

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

March 2014



This month I was going to praise the clearing job that Howard, Norm, Nick, Erwin and Bob have done from the old Tennis Courts all the way around past the old Dorm. Instead, I returned after the major ice storm to find the Abbey a war zone. I was alerted by the Abbot about the extent, but I assured him I would find an arborist right away. The damage was extensive and the debris mind-boggling, as you can see in the photo above. As I landed in Charlotte enroute to Mepkin on the Saturday after the storm, the following photo of the Flatbed Truck was on my phone!



Nick and Richard B had just showed up and started the clearing.



What kind of thanks do you give Volunteers who come unexpected and uncalled? This devotion has continued for two weeks and we have about another week or so to go. The following tell you who some of these very special people are.



Roy in the Live Oak debris that had twisted into the Magnolia next to it.



Laura, Jackson, Alexis, Craig, Dottie and Russ. Craig brought his entire family on President's Day (a holiday for the kids and Laura!)



Roy and Father Kevin, who was out thanking all of us for the time and effort



Second Saturday of work for Richard B! Gary, Abbot Stan, Richard B



Sometimes things don't work out just as we planned. Working on the road at the entrance, Brother Joseph had to save the day!

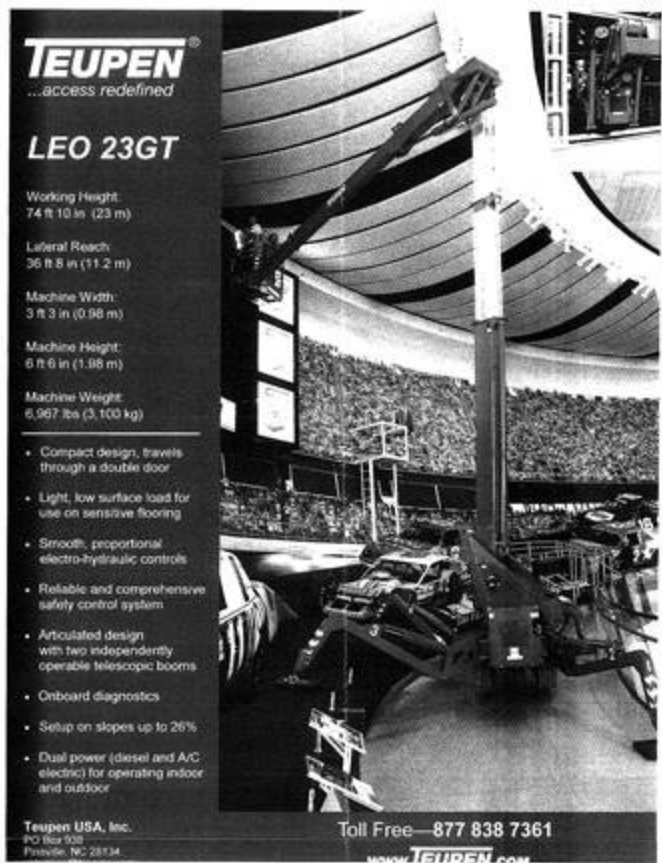


Meredith and Dan with a full load on a 30 degree day!

There are no words to describe the fellowship and partnership with the Monks this disaster brought forth. There were many more involved than show in the photos. I did not get around to everyone, but I want to thank all who helped in this effort.

An arborist will start the high up tree work in a week or so. This will require a

machine new to me: The Teupen GT



The tree men are unable to climb the trees because of the amount of hanging limbs and rotten branches which would be very dangerous for them.

Garden Updates

The former Vegetable, now Orchard Garden Report:

The vegetable crew has been on hard labor helping to clean up after the storm. We had been improving the view shed from the new Retreat Center but we have been chasing around with the BIG truck and chain saw reducing limbs to transportable size and hauling them to the burn pile. I have a feeling we will see the fire from Summerville when that pile is lit.

George has been restocking the raised beds behind the Senior Wing. We are thankful to have Carl back to help with the in between watering. Howard

The Retreat Center:

The Retreat Center is a resounding success. The kinks in the system are being worked out and how to best do what the Abbey hopes to do. The availability(waiting list for a room by email) is six months out.

Father Guerric has help in the office at the Retreat Center on Thursdays now from Carole Nicolini, whom many of you know from the gardens and Creche Festival. She has been a faithful Volunteer for many years. Welcome back, Carole.



The Retreat Center Loggia at night

Luce Garden:



You just cannot keep the good men down in Luce. They heard there were originally steps from the area by the water to the top of the hill. Sooooo, they started digging and lo and behold, there they were. It will be interesting to watch the progress, now that they have the tiger by the tail.

Columbarium:

We have been meeting with contractors to effect the work on the steps and other repairs and additions. Hopefully by the next report, the work will be started. Peter has been invaluable in the time and effort he has spent assessing the drains and irrigation systems. He has also helped the garden group with a combination of fertilizer and spray that he has found successful with the deer and the Father Kline azaleas. Thank you Peter, for all your support.

St Benedict:



Doris, the angel at St. Benedict.

Doris keeps the labor intensive beds and surrounding area at St. Benedict in order. Here she is pruning and feeding the climbing roses in preparation for Spring. Ever loyal, we thank you Doris.

Odds and Ends:

We have another new Volunteer!



Barbara Gorman is from Summerville and will be working in the Cloister. We are so excited to have someone there as it will ease some of the work with Pam, who will be back in the summer. These ladies cover not only the Cloister proper, but both Monk Entries to the Church and the beds on the right side of the Church. Welcome Barbara.

Mystery Photo of the Month:



This is looking downhill from between the Bicycle Shop and the Old Dorm in the private part of the Monastery where the Brothers live.

This is part of the area that Howard and the guys have taken on. These areas have been overgrown for years. We will continue to work on them and hopefully get them under control, so the Monks will have further ground on which to stroll and additional views to the Cooper River which were hidden for so long.

One of the challenges we have as we continue to rehab areas that have been overgrown for years is that fine line between neat/traditional and the wild/habitat areas. Whenever we consider opening up one of these areas, we need to think about the available labor to maintain it as well as how to transition, in a pleasing way, between the more formal and less formal. It has been most evident to me in taking over the Columbarium, where we have the more formal at the top of the Ravine (where the Niches are) and then transitional steps down into the Ravine itself, which is left natural (less formal). There is beauty in both, but sometimes it is not readily seen. Bear with us as we explore this balance. This is care of God's earth.

My thanks to Howard for the Vegetable/Orchard Garden Report and to Richard B for the Flatbed photo. My thanks also to Langhorne for editing. dottie