiently in the auditorium . . . and she didn’t show. I called her up—she lives in Atlanta—and she was home. And she said, “Well, you never confirmed it.”

INTERVIEWER: What did you do? Did you talk about ferns for an hour?

DOT: No. I gave them their money back and everybody went home. It was terrible.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: That was your one mistake in how many years?

DOT: Oh, no. Let me tell you about the first mistake I ever made! That was really fun! One of my big jobs, before I took over from Anne, was to go over to the printing department. The Garden Club was selling forsythias and redbuds—not blueberries at that point. It was time for the sale. The sale was in March, so it would have been March of ’74. Ritchie said, “Here. We need to inform the public about these plants. Go to the printers and have them print up 1,000 copies of how to grow forsythia and how to grow redbud—how to plant them.” I can see it now; it is still bugging me. A thousand of these things! (Laughter) Instructions had to be printed for 1,000 redbuds and 1,000 forsythias. That was a significant expense at that point! I was very proud of being handed this responsibility. I went over to the printers, picked them up, and brought them back to Ritchie. Ritchie took one look at them and said, “Dot, they’re white.” And I said, “Yeah.” He said, “I told you that the instructions for the redbuds go on pink and the ones for the forsythias go on yellow.” So, I had to reprint them . . . and we didn’t have money.

INTERVIEWER: I don’t think that was a very big mistake. You can just let that one go. (Laughter.)

DOT: When you joke that much about something, you know it’s time to let it go! We used to go up to the Carolina Inn and ask for their trash. We brought it down here. There were lipstick smears on the Styrofoam cups. We kept anything that wasn’t covered with lipstick and didn’t have cream in it. We washed them and Ken used them to plant seeds in. But, you know, we sold those cardinal flowers for a quarter—they just didn’t cost anything. But we didn’t have anything. It is really remarkable what the staff did with the resources that we had. All the dedicated people!

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: Who inspired you?

DOT: Who inspired me? The people here at the Garden. Definitely, Ritchie. I didn’t always agree with him, but he was intensely dedicated to native plants and on educating the public about how to use them in their gardens. If you are going to put a label on people, Ken was the one who came up with the phrase “conservation through propagation.” But Ritchie was the one who said that native
plants are important in our world, and he had so much enthusiasm and energy for getting that word out. He was really big with the garden clubs. He spent years developing a relationship with the garden clubs of North Carolina. That was really important. Ritchie was an inspiration.

Ken has always been an inspiration: “We can do it. We can do it. You can do it.” If I learned anything from Ken, it was, “You can do it.” Jimmy Massey was a big one. He started the Plant Sale when he was here. We had these concrete block rectangular beds and the plant families went linearly through these beds. The different families and their relationships with each other were clearly delineated. I got out there on the weekends and dug holes, because of his enthusiasm. He is a very enthusiastic plant person as well.

A lot of the early Board members were important. Linda Lamm—oh, my gosh! The gals from Wilson: Teeny and Gretchen, Judy and Burke Davis. Once you get Ken started, you’ll never hear the end of that.

When Ruth got here, I was inspired in another direction, because of my drawing—even though I had illustrated the newsletter, beginning in January of ‘74—the first illustrated one. When I got here, the newsletter was an 8½ x 14 mimeographed sheet printed on two sides. We folded it like an accordion and put a little sticker on it. Mrs. Crockford had all the members’ names, and we stuck it in the mail. And that was it. It was just words. So, in January of ‘74, I drew a skunk cabbage—and that was the first newsletter illustration. I never stopped after that.

INTERVIEWER: And we are still having beautiful drawings.

DOT: Every once in a while, they will use something from those days.

MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE: By the way, if anybody needs any beautiful Christmas cards, her chickadees are in the gift shop.

DOT: Those are going to be my Christmas cards this year.

INTERVIEWER: Dot, thank you.

CONCLUSION

This concludes our series of interviews with a small but significant group of people who, in their role as lead staff or board members, have worked devotedly to shape and steadfastly advance the mission of the North Carolina Botanical Garden during its first fifty years. We greatly appreciate the time and attention each of them has given to this project. Their thoughts, memories, and stories not only provide us with a better understanding of the Garden’s early years, but convey the power and importance of individual action in making the world a better place for all.
APPENDIX H: Conversations with NCBG Horticulture Staff, Past & Present

INTRODUCTION

During a nine-month period, from December of 2015 through July of 2016, Greenbrier volunteers sat down with various members of the NCBG Horticulture Department staff, past and present. Memories and the information shared during these conversations are summarized in the following scripts.

CURTIS BROOKS, FORMER COKER ARBORETUM CURATOR—MARCH 11, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Curtis Brooks was the curator of Coker Arboretum from March 1984-September 1986. He replaced Paul Jones, the Arboretum’s first full-time curator (1978-84), who left to develop an Asian plant collection at Sarah P. Duke Gardens. During Jones’s time, care of the Arboretum was moved to the NCBG from the Department of Botany, which merged with the Department of Zoology to form the Department of Biology.* Coker Arboretum, with extensive non-native plant collections, found itself now something of a “stepchild” to NCBG, with its mission of promoting native plants.

Curtis was the first Arboretum curator hired by the NCBG—specifically, by Ken Moore, Charlotte Jones-Roe, and Alan Johnson. Ken called J. C. Raulston at the NCSU Arboretum, seeking someone for the job, and J. C. said, “Call Curtis,” a Duke botany graduate who was then a helper at the NCSU Arboretum. Raulston was Curtis’s mentor and dear friend.

The NCSU Arboretum in Raleigh was a teaching, demonstration, and information garden for new introductions to the state’s horticulture industry. In contrast, Curtis saw the 5-acre Coker Arboretum as an historic garden to be cherished, a naturalistic pleasure garden, and a sanctuary for relaxation without a singular educational mission. In this, he found himself sometimes at odds with the purists among the horticultural staff at the main garden.

When Curtis arrived at Coker Arboretum, plant accession records were poorly organized or nonexistent, and many plant labels had been vandalized. He worked to organize plant records and expand the labeling of woody plants with metal tags attached to branches.

At that time, Coker Arboretum mostly needed a lot of maintenance—mulching, weeding, lots of pruning, plus selective removal of overcrowded and declining plants. Paul Jones had greatly expanded the woody plant collection, including numerous dwarf conifers and Camellias, the favorites of his supervisor, Dr. Cliff Parks. Curtis removed some of these to give those remaining room to grow, and to align the Arboretum more with his vision of its primary purpose: a pleasure garden.
Chinese wisteria had overgrown not only its arbor, but also the gazebo at one end, and was well into adjacent trees.

CURTIS: You couldn’t see into the arbor; it was dim and scary. In 1984, I climbed up on top of the arbor with a chain saw and loppers, and cut it back severely to either the appreciation or dismay of many garden visitors.

INTERVIEWER: Besides pruning and thinning out woody plants, Curtis added bulbs and herbaceous plants.

CURTIS: I used the cactus greenhouse to grow perennials and annual bedding plants. I grew lots of zinnias and marigolds, wanting the enhanced views into the garden to have color and make people feel happy.

INTERVIEWER: What challenges did you face?

CURTIS: Vandalism, some of it in the form of poached and damaged plants. People also moved, defaced, or took away plant labels. They removed parts of the split-rail fence so that they could drive in and park in the Arboretum for sports events. Rocks were thrown through the roof of the greenhouse every several months. It got to be such a problem that staff removed the greenhouse in 1987, soon after I left—and that was the end of the zinnias. Safety issues such as gates, lighting, and visibility were concerns then, and are still a problem on the minds of staff today.

I had one regular volunteer. His name was Tom and he helped with the chores, especially mulching. The UNC Grounds Services Department delivered mulch and fixed the greenhouse when panes were broken. After about a year, UNC agreed to mow the grass, but that was pretty much the extent of their involvement.

I had a small budget for plants. I used it primarily for daffodils and daylilies. I felt the need to rethink previous plantings. The Arboretum was in a period of transition, so I planted what could be moved around easily in the future. I’m probably guilty of planting daffodils without accession.

INTERVIEWER: Besides caring for the plantings, Curtis taught pruning workshops at the Arboretum, as well as a course called Landscaping by Subtraction. Its focus was on assessing which plants in your landscape will still be your “friends” in 20 years, and removing those that won’t. He gave tours of the Arboretum on request, and pitched in with the rest of the NCBG staff for the Labor Day Open House and Plant Sale, at the main garden site each year. He also wrote a brief history of Coker Arboretum [see NCBG Newsletter Vol. XIII No. 5, p. 1; and Vol. XIII No. 6, p. 2, both 1985].
Curtis’s memories of his years as curator include Friday afternoon NCBG staff parties, mostly at Mason Farm.

CURTIS: [I remember] a really nice group of people on the whole. My best friends were Alan Johnson and Harry Phillips. We all went to Ritchie Bell’s house, sometimes.

INTERVIEWER: Curtis also recalls that Ken Moore married his wife Kathy Buck, and Curtis Brooks married his wife Nan Dewire, in the Coker Arboretum on consecutive spring weekends, in 1984.

After 2½ years as Coker Arboretum Curator, Curtis returned to NCSU to work as a teaching assistant while he took classes in landscape architecture. His master’s thesis topic was planning for changes to a historic garden [=Coker Arboretum]. He observed Arboretum visitors and proposed design changes to enhance public use and enjoyment, as well as aesthetics—where there were missing paths, where trash accumulates, etc. His thesis envisioned more views across the Arboretum, and a central focal point. One of his suggestions—the DeBerry Overlook at the entrance by Morehead Planetarium—was implemented in 2008.

CURTIS: Since I left [Coker Arboretum] there have been other curators with other visions. I respect their different approaches and what they’ve accomplished.

INTERVIEWER: Curtis expected to end up teaching, but instead became Chapel Hill’s Urban Forester in 1990. He is currently project manager for the town’s major projects, such as the recent public library expansion. His job now primarily involves logistics and organization, with landscaping playing only a minor role. He misses working with plants, as his private yard is now his outlet for horticultural expression.

CURTIS: I’m still a gardener at heart, and when I retire, gardening is what I’ll do.

*Paul Jones left not only for a good opportunity at Duke, but also because his mentor and supervisor, Dr. Cliff Parks, was not in support of the transfer of Coker Arboretum from his own oversight to NCBG. Dr. Parks and NCBG Director Dr. C.Ritchie Bell did not always see eye to eye.

**NANCY EASTERLING, FORMER HERB GARDEN CURATOR— JULY 15, 2016**

INTERVIEWER: Former Herb Garden Curator Nancy Easterling wore many hats during her career at the NCBG. Nancy was responsible for the Herb Garden from 1995-2005. She was preceded in this post by Rebecca Wellborn and succeeded by Wendy Wenck. During this span of years, she also served as coordinator of the Garden’s Horticultural Therapy program and assisted with children and family programs. Nancy credits Kim Andrews and Laura Dorton with helping her juggle these various roles at the Garden.
NANCY: Thank you for asking about my years as Herb Garden Curator. Here is a list of what we accomplished during that time period:

- Redesigning all beds, especially the Rosemary Collection beds
- Purchasing the first large container planters
- Creating a Kitchen Garden within the Culinary Garden
- Replanting the apple espalier
- Accepting the Rosemary Collection from the NC Herb Association; managing the Rosemary Collection with nursery stock back-up and regular data collection and reporting on horticultural aspects
- Redesigning the Native American Garden; writing *An Illustrated Guide to the Native American Plant Collection* at NCBG; planning and implementing the Native Plants, Native People family event (held 2 times), in partnership with the Occoneechee Indians; working with an Eagle Scout to build the Native American *ati* (hut)
- Working with ceramic artist Sarah Craige to create the Rosemary Collection tiles that tell the story of rosemary, now hanging on the apple espalier
- Developing the *For the Young at Heart* activity booklet used by children and families to explore the Herb Garden
- Prototyping the “Children’s Garden,” which included a fairy house, fairy hunt, blueberry house, and digging place.
- Supporting a group of 20+ volunteers and providing weekly educational mini-sessions
- Developing the Herb House into a place for children’s activities and educational herb exhibits, including having benches made into storage benches
- Incorporating ergonomic gardening tools into the volunteer program
- Integrating horticultural therapy-referred clients into the volunteer program
- Consulting on the plant choices for the UNC Library Sciences medicinal garden
INTERVIEWER: Matt Gocke started working at the NCBG in January of 2008, under Director of Horticulture Jim Ward. Peter White was then director of the garden; Andrew Bell was assistant director. Matt filled a newly created position, which centralized greenhouse and nursery operations into a single propagation-management role. He came directly to the Garden from graduate school, where he had conducted research on woody plant propagation. He knew [NCBG employees] Sally Heiney and Dan Stern and had always been envious of their jobs. When Matt’s current position became available in 2007, both Sally and Dan called Matt to let him know about this opportunity.

Chris Liloia and Sally Heiney were relieved of greenhouse and nursery duty and returned to their other responsibilities when Matt came on board. Matt Daley became Matt’s assistant in 2010, after a period of volunteering in the greenhouse and nursery. Nursery Assistant Katherine Meehan was hired in 2016, replacing Aren Blake (2015) and Ray Donheiser (2013-2014). Katherine works at the Garden Thursday through Sunday and oversees greenhouse and nursery operations on the weekends, when Matt is ordinarily not at the Garden.

Heather Summer has been the coordinator of NCBG’s Seed Program for four years now. Her job is integral to the nursery because she collects seed, sows seed, and maintains data on seed accession (the seed’s place of origin and collection date).

Only plants with known wild provenance can be planted in the NCBG habitat gardens. Habitat Gardens Curator Chris Liloia maintains the habitat gardens at the NCBG and keeps track of the accession of the plants in her spaces. Any accessionable plant material not used by Chris is either used in other spaces in the Garden or sold to the general public. Non-accessioned plant material in the nursery may be utilized in certain spaces in the garden or sold to the public.

Matt also receives seed from NCBG Conservation Department employee Amanda Faucette, who collects seed from NCBG land and natural areas, when permitted. Other sources of seed include former employee Andy Walker, who periodically collects seed from wild areas across the state (with permission) and donates some to the Garden. Conservation Ecologist Mike Kunz, a member of NCBG’s Conservation Department, also provides seed to the nursery from his research areas, when permitted.
In 2010-12, work-study student J.C. Poythress helped both NCBG’s Horticulture Department and Conservation Department, collecting seed, growing and propagating plants, and ramping up production to populate the new garden areas around the new Education Center. J.C. also developed an Excel spreadsheet propagation guide, before heading to graduate school in Georgia.

NCBG’s greenhouse and nursery operations rely on a handful of staff to run efficiently and effectively. Work-study students, interns and a dedicated cadre of volunteers are also crucial to the success of the nursery operation. There are about fifteen Tuesday/Thursday morning Nursery and Greenhouse Volunteers. The Wednesday morning Plant Propagation Volunteers are a long-running group, some now in their 90’s, who pot seedlings.

MATT: The volunteers are a great group; I couldn’t do it without them. They do anything I need—potting, watering, weeding etc.

INTERVIEWER: Each year, the greenhouse and nursery staff holds a a Daily Plant Sale, a Spring Plant Sale, and a two-day Fall Plant Sale. The Daily Plant Sale area is located outside the Garden Shop and houses up to 100 species of plants for sale to the public, beginning when trout lilies bloom along the Nature Trails, in February/March, and running until shortly after the new year. In 2016, the Spring Plant Sale was renamed the Spring Native Plant Sale and Festival and included five guest vendors, all native plant growers. It was designed to be a fundraiser for the Garden, as well as an opportunity to work side-by-side with other local native plant nurseries. The Fall Plant Sale showcases plants grown by the NCBG and simultaneously celebrates our members with a member-only preview sale on Friday evening, before the Saturday public plant sale.

MATT: The plant sale was hectic the first year or two. I like seeing all the plants on display that we’ve worked hard to grow. It’s a Garden-wide event across all departments, particularly enjoyable because we interact with the community; it’s the people’s party for all our supporters.

INTERVIEWER: What changes have occurred in your eight years here?
MATT: The Conservation Department has evolved and grown. New positions, since 2014, include Conservation Botanist Amanda Faucette, a member of our Seeds of Success team, and Land Manager Neville Handel, at Mason Farm.

Horticulture is managing more landscape with fewer people than before. Nonetheless, we’ve evolved into a more positive work force—people seem happier at work than in 2008.

When I first started at NCBG, all staff worked out of the Totten Center. Because of this, there was an intense sense of community. With the new education buildings and spread of staff, a sense of closeness is harder to achieve. A greater sense of connectedness returned when Damon Waitt became director in 2015.

INTERVIEWER: What do you see as some milestones?

MATT: Garden milestones include construction of the new Education Center, the realization of a Piedmont Habitat Garden in the Garden proper, and the removal of the fence between the Piedmont and Coastal Plain Habitat Gardens. For me personally, my milestones include striving to be a better propagator and producing more plants for sale. Currently, we sell approximately 10,000 plants a year: 500 at the Spring Plant Sale, 7,000 at the Daily Plant Sale and 2,500 at the Fall Plant Sale.

INTERVIEWER: Matt’s favorite plants are “woodies,” plants with parts that stay alive above ground in the winter.

Matt grew up in Raleigh and graduated from UNC in 1991, with a degree in education and a focus on social studies. Before attending graduate school at NC State, in forestry, Matt worked for Mary Jane Baker at Spring Branch Landscapes, in Carrboro, NC, for 8 years. He also played in a band called Spatula.

MATT: Landscaping gave me freedom to travel and play music.

INTERVIEWER: Matt teaches classes on vegetative propagation, annually, at the Garden, and also to conference attendees at the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference.

What do you see as some challenges?

MATT: The distance of the nursery from the Daily Plant Sale site. Oftentimes, people working in the Garden Shop are not well versed in the plants and cannot promote sales, and the nursery experts are too far away to offer customers guidance. Recently, photos have been integrated into the Daily Plant
Sale signs. A new brochure on creating a pollinator garden is the first on the list of planned helpful leaflets.

**ALAN JOHNSON, FORMER GROUNDS SUPERVISOR—NOVEMBER 25, 2015**

INTERVIEWER: Alan Johnson worked for 32 years at NCBG, from 1974-2006. His first position was as a grounds worker; later, he worked as nursery manager and grounds supervisor. Harry Phillips, Jim Ward, Charlotte Jones-Roe and Rob Gardner were hired about the same time. Initially, Alan managed the greenhouse and then developed the first outdoor nursery areas. In the years to come, Harry and Janie Bryan were in charge of propagation that ultimately led to native plant sales. Rob Gardner took over this role after Harry left. During his time as supervisor, Alan was involved in hiring Wendy Wenck, Bob Peoples, and Steven Keith. Generally, he did not have volunteers working with him, but there were many work-study students, as well as young offenders putting in community service hours. Alan valued the opportunity to teach working skills to these young people.

A North Carolina native, Alan earned a two-year associate degree at Sandhills Community College, in their well-respected landscape gardening program, which provided a broad background in horticulture. The curriculum included visiting various public gardens along the East Coast, and Alan gained employment at one of them: Longwood Gardens, in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. After a year and a half at Longwood, Alan wanted to return to North Carolina. So, he jumped at the suggestion of William Hunt, who happened to be visiting Longwood with a Sandhills Community College class, that he get in touch with Ken Moore, who was hiring at the fledgling NCBG. Ken hired Alan, along with Charlotte Jones-Roe, Harry Phillips, and James Ward. This young and energetic group developed much of the garden as we know it today: Alan as nursery manager and grounds supervisor, the others developing and curating the habitat gardens. During these early years, Nancy Hilmer and Frank Parker were work-study students.

The Garden’s first Director, Ritchie Bell, a “DIY guy,” taught Alan and Jim carpentry, and they went to work.

INTERVIEWER: What projects do you remember being involved in during your time at the NCBG?

ALAN:

- Construction of the Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden (1973)

- Removal of rectangular nursery beds from what is now the Shade Garden and laying out paths now found there
• Rock work in front of the Totten Center, with Jim Ward

• Planting bald cypress trees opposite the Totten Center, with Jim Ward

• Personally collecting blocks of sod from an expanding quarry in Maple Hill, NC (near Burgaw), which were used to establish the Coastal Plain Savanna habitat (1984)

• Paul Green Cabin

• Plant rescue at Lionel Melvin’s “Pleasant Garden,” which was about to be developed and had many interesting selections of native plants (eg, a twice-compound Christmas fern, now in front of Totten Center; Pachysandra procumbens)

• Collection of Shortia before its site was flooded (Lake Jocassee in SC)

• Building nurseries at Mason Farm 2-3 times

• General contracting for the patio on the south side of the Totten Center (mid-‘90s)

• Locating the source of the black locust logs used in rebuilding the arbor at Coker Arboretum on UNC’s main campus (actual building of arbor by carpenter Bob Chamberlain) (1998)

• Coordinating with the logging crew that cleared (diseased) pine trees on the present site of the Allen Education Center; arranging for them to be lumbered so that their wood could be used in interior building trim; and clearing the building site

• Involvement in the design of the Allen Education Center

INTERVIEWER: What stories do you remember from your years at the Garden?

ALAN: Ritchie Bell built a log shelter where volunteers were stationed to greet visitors on weekends. It was the first interpretive site, and his mother was one of the volunteers. It was located by the path on the Mountain Habitat side of the garden, 50’ up from the lower gate.

In their early years at NCBG, the young staff had cookouts at Muskrat Pond on Mason Farm. They would picnic and swim. One of them, Harry Phillips, lived on the farm for several years.

Open Houses at NCBG were a Labor Day community event. Staff erected a stage where cloggers performed. There were storytellers, blues and traditional musicians, nature displays and fresh apple cider. Fifty bushels of apples from the mountains were pressed through Ritchie Bell’s cider press.
One year, the tiny Totten Center kitchen was used to prepare okra in various ways, so that the community’s Yankees could sample this southern vegetable. Roy Underhill was already a local celebrity, at that point, and demonstrated woodcraft. This was before Roy became an employee at Williamsburg.

Mercer Reeves Hubbard had financial backing for the Herb Garden. She worked with an enthusiastic group of other volunteers, and her ideas for the herb collection sometimes had to be reined in. From the beginning, NCBG was meant to concentrate on NC native plants, and most herbs don’t fit that mission.

In 1975-76, Alan met Herb Garden volunteer Laurie Mettam. Their lives touched from time to time, over the years, and they eventually married (second time for both). In 2015, they’d been married for 5 years.

Adult education classes Alan taught at NCBG included Firewood, Indoor Gardening, Landscape Design, Propagation, Pruning, Soil and Soil Improvement, and Tree Care.

CHRISTINE LILIOIA, HABITAT GARDENS CURATOR—JANUARY 27, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Chris Liloia arrived at UNC after earning a BS in natural resource management at Rutgers University. During school and for several years after graduating, she worked in ecological restoration and rare plant conservation throughout New Jersey and in south Florida. Chris came to Chapel Hill to earn a master’s degree with Peter White, biology professor and part-time director of the NCBG, in part because of his conservation-mindedness and research interests, and in part because of his involvement with the NCBG. She arrived in town with a trunkful of Helonias bullata (swamp-pink) from her work in New Jersey. She handed them over to Jim Ward, and some of those plants are still at the Garden today.

Chris intended to continue her work in ecological restoration and wanted to learn more about plant propagation. At the time, Rob Gardner needed a new propagation intern.

CHRIS: I interviewed with Rob and with Janie Bryan. They hid it well at the time, but many years later they confided that they were reluctant to take me on, but felt obliged to hire this person Peter had sent down. So, in 2000, I ran away to be an intern at the Garden and never did make it back up the hill to finish my master’s degree. I stayed at the Garden because I liked the job and the people. I didn’t intend to stay in North Carolina, it just kind of happened.

INTERVIEWER: When Rob left, there was no new hire. Chris took over his responsibilities: the horseshoe-shaped Native Perennial Border, the Plant Families Garden, the Water Gardens, the
Carnivorous Plant beds, the Wildflower Border along what was then Laurel Hill Road, propagation, and plant sales.

When Andrew Bell became assistant director, he shifted personnel assignments, and responsibility for the habitat gardens came to Chris. This is also when the Shade Garden became part of the Mountain Habitat. When Janie left, Chris “inherited” the Seed Program, which later passed to Heather Summer, then JC Poythress, and back to Heather. Chris worked with two key employees who have passed on. She shared her recollection of them.

CHRIS: From the stories I’ve heard, Rob Gardner had mellowed some by the time I got to the Garden, but he was still cranky and crotchety—but also interesting, talented, and knowledgeable. I was the last person who came on board the staff and got to work with a lot of the original crew, like Rob, Ken, Dot, and Alan Johnson. I’m so glad I got to work with all of them. Also, with Jim and Charlotte, who are still here now. Rob was more of a plantsman than anyone who’s been here since. In addition to having a hand in the NCBG’s two hybrid wild indigos, he developed quite a few hybrid pitcher plant cultivars with Larry Mellichamp. Many are still available in the trade. Rob also had talent as a designer and propagator.

I think Janie Bryan’s start at the Garden was through Coker Arboretum, possibly while she was in school here. Later, she came back to help with the Seed Program, while Harry Phillips and others were working on the wildflower book [*Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers*, by Harry R. Phillips, UNC Press, 1985]. When Harry left, she took over the Seed Program. That was all before me. When I got here, Rob and Janie worked closely on plant propagation. She went to full time and took on a lot more responsibility during Andrew Bell’s time here. At that time, she wound up supervising me, Sally, Lee Davis (nursery manager) and Wendy. Janie was fantastic to work with. She would pitch in where she was needed, in whatever capacity that may have been. One of her lesser-known talents was her editorial skill. She had the correct spelling of all the botanical names in her head.

INTERVIEWER: What about milestones, memories, or inspirations?

CHRIS: Ritchie Bell was no longer at the Garden when I started, but I was lucky enough to work with Ken Moore. Ken Moore’s vision and tenacity made the Garden the wonderful place I walked into. He was a great leader: able to see what you were doing, appreciate it, communicate that appreciation, and make you want to do more. We’re so lucky he’s still around giving us inspiration.

INTERVIEWER: What events or traditions do you most enjoy?

CHRIS: I like the Plant Sale, but to me what’s best is not so much the events, but the community of people who come, and the volunteers. I’m not what people generally think of as an ornamental
horticulturalist. What I love are the native plants and plant communities, and there are lots of people around here who feel the same way—people who “get” the Garden’s mission, take it for granted that it’s the kind of work we SHOULD be doing here. There really isn’t another place where I could take care of the kinds of plant collections we have at the NCBG.

When Andrew Bell was here, we went to the U. S. Botanical Garden in Washington and replicated our coastal plain habitat, boardwalk and all, on the patio outside their conservatory. We submitted a proposal to the APGA [American Public Gardens Association], and the NCBG proposal was one of about twelve chosen. Andrew, Janie, Johnny Randall, Andy Walker, and Mike Kunz all went. We rented a truck, filled it with Sarracenia (pitcher-plants), and drove to the Capital.

During Andrew Bell’s time here, we also went on staff field trips—one to the Mount Cuba Center and Winterthur, in Delaware, and Longwood Gardens, in Pennsylvania. Another time we headed west, and Peter led us on a Bartram Trail hike before we visited the Atlanta Botanical Garden and met with some of our Atlanta-based board members.

INTERVIEWER: Who are your key volunteers?

CHRIS: Sally Haskell has been here longer than I have. Heather Summer is now in charge of the Seed Program, but she started as a volunteer. Carl Shy was a longtime volunteer; he has just stopped being able to come because of advanced age.

BEVERLY CONNOR McSWAIN, FORMER HERB GARDEN CURATOR—JULY 6, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Beverly Connor moved here from upstate New York, after traveling across the United States for six months. Bev felt at home because North Carolina seemed a lot like her native upstate New York. She had become interested in herbs during vacations at her parents’ cottage on Keuka Lake, and from her early 20s, she always wanted an herb farm. In 1978, when she heard about the Herb Garden at the NCBG, she started coming to work as a volunteer. Herb Garden founder Mercer Reeves Hubbard, also a volunteer, saw Bev’s keen interest and arranged for her to become a half-time employee, working 20 hours per week—the Herb Garden’s first paid employee. Eventually, the position became full-time. This position had been classified as grounds worker, but was elevated to the title of Herb Garden Curator. Although Bev’s responsibilities were limited to the Herb Garden, she fell not only under its umbrella, but also under that of Ken Moore, assistant director of the NCBG, and was sometimes pulled between Mercer and Ken. This was confusing, and became intense toward the end of Bev’s time here. After eight years of managing the Herb Garden, she had a new baby daughter, and she wanted to move on in her career, so she left the NCBG to go into a landscaping business with more flexible hours.
When Bev arrived, the Herb Garden had been established by Mercer and a dedicated corps of volunteers. It sat in an area behind the not-yet-constructed Totten Center. After the Totten Center was built, Mercer dreamed of a yet bigger Herb Garden. The move to its present site, on the other side of the building, was accomplished during Bev’s tenure. Mercer and Glen Morris of *Southern Living* worked closely to plan the enlarged Herb Garden. Establishing the Evergreen Herbs area, at the front of the new Herb Garden, took longest because laying the brickwork was time-consuming. This work was completed by Marvin Traynham of UNC, in November of 1979. Subsequent infrastructure in the Culinary, Industrial, and Medicinal areas went faster because the cinderblock beds came up more easily. The Herb House was built in 1983, by Bev’s fiancé and some of his friends, and photos show Mercer cutting the garland to open the brand-new structure. The Native American Herbs area was the last part of the Herb Garden to be planned and developed, in 1984, including the “spring” and concrete “streambed” water feature. Although the knot garden in the Evergreen area was an early feature, it was always changing because “things didn’t work.” When the Herb Garden was moved to its new location, there were not that many plants in the old area to move. Mercer provided money to purchase some of the new plants needed. Mercer was also a great source of inspiration and a mentor to Bev.

**INTERVIEWER:** What were your responsibilities in the Herb Garden?

**BEVERLY:** My daily duty was maintenance of the various Herb Garden collections, eight in total. I also taught classes on growing and using herbs. I had help from volunteers on Sundays and Wednesdays. They worked two hours at a time, and there were 10-15 volunteers around for each session, usually more on Wednesdays than Sundays. During spring and fall, the volunteers helped with the propagation of herbs to be sold at the Herb Sales. I was available to help with other duties at the NCBG, such as setting up for programs.

Alan Johnson [NCBG Grounds Supervisor] helped with the heavy stuff—soil and so forth. I remember helping Alan sift compost for hours on end. I fed corn meal to worms in the worm farm and made sure they were moist. During the winter, I had a lot to do in the greenhouse. In January, I ordered seeds and sowed them for the Spring Herb Sale. There was a lot of trial and error; at first I didn’t know which ones were best grown from seeds and which from division of the plants. Toward the end of my time, in 1984, Mercer asked me to keep notes on everything done in the Herb Garden, the volunteers and classes. I kept track of seeds and cuttings, from the start until the sales, on a spreadsheet. The publication *Herba Officinalis* was all done by the volunteers, but I did the calligraphy.

**INTERVIEWER:** What kinds of pest-control measures did you use?
BEVERLY: In the greenhouse, Alan Johnson showed me how to use horticultural oils, but nothing was used outside.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the milestones and memorable events for you?

BEVERLY: In 1979, the Herb Volunteers’ exhibit won “Best of Horticulture” award at the Southern Living Show in Charlotte [February 24-March 4]. That took a lot of preparation. I drove a truck to Charlotte and set up an herb garden display similar to the little garden booths at the NC State Fair. A handful of Herb Volunteers were also there to help set up. Altogether, we spent $960, which covered room and board, labor for carpentry and painting, labels, baggies, light bulbs, etc.

I really enjoyed the Herb Sales; they were always busy times. We had to write name labels and prices by hand on every pot. I wrote down that we cleared $1,400 in October 1979, and $3,100 in the fall of 1981. The Herb Sales were twice a year.

The potluck luncheons were so much fun, and they initiated the cookbooks, with recipes contributed by the Herb Volunteers. I did the calligraphy for that, too. Gertrude Howell—we had a friendship, and I visited at her house and was amazed at how she could cook with the large machines, like big mixers. Also, Kay Bream. Sometimes we’d go to their houses for the potlucks, and some were in the Totten Center.

We had the first craft fair in 1980. We sold potpourri, cosmetics [such as rinses and lotions], sachets, stationery, sleeping pillows, pincushions, tea cozies, herb vinegars, moth bags, Christmas hearts, plants, dried wreaths and bay wreaths, pinecones with ribbons, pomanders, bouquet garni, sleighs, and spice ropes. One year, we were invited to be in a craft bazaar up on campus. We didn’t do it because they wanted to take 20% of the sales, and we could get 100% by selling here!

The Herb Garden sent me on a trip to the Cornell Plantations’ [now known as the Cornell Botanic Gardens, part of the Cornell University campus] Herb Garden in Ithaca, New York.

INTERVIEWER: At a tea in the Herb Garden, on April 24, 2016, part of NCBG’s 50th anniversary celebration, Ken Moore presented a brief history of the Herb Garden. He remarked that Bev McSwain became the “go-to person” for anyone interested in growing herbs in the Southeast. Many years after leaving her job at the NCBG, Bev continues to advocate for the Herb Garden and to volunteer, as time permits.

MARGO MACINTYRE, COKER ARBORETUM CURATOR—FEBRUARY 25, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Margo MacIntyre came to Coker Arboretum on February 1, 2005, replacing Gustavo Vázquez [resigned August 2004] as assistant curator under Daniel Stern. She stepped up to

This was not Margo’s first NCBG job; she interned in 1984-85.

MARGO: Because interns worked with each curator on a rotating basis, we learned different management styles and different areas of expertise. I interned during the writing of the book *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers*. Harry Phillips was the lead author, but it was a collaborative effort with all staff involved. I worked on the bloom time charts for the book, with Rob Gardner.

INTERVIEWER: Margo’s NCBG roots go even deeper: she is a Chapel Hill native, and her mother was a Plant Rescue Volunteer and a Propagation Volunteer, off and on, from the 1970s, for nearly 25 years. Margo sometimes spent Wednesday mornings with these volunteers.

MARGO: [Mom] told stories of volunteers, some quite small, standing in front of bulldozers to halt them while the Plant Rescue group dug plants as fast as possible, in sites all over the state.

INTERVIEWER: From the NCBG, Margo relocated to Greenville, Delaware for 2 years (1985-87) to become the first meadow gardener at the private Mount Cuba Center for the Study of Piedmont Flora (now a more public garden known as the Mt. Cuba Center). Then she returned south, to Salisbury, North Carolina, to Elizabeth Holmes Hurley Park, a brand-new garden of 15 acres in a residential area and adjacent to the regional hospital, a move which put her back in a very public garden setting. Shade trees had been planted and a trail system existed, but the gardens were just in the planning stages. The Hurley Foundation and City of Salisbury guaranteed 50% of the maintenance funding, so the park was well-funded. MacIntyre was the first curator of the park. The park also employed a landscape architect, Jane Ritchie, who was trained, in part, by NCSU’s J.C. Raulston, a plantsman of great renown. Because of her ties to Ritchie, Raulston and the NCBG, Margo utilized many plants from regions outside North Carolina, but she was still connected to the NCBG and to its ethic. Knowledge about a plant’s potential was always a part of the planning, and if a plant later revealed invasive qualities, it was removed.

Did people understand the connection of native plants to insects and wildlife back then?

MARGO: Yes, in many ways, but a much more complete definition of interconnectedness is in use today. We didn’t become concerned about ALL of the components of an ecosystem, especially pollinators, until more recently.

INTERVIEWER: Illustrating this point, Margo mentioned the stream banks in Elizabeth Holmes Hurley Park, which were reconfigured to be more in line with a natural ecosystem.
MARGO: The stream banks were planted with a native wildflower mix and were mowed yearly. Visitors did not understand why they were not mowed more often, but once we explained the interconnectedness between the “overgrown” plants, erosion control, wildlife, and pollinators that use them, people did come to understand.

The azalea garden was another example of blending sustainability and interconnectedness. People expected a sea of azaleas in mid-spring, and while we wanted to have an azalea garden, we wanted to meet more needs than just the desire for color. We tried to pick azaleas that were slightly different varieties and selected for later and longer bloom time. It’s a great place for weddings, in late April. The azalea garden and magnolia collection bring people in, but once visitors are in, you can then show them little tiny treasures and seed pods that are important to the whole system. Because of my 17 years in Salisbury [1987-2004] I learned to like to “work with all the paints,” and I got used to using a variety of plants, both native and introduced.

INTERVIEWER: Joining the NCBG staff as assistant curator of Coker Arboretum was the next logical step for Margo. The fact that the Arboretum is on the main campus of a university set it apart from other gardens where Margo had worked, and it combined all her past knowledge.

MARGO: The NCBG is mostly native; Mount Cuba was mostly native, but had formal gardens too, and Hurley Park was a blend, as well. The Arboretum has extensive collections of Japanese maples, camellias and other traditional garden plants of the South. My horticultural philosophy changes all the time. Now, things still change every year, as I learn new concepts and have a broader awareness of impact. I try to achieve balance between what happens here and on campus. An example is how leaf-fall is handled. On the main campus, leaves are all removed and taken away. In the Arboretum, leaves in lawns, on walks and in certain gardens are removed, but they are ground on-site and returned to the gardens as mulch. Most of the more naturalistic gardens are mulched naturally with the leaves that fall on them. Maintenance of the Arboretum does include keeping neat edges and cutting more plants back than one might in a completely naturalistic garden, but the Arboretum is connected to campus and should blend, to a certain degree, with the overall look of campus.

INTERVIEWER: The work crew at the Arboretum consists of Margo, Geoffrey, one summer intern, and work-study students during the school year. On Tuesday mornings, 5-7 volunteers, the Coker Nuts, come for three hours.

MARGO: They do a lot of weeding and can accomplish a great deal in those three hours, which leaves a cleaner look and allows us to keep our herbicide use to a bare minimum.

In 1982, Coker Arboretum came under management of the North Carolina Botanical Garden. The Arboretum had been through many directors and curators and periods of time when there was very
little maintenance, except mowing, done. There was so much ivy and wisteria. Additionally, no one had been in to pull out tree seedlings, to decide where to mow the grass or where the edges of the beds should be. When Curtis [Brooks] came in, he had to FIND the garden under all the ivy—and there was tons of *Microstegium*. By the time I got here, the *Microstegium* was gone from most planting areas, and we could make deliberate bed edges.

My philosophy is that this garden should be ready for any visitor, at any time. Alumni come for all the reasons, and there are a lot of memorials in the garden. You never know when family may visit, and “their” area should always look good.

A variety of classes use the Arboretum for many purposes. In 2006, art students made temporary sculptures of semi-natural materials. Writing classes and the Local Flora class are here, on and off, throughout the year.

INTERVIEWER: Who inspired you?

MARGO: Ken Moore is really why I am where I am. He’s amazingly energetic. He’s nurturing in what he sees in people—he can write a whale of a recommendation. Charlotte, I worked with in college, and she’s so enthusiastic. I took her Fern ID class. Rob Gardner and Harry Phillips: working on the book was so much fun. Rob had so much knowledge of carnivorous plants, as well as dedication to the mission. At the time, Jim Ward was the curator of the brand-new Plant Families Garden, and working with him in that garden reinforced my knowledge of plant taxonomy, which I had studied at Warren Wilson College. Janie Bryan was dedicated to the Seed Program; she was lots and lots of fun, and she had this infectious laugh. I worked with Janie on cleaning seeds, and it was fascinating to learn the different seed structures. The year we did butterfly weed—that was a very messy Wildflower of the Year—the fluff got stuck all over the inner workings of the refrigerator. I filled seed orders; that’s the way to learn: when you have to write their names over and over. Now you have computers, and you don’t get that learning through repetition in the same way. They knew so much about what they did. They all seemed to really enjoy what they did: writing the book *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers*, attending the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference—all the things they did together.

INTERVIEWER: What about Arboretum traditions?

MARGO: The Arboretum has tours every third Saturday, from March through November, usually led by [volunteer] Steve Rich or staff. Depending on who does it, there’s a different flavor to each tour. There are other tours throughout the year, as arranged by garden clubs, etc. Graduation photos taken in the arbor are certainly a tradition. It’s wonderful seeing so many remember a place in this way.
INTERVIEWER: Courses that Margo has taught include Pruning, and team-taught Sustainable Landscaping.

What are your challenges?

MARGO: I spend a lot of time thinking about how not to have to put Chapel Hill grit back after heavy rains—to make use of channel drains, and other forms of diversion engineering. In the past, water flowed down walks in sheets, and it’s now diverted into channels and into lawns, which protects the walks. I’m still working on the area around the water feature and the path that washed out; we’ll be doing more with stabilizer. [Volunteer] Marcella Grendler made a donation for the entry at the well house, where we now have a stone walkway, so our list of difficult areas is shrinking. Currently, we are working on a large daffodil identification project. Between the two of us, on rainy days, we delved into the records and found a large international source for identification. Every year, we add to it and find more accession records. Daylilies are next. Renovation of gardens is an ongoing process. We have plans to order bulbs every year, but haven’t had funds for it. We’re at a point where we can spend time on plant records and mapping.

INTERVIEWER: What does the future hold for the Arboretum?

MARGO: Working in the Arboretum is the most fulfilling job I have had. It’s dynamic because of the daily chance we have to interact with all types of visitors, and because of the variety of work we do and the interaction with work-study students. With visitors, one question leads to another and another, and then you have a new convert or friend. By variety of work, I mean that we can move from routine weeding, blowing and weed-eating, to dividing native grasses for planting in lawns, on any given day. There is an element of more formal gardening that mixes with the use of native plants that bloom for only days or weeks, to then be left to go to seed for wildlife. Being able to use “all the paints,” meaning native AND introduced [plants], in a semi-formal setting, is just a lot of fun. We can weed or propagate plants, or divide and change the entire look of a place. Being able to share this work with work-study students and interns, in a place with such history, is an honor, too. Work-study students have a chance to learn plants and maintenance, but I think it’s also a way to learn to be outside and gain the benefits of this work, both physical and emotional.

HARRY R. PHILLIPS, FORMER CURATOR OF NATIVE PLANTS—DECEMBER 14, 2015

INTERVIEWER: Harry Phillips worked at the North Carolina Botanical Garden from 1975-1986. In 1973, he had a job at the New England Wildflower Society’s Garden in the Woods, in Framingham, Massachusetts. There, he was assistant to the horticulturist, helping to maintain a mature native plant sanctuary originally created in the 1960s by Will C. Curtis and Dick Stiles. David Longland, a friend
working at the Sarah P. Duke Garden, in Durham North Carolina, told Harry about an opening at the NCBG. In 1975, Harry joined a staff supervised by Ken Moore, the Garden’s first full-time employee. Charlotte Jones, Rob Gardner, and Alan Johnson had all been hired in 1974. Jim Ward joined this crew later, in 1975.

At NCBG, Harry’s primary responsibilities were: maintaining the Mountain Habitat Garden, working on propagation, overseeing the Seed Program, developing the “Conservation through Propagation” program, and delivering workshops on propagating native plants.

Originally from the Boston area, Harry needed to learn about Southern plants and gardening techniques. Ken Moore’s method of teaching was to travel all over the state with his employees, on field trips, to meet new plant communities and new plants. Back at the Garden, they put this knowledge to work. Especially helpful in this endeavor were the older members of the North Carolina Wildflower Preservation Society, [now known as the North Carolina Native Plant Society].

How did the Garden get its plants?

HARRY: The staff went on lots of plant rescue trips, all over the state, often with members of the Wildflower Society. Various ferns, Shortia, and spring ephemerals were notable additions to the Garden’s collections during this time. The rescue trips were complemented by seed-collecting trips, often noting where good populations of a plant were blooming, and returning later to collect seeds. On one occasion, Ken had noted a nice patch of Gray’s lily blooming in a field in West Jefferson. The farmer agreed to allow them to collect seed there, and, meanwhile, they staked a tape around the area so that the mower would spare the plants until the seed matured. (Gray’s lily is now endangered.) Friends of the Garden would alert the staff to good patches of plants where they could collect seeds or rescue the plants themselves.

INTERVIEWER: After the staff had mastered growing the plants at the Garden, they had good seed sources in-house.

HARRY: We were birthing the “Conservation through Propagation” ethic.

INTERVIEWER: At that time, native populations were under collection pressures in the wild, due to excessive digging by the nursery trade, and NCBG staff realized they could undo this damage by developing techniques to grow their rescued plants and collected seeds in the Garden’s nursery. They could use some of the resulting plants in the Display Gardens and sell the excess to the public.

How did you develop these growing techniques?
HARRY: There always was good reference material: Clarence and Eleanor Birdseyes’ *Growing Woodland Plants* and Montague Free’s *Plant Propagation in Pictures*. We could always try different things. Rob Gardner did good work propagating carnivorous plants on moist sphagnum [moss], and was soon producing Venus flytraps. Charlotte mastered growing ferns from spores. Other gardens and nurseries provided helpful information. The people at the North Carolina Wildflower Society, and their *North Carolina Native Plant Propagation Handbook*, were the number one source. Especially helpful were Tom and Bruce Shinns and Lionel Melvin. Gordon Butler’s contributions on *Cassandra*, *Zenobia*, and *Leiophyllum buxifolium* were a notable help to the Garden’s work on propagating coastal shrubs from seeds and cuttings, but most work here at the Garden centered on herbaceous materials.

It was an exciting discovery that we could influence how gardeners got plants. The advent of startup nurseries selling natives was very fulfilling. The trade was freed from relying on collected materials. It was an opportunity to address an ecological problem—the assault on native floral populations was and is a big deal. Did you hear that someone was just arrested for poaching thousands of Venus flytraps? Rob Gardner had made it easy to grow them from seed. Disturbingly, The Gardens of the Blue Ridge used to acknowledge in their catalog that some of the plants they offered would likely die out—they sold hundreds of thousands of plants [dug up] from natural areas. And we did influence nurseries to offer propagated material and gardeners to get their plants from those sources. We generated not only interest in native plants, but also a practical ethic to not damage native populations.

INTERVIEWER: Harry has memories of NCBG staff members who are no longer with us:

Janie Bryan came to the Garden staff a few years after Harry Phillips. She was responsible for the success of the Seed Program, working with the Wednesday morning volunteer group, cleaning seed and getting it into members’ and gardeners’ hands, or using it in the nursery to start wildflowers for the Garden’s sales, and more.

Rob Gardner was a widely recognized expert on carnivorous plants and their display. Interest in them became widespread through his efforts.

Harry also remembers important volunteers from his years at the Garden: Gert Howell, Jean Stewart, Annie Lee Broughton, Irma Stein, Marguerite MacIntyre (mother of current Coker Arboretum Curator Margo MacIntyre). They were always upbeat, industrious, offering more help than just on Wednesday mornings. Also, many of them went on off-site plant rescues, caravanning with staff members to the mountains or coastal plain.
Harry also remembers important milestones and Garden acquisitions: About 10 years of experience went into his book *Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers* (UNC Press, 1985). Everyone got involved: Ritchie Bell, the Garden’s director, and Ken Moore served as editors; Dot Wilbur drew the line art of each species; Rob Gardner contributed a chapter on carnivorous plants; and Charlotte Jones-Roe contributed a chapter on ferns; everyone supplied photos for the color insert section. With detailed descriptions of plants, and instructions on when and how to collect and store seeds, sow them, transplant seedlings, and divide mature specimens, this book preserved the knowledge gleaned from both printed sources and practical experiments in the Garden’s nursery.

HARRY: A front-end loader from the University made Alan Johnson the happiest man on Earth. Alan was the rock that held garden maintenance together. His strong work ethic put the rest of us to shame. He was always here first in the morning and stayed late. He showed us how much more you could get done if you kept at it!

INTERVIEWER: Who inspired you?

HARRY: Ken Moore is a fine botanist. He had two crucial qualities: first, the vision for what the Garden needed to do to fulfill itself—what we all needed to be doing; second, he was everyone’s emotional anchor. Early days in the Green Shed meant we all shared a cramped space used as office, tool storage, and classroom (the Totten Center changed all that), and Ken was always there to listen to our problems and offer good advice. His stature as a mature, sensitive person allowed him to accommodate within himself the challenges of running the Garden every day and keeping everyone functioning. I think most leaders would fail at one or the other, but he had the ability to do both. Ken was good at acknowledging your strengths and working with your weaknesses. Here, he was the go-to person; he was the contact outsiders were sent to, the real center of it all. Without him, the Garden would have been less people-centric, more of a scholarly institution.

Ritchie Bell was cool, and patient with me as a person who didn’t have a degree in botany or horticulture.

Bill Hunt was a fount of great native plant knowledge and shared it generously with the staff, as well as [offering] advice [on other matters].

INTERVIEWER: Traditions or celebrations Harry most remembers were Christmas parties held between 1975 and 1986. They were held at the home of a volunteer or a staff member. Dot Wilbur-Brooks hosted this holiday event a few times.

Do you have other particular memories?
HARRY: A million field trips. In June of 1975, the staff went to a regional meeting in Coral Gables, Florida. On that trip we canoed in the Okefenokee Swamp, stayed with Ken’s parents in Norman Beach, Florida, and collected tropical fruits from a tropical fruit orchard.

INTERVIEWER: Harry, along with Ken Moore, were interested in sharing the Garden’s approach with other professionals in the field, as well as the general public. They took the “Conservation through Propagation” idea on the road, with programs at Callaway Gardens, in Pine Mountain, Georgia; the Philadelphia area; across North Carolina; and, generally, up and down the Eastern seaboard.

HARRY: It was fulfilling to deliver and present this concept to groups and see it take off with practical actions: grow it yourself or purchase from places that do. It was the efficiency and cleanness of the approach that people bought into. For me, I got the privilege to be at a place and time when that idea was unfolding. I feel very fortunate to have been involved.

I taught classes on terraria at the Garden, in 1975, when I first got down here. Once, Charlotte and I made an edible terrarium—chocolate cake soil, white frosting, and we planted cookies for plants—we phoned Ken and insisted that he had to drive all the way up from his house to see it!

In general, the Garden was a cool, apolitical place to be. Over the years, the people I met had in common an abiding love for plants, despite political differences.

INTERVIEWER: In 1986, Harry Phillips left the NCBG to go back to school. He earned a master’s degree at NCCU, in Durham, North Carolina, and taught high school English in southern Durham. In 1990-94, he studied for a PhD at Washington State University, and then taught at Central Piedmont Community College, in Charlotte, North Carolina, from 1994 to 2009.

DANIEL STERN, FORMER COKER ARBORETUM CURATOR—JANUARY 27, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Dan Stern worked for the NCBG from 1996-2008. First hired as a seasonal intern for 3-4 summer months, he spent half-days working for various senior employees: Nancy Easterling (Herb Garden Curator), Jim Ward (Habitat Curator), Alan Johnson (Grounds Supervisor), and Rob Gardner (Carnivorous Plants and Greenhouse/Nursery) at the main NCBG site, and stints with Coker Arboretum Curator Andrea (“Annie”) Presler. In the early fall of 1996, funds were found for a new, temporary assistant position that allowed Dan to stay on to help Annie (formerly, the only Arboretum employee). The assistant curator position became permanent in 1998. At that time, Dan began taking classes at UNC, majoring in biology. Annie left in the late summer of 2002. Dan then became Coker Arboretum curator, until he left in 2008. Work-study student Gustavo Vázquez, became assistant curator for a year or two, spanning the ice storm of 2002 and the Coker Arboretum Centennial
celebration in 2003. After he left, Margo MacIntyre was hired as assistant curator (2005), and she became curator after Dan left in 2008.

DAN: Hurricane Fran [September 6, 1996] catapulted me to the Arboretum to help Annie clean up. There were lots of trees with the whole root ball out of the ground. The ice storm [December 5, 2002] made every bit as much organic debris—mostly broken limbs. About 1/3 of the woody material was impacted.

INTERVIEWER: Dan’s years at the Arboretum saw one project after another.

DAN: There was always something really big just starting and ending.

INTERVIEWER: First was the arbor renovation, in 1997-8. This was funded by the Class of 1997, as a gift dedicated to four students (and a non-student friend) who had died in a fraternity-house fire on Graduation Day of 1996, and to three Class of 1997 members who died before graduation. The old arbor was removed and replaced with a new one, a foot taller, again of black locust logs. This renovation featured a new Arboretum entryway: an opening at mid-arbor to the new Stone Gathering Circle, with a flagstone mosaic of a tulip poplar leaf in the center, and surrounded by a low stone wall. The Chinese wisteria vines that grew on the old arbor were removed and replaced with a variety of native flowering vines more in keeping with the Garden’s mission of conserving native plants. A bed of English ivy and a thriving population of bamboo were also removed from this area.

Next came installation of an irrigation system financed by the Grendler family [Marcella Grendler is a key long-time NCBG volunteer], a project that took 1-2 years.

DAN: The irrigation project was a sea change for the Arboretum. No longer was time spent hand-watering everything, as Annie had done for years. This was finished shortly before Annie left. We still had to hand-water some, but we had to do it all by hand before the irrigation system.

INTERVIEWER: Dan’s first big project as curator, completed during the latter part of 2002, involved several months spent producing a book, *A Haven in the Heart of Chapel Hill*, published, in 2004, by the Botanical Garden Foundation. Dan’s text outlines Arboretum history and introduces some prominent green residents. Illustrations were contributed by artists who love the Arboretum. The book honored Coker Arboretum’s centennial in 2003, when a weekend in early April was set aside for a number of celebratory events in the Arboretum and nearby buildings.

Just before Dan left, in 2008, the installation of a water feature, with a recirculating stream splashing over newly installed boulders, was financed by Tom Kenan. The new Arthur DeBerry Entrance soon followed, financed by former BGF President Arthur DeBerry. Its semicircular stone overlook, near
the east end of Morehead Planetarium, gives a view across the north end of the Arboretum, and an inviting gateway nearby replaces an inconspicuous path formerly in the same vicinity.

DAN: The thread tying these projects together [the Stone Gathering Circle, on the south end of the Arboretum, and the Kenan Water Feature and DeBerry Entrance, at the north end] was David Swanson, a landscape architect. Stone mason Dave Swan and the Arboretum staff realized Swanson’s plans. [Swanson also planned hardscaping such as the Ken Moore Gathering Circle at the main NCBG.]

INTERVIEWER: What changes in horticultural practices occurred during your time with the Garden?

DAN: The NCBG philosophy became a growing influence on care and, from the late ’80s on, manifested as an increasing emphasis on native plants. There was increasing strictness in suppressing invasives. There was more sustainability in horticultural practices, such as what we used for fertilizer, and recycling leaves on-site. There was very little use of synthetic fertilizer to start, and that decreased over time. Herbicides were used on invasives, but we increasingly looked to other tools. I personally grubbed out bamboo by hand. We used cardboard and mulch to smother the English ivy, because herbicides were not effective.

INTERVIEWER: What about the trend to show more perennials in the Arboretum?

DAN: The ratio of herbaceous to woody materials at the Arboretum fluctuates, but between the mature trees and dedicated lawns, the Arboretum has not historically had a lot of sunny space available for perennials. Showing more perennials probably began with Annie Presler, and Margo MacIntyre is continuing to integrate more herbaceous displays. They’re showy, and the President’s Walk needed to be punchier.

INTERVIEWER: What were your experiences with people using the Arboretum?

DAN: During my time, the graduating class was no longer marching to the ceremony via the Senior Walk. I think classes with Alan Weakley in botany and plant identification probably use it. There was a sculpture class one year that did installations at various sites in the Arboretum. Camps and classes in the early school years are regular users, often in conjunction with visits to Morehead Planetarium [next door].

As part of the Coker Arboretum Centennial celebration, there was an exhibit at the Chapel Hill Museum, with a narrative history and photos. The book *A Haven in the Heart of Chapel Hill* contains a shorthand version of the first 100 years, with the best-substantiated stories.
INTERVIEWER: The still-unsolved murder of Sue Ellen Evans, a nursing student, in the middle of the day [July 1965], had put the Arboretum into bad repute.

DAN: Decades later, the family was invited to visit the spot to grieve and celebrate her life, perhaps to get some closure, and a bench was dedicated to her by the Garden.

A black gum was planted in the Arboretum in 2008, in memory of Student Body President Eve Carson, who was murdered in March of that year.

INTERVIEWER: What about the Arboretum volunteers?

DAN: Oh, I couldn’t have done it without them. They were all so faithful and supportive. New people found out about volunteering either through the Garden or by word of mouth. There were about a half-dozen volunteers who were a solid weekly core, with others coming and going over time. The Arboretum also has the largest-scale program for work-study students, because of its proximity to the campus area where they already are, and it is ongoing.

INTERVIEWER: How did the distance of the Arboretum from the main NCBG site affect your job as curator?

DAN: That was both a blessing and a curse. I had more latitude and autonomy, but also missed out on some stuff taking place at the Totten Center. There were ten people taking care of five acres in the habitat gardens at the main Garden, and only two taking care of the five acres at the Arboretum—hence the importance of volunteers and work-study students—often half a dozen at any one time.

INTERVIEWER: And now you’re working for the Public Garden Association?

DAN: Yes, the American Public Gardens Association, which has a membership of 590 organizations. We help them with professional development, resources, and achieving their goals in funding, development, and membership. We bring people with similar challenges together to share their knowledge and resources. I recently gave an orientation program for new attendees at the Association’s national conference, to inform them what the week is for and suggest how to derive the greatest benefit from their attendance. I told them that I first went to the Association’s annual conference as an NCBG employee in 2000, when it was nearby in Asheville NC, and Director Peter White paid the registration for Horticulture Department employees if they would arrange their own transportation and accommodation.

INTERVIEWER: Before coming to NCBG, Dan worked in propagation and retail at Growing Green Nursery, a “mom and pop” business on what is now Martin Luther King Boulevard, in Chapel Hill. [It is now out of business.] This was the last in a series of short-term jobs. At each, he learned a
palette of plants related to a certain area, such as residential gardens or greenhouse culture, and then moved on. He came to NCBG when he realized he had mastered so much, but still didn’t know anything about native plants. He went to the Arboretum to ask whom he should speak to about becoming a student intern, and was sent to NCBG headquarters. Assistant Director Ken Moore [whose office was right behind the Information Desk at the Totten Center entrance] hired him when he overheard Dan talking to the person at the desk, recognized his passion, and came out to speak to him.

Dan found Peter White, Ken Moore, Jim Ward, Nancy Easterling, Rob Gardner, Alan Johnson, and Annie Presler all inspiring in different ways. His career at the Garden paralleled that of Stephen Keith, as peers rising on similar timelines. [Stephen became the first Battle Park and Koch Memorial Theatre Curator when NCBG took over their management, in 2004.]

DAN: Working at NCBG was a stage of life that was seminal in many ways. I reported to Ken Moore, then Andy Bell, Peter White for a short time, and then Jim Ward.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know of any artifacts of interest to the 50-year history project?

DAN: There was a plant rescue at Lionel Melvin’s private nursery, and some of the plants ended up at both the main NCBG and the Arboretum. As a sidebar, Lionel was somehow connected to the people who hosted the filming of The Wizard of Oz in the mountains. In his garden, he had used some of the yellow bricks as plant markers: he painted labels on the non-yellow sides of the bricks. Some of these plants and their bricks ended up in the Arboretum.

REBECCA WELLBORN, FORMER HERB GARDEN CURATOR—JUNE 11, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Wellborn worked at the NCBG for 10 years, from April 1, 1985-May or June, 1995. Rebecca heard about the job through a phone call from her former Appalachian State schoolmate Katherine Murray, daughter of Clara Murray, one of the original Herb Garden volunteers. At the time, Rebecca was working in the Old Salem gardens. In college, she had taken an interdisciplinary degree in earth studies, with a special interest in biodynamic French intensive gardening: getting the most out of small spaces, without chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

With this as her background, Rebecca worked to make the Herb Garden organic—previously not a focus there. Aside from changing to organic fertilizers, she also stopped the previous practice of growing plants in gravel in the raised beds. She feels that her impact on the Herb Garden included changing to better horticultural practices; honing the herb collections, with special attention to the medicinal, economic, and Native American areas; and wresting control of the Herb Garden, previously “ruled” by the forceful Mercer Reeves Hubbard, its founding volunteer leader. Rebecca
felt that her presence mitigated Mercer’s impact on other staff members. Mercer was around a lot, but less so over the years. Some financial support for the Herb Garden came from Mercer’s brother, who ran the family business.

REBECCA: It was nice to have a budget to buy the hand tools we needed.

INTERVIEWER: Alan Johnson and Al Cook provided support by bringing in the necessary mulch and soil. The annual Spring Herb Sale was an incredibly popular event, and Rebecca pitched in alongside the Herb Garden Volunteers.

REBECCA: We worked really hard. There were a lot of volunteers, probably about 30-40 on the book; 10 or 15 were the “core.”

INTERVIEWER: Special events at the Garden were a highlight for Rebecca. She organized visits by prominent speakers of special interest to her field, such as Gary Nabhan of Seeds for Change, Jim Duke, and herbalist David Hoffman.

REBECCA: I was integrated with the staff and helped with other projects—all the events we put on at NCBG were great. I loved the sculpture shows.

INTERVIEWER: Rebecca’s responsibilities also included writing articles for the Garden’s newsletter, many of which focused on medicinal plants. She taught various classes at the NCBG. Herb Propagation was the most popular, and Herbal Cosmetics also had much success. She also conducted tours.

Just as Rebecca was leaving the NCBG and handing the Herb Garden over to Nancy Easterling, a Rosemary Collection was brought in by Tom DeBaggio, on behalf of the Herb Society of America. Its purpose was to test the hardiness of various rosemary cultivars in our climate. This collection was planted in the raised beds in the evergreen herbs area, in front of the espalier fence.

Who were your models?

REBECCA: Bob Gow, my teacher at Appalachian State, and Alan Chadwick, who brought the concept of biodynamic French intensive gardening to the U.S. At the NCBG, Ken Moore was wonderful—definitely a mentor. Also, Mercer Reeves Hubbard, in many ways. I learned so much about herbs and native plants from Rob Gardner and Janie Bryan. Rob was instrumental and took a keen interest in the Herb Garden; he helped me a lot.

During my time, the staff was like a big family. Everybody worked together—or not; there were conflicts. We took turns using water during the droughts. I had my wedding in Janie Bryan’s backyard, years later, after I stopped working here. Now, my husband and I have a nursery business,
and we helped out Jim Ward while changing over the irrigation system. The staff all struggled for many years to get the new Education Center built—I never thought I’d see it!

INTERVIEWER: While working at the NCBG, Rebecca became more interested in medicinal botany, and the Garden paid for her to study with top people in the field. Eventually, she was ready to move on. Meanwhile, she had fallen in love with nursing, which pulled her away to her present career at UNC’s pediatric center.

WENDY WENCK, HERB GARDEN CURATOR— FEBRUARY 11, 2016

INTERVIEWER: Wendy Wenck began studying biology at St. Andrews Presbyterian College and then earned a BS from the Department of Horticultural Science at NC State, in 1992. While 90% of the plants in mainstream horticulture were non-native, she was always interested in native plants and hoped to find a job that included them. She began working at the NCBG the week after graduation, as an entry-level groundskeeper, assisting Alan Johnson. Her fellow groundskeeper was Guy Meilleur. Alan assigned her to an increasing level of responsibilities with the nursery and greenhouse, and she became Nursery and Greenhouse Manager when that position was created (thanks to Ken Moore’s diligently stewarding the reclassification process), in 1997. In October 2005, a staff reshuffling made her Herb Garden Curator. She also oversees the Green Gardener Plant Clinic, serving as the point person for plant question forms filed on the Web, and backup at the Green Gardener Desk two days a week.

The Herb Garden marries two of Wendy’s loves: cooking, a skill she learned from chefs in the good restaurants where she worked part-time while a student; and plants—she comes from a multigenerational family of gardeners. As a teenager, she spent her allowance on mail-order perennials!

At NC State, Wendy had Dr. J.C. Raulston as an instructor for five classes. She regards him as one of her great mentors, and he was one of her references in applying to work at NCBG. She admired Dr. Raulston for his even temper and skill at dealing with students in his classes and everyone else he encountered. She also worked with Edith Edelman for a summer internship, creating a record of plants in the perennial border at what is now known as the Raulston Arboretum.

What changes have you noted at NCBG?

WENDY: We have always had a focus on native plants, which fascinated me while I was studying the ornamentals curriculum at NCSU. While working with both the Herb Garden and the Garden of Flowering Plant Families, and improving our interpretation, I enjoyed seeing the recognition on visitors’ faces, as they “connected the dots” and understood more about plants. There has been
increasing awareness of invasive exotic plants and what we all can do about them. We have removed them from our collections, such as the *Akebia quinata* or chocolate vine that was once in the Garden of Flowering Plant Families. We want to set a good example on [our approach to] invasives; these days we would never use Asian bittersweet as a table decoration, as in earlier times.

The Garden has more international visitors than ever before, and while spring is still our busiest season, we have more visitors at all times of the year. Even in less-than-optimal weather, we see visitors who’ve dressed for the weather and come anyway!

As far as garden practices [are concerned], we have always tried to build soil for the long run, rather than just fertilizing it. I remember there being an awareness of environmental concerns here, that was not common elsewhere (recycling, composting), and a tremendous regard for the importance of native plants. That has only improved, in the sense that we recognize how critical native plants are for the survival of native pollinators, songbirds, and all wildlife. We are careful in managing insects and pests, as well as in the advice we give to the public about this, and it is heartening to me that we have become a well-respected source for advice, in this regard. In some ways, I think that everyone else “out there” has caught up, or is in the process of catching up, to what we’ve understood for a long time.

The Herb Garden endowment is thanks to Mercer [Reeves Hubbard]. She cultivated the Herb Garden group. As a woman in those days, and the wife of a preacher, she had no option for a business career. The endowment goes toward my salary, but there’s not enough to do all that I’d like. Since we started working on the new Education Center, we have struggled to maintain and improve the original areas of the garden, including this remarkable collection. I really appreciate the help provided by our volunteers, by summer interns, and by work-study students during the school year. The financial situation is rocky. Horticulture has only summer interns that help a few hours a day, about 15-20 hours a week. When I started working here, Herb Garden Curator Rebecca Wellborn had a dedicated intern for the whole summer. Now there are two or three Horticulture interns for the summers, with the Herb Garden having intern support one-half to one day a week.

Pieces of the Herb Garden have been renovated. The Herb House was built by [then-Curator] Beverly McSwain’s then-boyfriend. I replanted the apple espalier in November of 2014, with heirloom apple cultivars that better tolerate the Piedmont summers. The water feature was originally constructed about 1985. The concrete work was crafted to resemble stone, and reads well to the eye, with some real stone integrated as well. After the running water was discontinued, in approximately 2003, due to trouble with leaks, *Equisetum* was planted in it. That was a mistake! James Allen [for whom the Education Center is named] worked at troubleshooting the water feature and helped us bring it back to life, in 2014. I value his help and support tremendously.
INTERVIEWER: What other things have you worked on?

WENDY: For a while, I compiled the “What’s in Bloom” list, back when it was a printed sheet, revised weekly for visitors and tour guides. I managed the composting and its interpretation, at one point. We have recently revived the idea of a NCBG Sustainability Committee—Sally Heiney recalls that having a Sustainability Committee here was originally my idea; I had forgotten that! I helped maintain the habitat gardens. I worked at Coker Arboretum one-half day per week, while Diane Birkemo was curator there. For part of the time I was Nursery and Greenhouse Manager, I was also responsible for the Garden of Flowering Plant Families. In working with our plant sale, I pitched the concept of having a custom interpretive for each species, and I started writing those. I have helped with the Green Gardener Plant Clinic, both as curator on call and in coordinating with volunteers, including Master Gardeners. I remember a number of special events. For the Coker Arboretum centennial, in 2003, it was all hands on deck; the same for cleaning up after Hurricane Fran, in September of 1996. And I have always enjoyed working with our annual plant sales.

INTERVIEWER: Who has influenced you?

WENDY: Ken Moore—I cannot say enough. [He’s] the reason I’m the person I am, and why I’m still here. As a junior staff member, I found it hard to understand some of the organizational eccentricities. When there were disagreements among the staff about how to approach our goals, Ken would say, “Isn’t it a ‘good’ thing that each of you has a difference of opinion?” He was incredibly dedicated to working with people and to the advancement of the Garden. Ken put in countless hours and cared very deeply (still does) that we do what it takes, that we all get the big things right.

Rob Gardner was absolutely unique. He was such a tireless advocate of our native flora. I remember his work developing pitcher-plant hybrids with Larry Mellichamp; they are amazing! I see some aspect in the Garden every day that makes me think of Rob. He was tireless in advocating that we put our best foot forward in creating an esthetically pleasing garden; he was extremely gifted in that regard.

Mercer Hubbard: I take the responsibility of caring for the Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden collection seriously. There are not many gardens that survive their creators, and it is my honor to act as steward and care for this one. I am pleased that we are contemplating doing another master plan. Our Herb Garden is a unique collection, and I recognize its significance more, as I travel and visit other gardens. This collection has a reputation as one of the best herb gardens in the country. Seeing the Herb Garden at Cornell University last summer was tremendous, as that was one of the inspirations for Mercer and the volunteers who created this garden. I am excited to think of the opportunities we have for taking this collection to the next level!
The new buildings—Charlotte Jones-Roe made them happen, and Jim Ward shepherded the construction. All of the NCBG staff visited other institutions to see their new buildings; we saw what worked and found out their regrets. Our new facilities have increased our appeal as a venue for many more people, for ever more classes and workshops. The original plan was that we would increase the horticultural staff as we doubled our areas under cultivation, but that hasn’t happened, due to finances. We have made things work as best we can. I value my dedicated colleagues beyond measure.

INTERVIEWER: What do you consider to be special features of the Herb Garden?

WENDY: “The Story of Rosemary,” a set of tiles displayed on the espalier by local artist Sarah Craig, commissioned while Nancy Easterling was curator. Sarah also did the “Tree of Life” mural. The mural was moved from the garden of volunteer Eszter Karvazy, when she was planning to sell her house. The Spider Gate [at one entrance to the Poison Garden] by Jim Galucci arrived as part of an annual sculpture show. It was such a perfect addition to the collection that the Herb Garden Volunteers donated funds so that it could be purchased. The Lady Banks rose arbor (blooms early April) has been used for small weddings. You don’t see some of these features in an average garden. We have a wattle fence alongside the Dye and Fiber bed. It’s a relatively new feature that I built, one reminiscent of medieval gardens. I love to watch the looks on visitors’ faces as they experience the charm of this garden. The Herb Garden design got it right; there’s a sense of going from room to room. The Herb Garden at the Cornell University Plantations influenced Mercer in the design here.

This “garden within the Garden” appeals to the uninitiated as a “real garden.” People like to talk to staff concerning information about the Herb Garden. I have interpretives such as a “Plant of the Month,” in the Herb House. Patients from the hospitals and Ronald McDonald House come over, some for many visits. People come here in times of sorrow and times of joy.

We’re planning a tea party in the Herb Garden for April, as one of the 50th anniversary events. A couple of years ago, there was a tea and Poison Garden tour for author Ruth Moose [a former tour guide and children’s author, but this event honored her first adult book, Doing it at the Dixie Dew]. Alan Jones, a UNC professor, brings his Physician’s Garden class to tour the medicinal section of the Herb Garden and learn the plants here.

The care we take with nomenclature on plant names, such as on the labels, is a part of what is expected of a botanical garden. When I talk about plants with one of our many international visitors, we can have confidence that we are talking about the same plant species. I see how people of all cultures and backgrounds find plants that they recognize and can relate to within this collection. The
plants in the Native American section of the Herb Garden were selected by consulting the writings of the Cherokee.

This year, volunteers have given money to buy plants, to make sure that I can make some much-needed purchases.

INTERVIEWER: In the past, Wendy had a side gig, writing a monthly column in the Chapel Hill Herald, and a twice-monthly column in the Durham Herald-Sun. Her subjects were plants and gardening, with an environmental theme. Over the years, she worked with different editors and fielded follow-up questions. She enjoyed this, but hasn’t done as much writing since the papers ran out of funds for freelance work.

What courses have you taught here?

WENDY: I have taught about butterfly gardens, pruning, propagation, growing an herb garden, the Poison Garden, edible flowers, environmentally sensitive gardening, and the habitat gardens.

INTERVIEWER: Let me end with the mission statement for the Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden:

The Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden is a collection of plants that is designed to provide a visually appealing as well as educational representation of plant specimens that have been cultivated for their usefulness to peoples of different cultures. Specimens include plants that are grouped according to their culinary, medicinal, and economic or industrial significance. The collection includes non-native, non-invasive plants from around the world, including straight species, cultivars, and hybrids that support the mission of this collection. The collection also includes southeastern native plants of importance, including those with relevance to indigenous peoples of the Southeastern United States.