

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

September 2017



The Cloister from the Breezeway

Last month, I was gone for two weeks and returned to Mepkin this past Saturday. To drive into the Oak Allee and to ride through the grounds on my Gator, I was moved by how serene and beautiful everything looks in all directions. There were about a dozen visitors there and they all had such nice compliments about the grounds and what they meant to them. I always wish our faithful Volunteers were in my pocket to experience the joy it gives us to hear what our work brings to others.

August was the month of rain, rain, and more rain, and we are still trying to catch up on mowing, spraying, and the ever present debris the storms bring. We continued to prune spent blooms and dead head the hydrangeas as well as shaping them. In September we continue to fertilize the perennials and roses, and to clean out vines from the pruned azaleas and paint the vines in hopes they will not return. This month we will keep pruning the spent or bloomed out plants and divide perennials that have outgrown their space. Needless to say, the rain brought a proliferation of weeds too. Even with several people covering this, it seems when we finish a round of the Abbey, we have to start again! Mulching has also been another real chore to keep things looking very special.

Garden Updates:

The Store:

The Store front has outdone itself with blooms and growth.



Roses and Azaleas

The Parking Court is filling in nicely.





Parking Court

St. Clare:

St. Clare presents such coolness and peace as the Visitor's visit begins.



Everything is in green abundance.

The Cloister:

The Cloister continues to bloom and make a pleasant area for the Brothers. Most areas shown here are restricted, but I thought our readers would like to see how lovely they are.



Raised vegetable beds (I think the flowers have taken over.)



Brother Stephen's Garden



The Rose bed with the Plumbagos is doing well:



Old Dorm bed by the steps

Earlier this year, the unused brick steps on the river side of the Old Dorm, that had become dangerous, were removed, leaving a hole and lots of weeds in the area. Recently Green Carolina cleaned it up in preparation for filling it in and planting it this Fall. Look ahead to see what happens.

The before:



Before



After cleanup, in preparation for restoring this area

The Orchard:

The orchard continues to be a prolific producer of WEEDS and to my dismay lots of fire ants as well. I was working on an especially thick patch of assorted weeds when I realized that I was in big trouble 🐜. Despite gloves I got at least 15 bites. I made a run to the break room looking for benedryl. None there but fortunately some in my glove box.

I find that two 25 mg tablets provide a level of relief but the discomfort lasts for days.

I put some Amdro (fire ant bait) out before we left but suspect the rains may have washed it away before the ants had a chance to feed.

On guard next week! 🤖

Howard

Luce Garden:

We continue to fight the vines and weeds in the newly pruned Azaleas in Luce Garden. The daisies are about bloomed out and the Native Hibiscus have gone to seed.



As you can see, the pruned Azaleas have already filled out and are doing well.

If that is not comforting, look at what you see as you look down upon the Upper Pond. Remember when you could not even see the Upper Pond for the overgrowth? What a treat the area is now.



Upper Pond

Columbarium:

Many people do not realize the fabulous job that Peter did in opening up this kind of view at the Columbarium. I have previously pictured the Ravine he takes care of in this area. We cannot thank him enough for the continuing work he does.



View at the Columbarium from the Bridge to the Cooper River

Presently, the Columbarium grounds are one of my “Special Projects”. The former contractor did not keep things in order and we have a real challenge with the slopes. Mepkin has hired a new company to do the mowing and to take care of the

Columbarium and I will be working with them to bring it back to where it should be. Look forward to progress photos! (By the way, most people do not even notice that it is not pristine, but we want it to be an area that we are proud of all the time!)

Odds and Ends:

Only in our Volunteer Program could we celebrate a Volunteer's 80th birthday in the wrong month and the wrong age! Despite all, Norm was a good sport and we all had a good time!



Karen, Norm, Howard and Ed

The greatest joy is the news that two of the Brothers have graduated up.



Father Columba (formerly known as Father Jim), now a Novice
Brother Juan, now a Junior (Simple Vows)

Congratulations to both of them. Our prayers go with them.

This is the fifth in a series of those people who have lived at Mepkin.

The Mepkin Abbey Era: 1949 – Present



Oak Allee Entering Mepkin Abbey

In 1949, Reverend Emmett Walsh, the Bishop of Charleston, received over 3000 acres of Mepkin land as a gift from Henry and Clare Boothe Luce with the understanding that it would be used by a religious community. Knowing that Clare was fond of the Trappist writings by author Thomas Merton, the Bishop offered the property to the monks of the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani in Kentucky for the purpose of founding a new monastery.

On November 14, 1949, twenty-nine Gethsemani monks arrived at Mepkin. The Abbey was not an immediate success. Economic hardships and the severe low-country summers were a real challenge. Several of the original monks left the community and the future of Mepkin Abbey was in real danger. In response to these difficult times, Gethsemani sent a group of seven monks to bolster the strength of this young monastic community. They were referred to as “the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit” and arrived at the Abbey on August 15, 1952. Brother Joseph remains as the last of those gifts.

The Brothers of Mepkin belong to the worldwide Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance. They are part of an ancient monastic tradition that was formalized in the 6th Century by St. Benedict of Nursia in Italy. The Cistercians developed their own character at Citeaux in the 12th Century France and renewed their tradition at the Norman abbey of La Trappe in the mid 17th Century, becoming known as “Trappists”.

“We, the monks of Mepkin Abbey, are responding to God’s call to live in solitude and silence in and for the Church according to an ancient form of radical Christian discipleship focused on seeking and finding God in community where we “are of one

heart and soul and everything is held in common” (Acts 4:32-33). We live by the Rule of St. Benedict embodied in the Cistercian tradition, praising God in our prayer, our meditative reading of the Scripture, our work and our hospitality, obeying the call of the Holy Spirit to ceaseless prayer and sharing the sufferings of the present time until the Lord returns (Rm 8:18-23).”



Over the sixty-eight years that follow, Mepkin Abbey has seen plenty of change. The Luce home and guest houses were removed and in their place stand the handsome Trappist buildings we see today that include the Church, dormitories, Refectory and kitchen, Senior Wing, The Clare Boothe Luce Library, and the beautiful St. Francis Retreat Center for guests and retreatants. A Labyrinth, the Firemen’s Memorial and a Columbarium have been also added. The Visitors Center, Store, Gallery, Arbor and St. Clare Walk are also features of the Abbey.

The Monks sustain themselves by the Mushroom Operation, income from forestry, hunting club leases, the Creche Festival, and donations from the Retreat Center and many Benefactors.



September 2016

Spotlight on a Volunteer

In an effort to get to know each of you a little better, we are choosing a garden volunteer each month to answer a few questions and submit a brief bio for the monthly newsletter. This month we have chosen volunteer Kay Sappol. Kay can usually be found on one of the gators picking up piles of debris from around the property. She is a wonderful addition to the volunteer team and a huge help wherever she's asked to lend a hand. Following is a little more about Kay in her own words:



I grew up, went to school and worked in New York City. Retired from the Corporate Office of a major retailer located at Rockefeller Center.

Enjoyed all that the City had to offer such as Restaurants, Broadway Shows, Concerts, Sports, Shopping and Museums

I have Fond Memories of Christmas in Manhattan.

We lived in Bermuda for two years before my husband was transferred with his job to Charleston seven years ago.

As a young girl I played Basketball and always enjoyed Exercise. Walking, Yoga and the Gym are among my favorites.

When we can my husband and I travel in the US and to Europe.

I also enjoy Photography, Horses, Gardening and Love Flowers.

I look forward to the upcoming Football Season and rooting for the New York Giants.

1. Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a deserted island? **My husband Eric**

2. If you could do anything you wanted right now, what would it be? **Travel**
3. If money was no object, what would you do all day? **Travel the world**
4. Where do you most want to travel, but have never been? **Australia and New Zealand**
5. What is your favorite memory? **My wedding**
6. What is your favorite movie? **I enjoy Disney movies**
7. What is the one thing that should be taught in school that isn't already? **That we are all created equal and should treat each other with mutual respect.**
8. What one thing would you change if you had to do it over? **Travel out west and learn to ride horses**
9. If you could share a meal with three people from the past, who would they be? **Mom, Dad, and friend Tina.**
10. What actor/actress would play you in your life movie? **Jane Seymour. Loved her as Dr. Mike**
11. Why do you volunteer at Mepkin? **It is beautiful and serene. It brings me close to nature.**

My thanks to Craig for the Spotlight Article, to Howard for the Orchard Report and to Langhorne for editing. The last article on those who have lived at Mepkin has been a joint venture between Craig and myself. We are considering putting together some kind of publication of this series of articles on those who have lived at Mepkin. We would love to hear if there is any interest in us doing so. Please send any comments to Dottie Roddy, roddydh@gmail.com, 1098 Mepkin Road, Moncks Corner, SC 29461. Thank you.

Next month we are going to tell you a little bit about the Garden Volunteer Program and feature the areas of which we take care.

I think you will be surprised at the number of areas for which we are responsible. I was! In closing, I want to give you my definition of a Mepkin Garden Volunteer.

“Do a little bit here and there to make things righter. It just takes a willingness to step up,...lend a hand, and effect real change.” Oprah

Bless you one and all, dottie