



# THE DIRT

Catching up on the Duke Gardens Volunteers

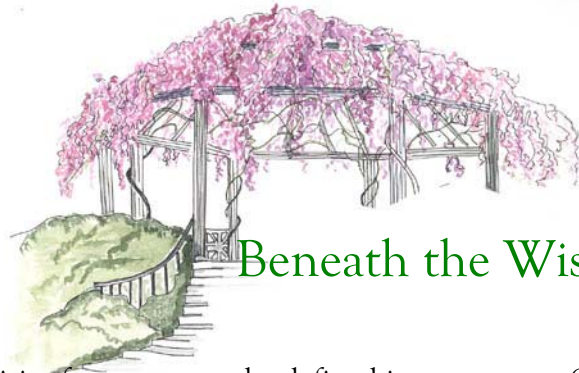
Editor: Jerry Sheehy

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[www.gardens.duke.edu](http://www.gardens.duke.edu)

Layout & Type: Sheryl Fowler

## Newest Volunteers

Sheila Bhattacharya  
Tena Chiaro  
Karima Christmas  
Jaiquan Coston  
Victor Dudley  
Andrew Ehlert  
Marcia Eickmeier  
Vicki Gedge  
Jeanne Gustafson  
Megumi Kasuga  
Jackie Kaufman  
Samantha Kozub  
Joshua Lim  
Marcia Loudon  
Dominic Lynn  
Kay Maltbie  
Kevin McDonough  
B.J. Morton  
Amy Moss  
Lynne Nelson  
Yoshie Ogata  
Jetta Peterkin  
Ana-Maria Raducanu  
Emily Reisner  
Joe Rowand  
Martha Sanderford  
Susan Schaffer  
Michael Schoenfeld  
John Schwaller  
Uma Subramanian  
Hideko Tsurumi  
Jeanne Woodard  
Sara Zabloney



## Beneath the Wisteria

The Spirit of a person can be defined in many ways. One way I like to think of it is that the human spirit refers to that part of a human which both wants and strives to make things better for themselves and those around them.

The volunteer spirit is much the same way; giving of one's self to help others in an effort to improve a situation or circumstance.

Margie Watkins was that kind of individual. She was tireless in her efforts to help others. After graduating from Duke University, she embarked on a long and distinguished career in the Duke University Botany Department. She took some time away to rear her children and then returned to the job she loved so passionately.

Upon retirement, she dedicated her life to giving back to help other causes and individuals. One of her favorite places was the Sarah P. Duke Gardens. She was faithful to her weekly shift at the main information desk. She loved meeting people and introducing them to "her favorite garden." Margie was never without a smile and a word of encouragement. Her various articles of clothing reflecting her love for her alma mater were iconic. She was rarely, if ever, without something in royal blue.

In celebration of Margie's beautiful spirit, Sarah P. Duke Gardens is pleased to announce the *Margie Watkins Volunteer Spirit Award*. This award will be presented at the Evening of Celebration on October 27, 2011. This award will honor the memory of Margie and will reward other individuals who demonstrate a vibrant and engaging spirit as a volunteer at Duke Gardens.



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# Like the Phoenix

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*From Humble Beginnings to Steady Rise*

*by Jerry Sheehy, Editor*

It is time for another celebration, our 20<sup>th</sup> year of the development of the Volunteer program at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens. Let's do it—let's celebrate!

Twenty years ago Dr. W. Scott Gehman founded and funded the Volunteer program at the Gardens. From this Volunteer program other significant programs have been developed; i.e., The Terrace Gift Shop, the Children's Education program, and Adult Education programs with classes available to all, as well as the Garden Guild with its annual decorating and craft sale.

Dr. W. Louis Culberson, former director and visionary for the Asiatic Arboretum began the foundation for a development program as well as the Volunteer program. A volunteer was asked to lead the fledgling program. Chuck Hemric worked alongside this volunteer and 6 months later was asked to assume the duties of expanding the recruitment of volunteers. Chuck with his ability to understand the nature of people, began to design the program as he thought it should be done, and with the thought in mind to make it "a family affair." It has worked so well through the years, we feel a part of "the family."

Most volunteers are very friendly people, and when asked about their view of the program; i.e., are they happy in the program? I was greeted with some of the kindest remarks for Chuck and the staff, to wit: "*I have loved the program for years, and don't like to miss my time to be there, even when I'm sick.*" Comments like "*it has added a new and happy dimension to my life.*" Another, "*I like to come in early just to be with Chuck and other friends—it's such a friendly place,*" and another from Mary Dawson, who has been the volunteer with the most years in the program, "*Oh yes, the program has been so important to me and others, who like to weed and dig in the dirt.*"

The Gardens have been growing for over 75 years, and for the past 20 years volunteers have been doing their part in this growth. During this year-long celebration each group of volunteers (horticulture, education, etc.) will be feted with special activities to celebrate their contributions. A few of the highlights are listed below, with more events to come:

November 16, 2010: Horticulture volunteers were celebrated with a cookout.

April 12, 2011: a trip to Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, more details will be announced.

October 27, 2011: An Evening of Celebration, 20 years of Volunteerism!

It is the hope and desire of the Gardens staff that you will take part in these festivities. *It is all about you!*

*Knowing Scott as I did, he would be very proud of all that you have done for his beloved Gardens.*

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## Remembering those we lost

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John Blackburn

Lula McKnight

Betty Ostrander

# Six Degrees of Sarah P. Duke Gardens

## *Sarah P. Duke Gardens and the RMS Titanic*

By: Nan Len

*This is another installment in “Six Degrees of Sarah P. Duke Gardens,” my series about the connections of our Gardens to people and things that you might not expect.*

I can imagine what you’re thinking—the *Titanic* sank on April 15, 1912, years before Duke University was even founded. But there are actually two connections to the *RMS Titanic* and both of them start with Colonel John Jacob Astor IV (1864-1912), the wealthiest passenger on the *Titanic*.

Astor was the great-grandson of John Jacob Astor and a member of one of the wealthiest families in America. In 1891 he married Ava Lowle Willing (1868-1958) and had two children—William Vincent Astor (1891-1959) and Ava Alice Muriel Astor (1902-1956). It was something of a scandal when they divorced in 1909 and it raised even more eyebrows when, in September 1911, Astor, aged 47, married Madeleine Talmage Force (1893-1940), aged 18 and two years younger than his son.

The couple decided to take an extended honeymoon in Europe and Egypt in the hopes, I imagine, that “out of sight, out of mind” would put an end to the gossip. When they realized that Madeleine was pregnant, they decided to return home so that their child would be born in the United States.

They boarded the *Titanic* in Cherbourg, France, on the evening of April 10, 1912, bound for New York City. The *Titanic* hit an iceberg on the night of April 14th and eventually sank in the early morning of April 15th.

Madeleine, her maid, Rosalie Bidois, and her nurse, Caroline Louise Endres, were put on a lifeboat and later rescued by the *RMS Carpathia* (also saved—John Jacob Astor, VI, born August 14, 1912). Astor, his valet, Victor Robbins, and his favorite Airedale terrier, Kitty, did not survive.

In the news reports after the sinking of the *Titanic*, there is mention of Nicholas Biddle (1878-1923) who was one of the trustees of the Astor estate. Nicholas Biddle was the younger brother of Ellen Biddle Shipman. I do not know how long Biddle had worked for Astor, but two stories that I found make me think that Biddle was well thought of by the Astors.

In 1902, Astor built the St. Regis Hotel in New York City; in 1906, he built the Knickerbocker Hotel. According to the St. Regis website, in 1905, “Nicholas Biddle commissioned the “Old King Cole” mural from the artist Maxfield Parrish for \$5,000 as a gift for his friend, Colonel Astor, to hang over the bar in his Knickerbocker Hotel at 42nd Street and Broadway.” The “Old King Cole” mural was moved to the St. Regis and installed in The King Cole Bar (which is where the “Bloody Mary” cocktail was invented) in 1932.



John Jacob Astor IV, his wife Madeleine and (maybe) Kitty the Airedale terrier.



*This is a section of the Maxfield Parrish mural "Old King Cole"*

Maxfield Parrish was well known as an illustrator, and his father, Stephen, had a successful career as a painter and an etcher, so it is not surprising that Biddle asked Maxfield Parrish to take on this project. However, it is interesting to note that Parrish lived in Plainfield, New Hampshire, where Ellen and Louis Shipman also lived. Parrish and the Shipmans were part of the Cornish Arts Colony and would have known each other socially, if not personally.

There is a bit of bathroom humor connected to the painting of "Old King Cole." The King, reportedly modeled after Astor himself, has an odd smirk on his face and the knights on either side of him have peculiar expressions as well. Supposedly there was a competition among well-known artists of Parrish's time to see who could portray flatulence, a contest that Parrish was said to have won with this mural.

After John Jacob Astor died, his son Vincent inherited the St. Regis which he sold to Benjamin N. Duke (!) in 1927. Duke Management made additions and renovations to the hotel. In 1935, Vincent reacquired the St. Regis.

In 1924, Vincent (Harvard, '15) presented to the Harvard Club of New York City a room in memory of Nicholas Biddle (Harvard, '00) which was certainly a gesture of respect and maybe even affection.

Vincent Astor's third wife—later widow—was Brooke Astor (1902-2007). You may remember that she was in the news in 2006 because of allegations that she was being neglected by her son. Despite that unpleasantness at the end of her life, she is mainly remembered as a socialite and philanthropist.

(Okay, even though I am not a big fan of James Cameron's *Titanic*, I looked it up and learned that the actor Eric Braeden played John Jacob Astor IV in that movie. Braeden is probably best known for his role as Victor Newman on the soap opera *The Young and the Restless*. None of this has anything to do with Sarah P. Duke Gardens, but I thought you might find it interesting.)

Sources:

St. Regis, New York: The Legacy; [www.stregisnewyork.com/experience/the-legacy/](http://www.stregisnewyork.com/experience/the-legacy/)  
Kingcolebar; [www.kingcolebar.com/](http://www.kingcolebar.com/) (there is a good image of the mural at this site)

"King Cole, a grimy old soul, heads for a cleaning" by Glenn Collins, New York Times, January 17, 2007  
[www.nytimes.com/2007/01/17/nyregion/17painting.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/17/nyregion/17painting.html)

Cornish Arts Colony in Cornish and Plainfield, NH 1885-1930. [www.crjc.org/heritage/N08-16.htm](http://www.crjc.org/heritage/N08-16.htm)

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# The Terrace Shop

by *Leola Smith and Donna Owens*

“Baby it’s cold outside!” Remember those lyrics from our favorite crooners, Dean Martin and Bing Crosby? It might be br-r-r-r and cold *outside*, but it is warm and toasty in The Terrace Shop.

You must stop by and see the newly expanded children’s area with its vast array of small bugs and butterflies, light-up critters and frogs, silly bands and kaleidoscopes. Frogs, frogs, and more frogs! What perfect “granny gifts” for those days school is closed due to inclement weather and it’s too cold to play outside. We also have a large selection of children’s clothing.

Let’s not exclude the adults! Your choices are limited only to your imagination. Our sweatshirt and sweater selections and our coffee mugs will warm you inside and out as you sit back and thumb through our Sarah P. Duke Gardens 2011 calendar.

But take heart; spring is just around the corner! As a child, I remember someone saying that spring unlocks the flowers.

In anticipation, The Terrace Shop is budding and blooming with both new and familiar items for the warm weather. When you stop by to purchase your food for the ducks, take a minute to browse our book section. During the next couple of months we will feature several books by William (Bill) Cullina that will help you plan and plant your spring garden. Bill is the Director of Horticulture/Plant Curator at The Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens and was previously the nursery manager at Niche Gardens in Chapel Hill.

And as always, we have a nice selection of waterlilies and other water plants, summer bulbs, containers, and spring-blooming plants. You might even find a tadpole or two!

Our inventory of many unique items will inspire you to make special memories with friends and loved ones in the coming months. And as always, we want to remember and thank our loyal volunteers who help make our Volunteer program and Plant Sales such a success, as well as the patrons who visit the Gardens throughout the year.

We look forward to seeing you in The Terrace Shop.

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## Tuesday Talks

Want to know more about what is going on at Sarah P. Duke Gardens? Attend the monthly Tuesday Talks. These informative lunch-time sessions are filled with pertinent information about specific projects, programs and activities. Recent topics have included project updates within the Gardens, and overview of the Friends of Duke Gardens, color and plant combinations used in the Terraces and a session given by Paul Jones on disjunct species and his recent plant discoveries in China. Mark your calendars for the last Tuesday of each month at noon, bring a bag-lunch and join your fellow volunteers for these informative sessions.

# Family Fun Day

Mark your calendars now, because you are hereby invited to the best volunteer gig of the year! Come play with us at this spring's Family Fun Day on Saturday, May 28. There are no tame, dignified Gardens tours to give today, and the weeding can wait until tomorrow. Instead, we'll have a "blast" with the kids creating volcanoes out of baking soda and vinegar. You can learn how to make fairy houses and gel slime. You will get to dissect lima beans and see plants growing in, of all things, plastic gloves. Wildlife Society and Herp Society displays will be on hand during the event. The Great Fish Release will welcome the goldfish to their new home in the Terraces pond. And who wouldn't want to bounce Super Bouncing Bubbles on the South Lawn? To top it all off, Family Fun Day will close with a parade through the Gardens, led by the Paperhand Puppet Intervention troupe!

This is a volunteer opportunity that you do not want to miss. So call Jan Little at 668-5309 or email [Janice.little@duke.edu](mailto:Janice.little@duke.edu) to reserve your spot, and rediscover your inner child, today.



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