

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

May 2017



Easter Sunday (Father Jonas)

What a glorious season it has been, culminating in the celebration of our Lord's Resurrection! As you can see, Father Gueric did his usual wonderful preparation of the Church. The Abbot was unable to get home from Ecuador because of the storms in the USA the preceding week, but the Palm Sunday procession from the Retreat Center to the Church went off without a hitch.



Palm Sunday Mass (Father Jonas)

April brought everything to life—seemingly all at once! The later Azaleas were blooming, trees budding out, and we started the major project of feeding and pruning all the Camellias and Azaleas. The Roses showed their bloom and proved that amending the soil and feeding them was the correct thing to do! Weeds continued to

get ahead of us, and the lack of rain took a great deal of our time in watering all pots and new plantings. This month we will finish up the Camellia and Azalea feeding/pruning program, and begin to cut back the mums, divide several perennials and try to keep the weeds under control.

We are excited to announce that we will have Mepkin Greenhouse plants in the Arbor (whose entrance is to the right of the steps up into the Store). This week we are staging them on tables and other shelves and getting everything in order, so that Visitors can “take a piece of Mepkin home with them”. If you have a chance to visit, follow the signs at the entrance of the Arbor to see the various succulents and hanging baskets we have to offer. There is a suggested donation list and all proceeds will go to help our Garden Program.



Fern



Wandering Jew hanging baskets



Various Succulents

Garden Updates:

The Store and Parking Court:

We continue to weed and water the new berms. We hope to get approval from the Abbot when he returns so we can start paving soon and wrap up this project.

St. Clare:

The Florida Anise that edges the secret garden from the woods in St. Clare bloomed this month. The Siberian Iris are up and should be blooming soon. The ferns have gone crazy.



Florida Anise



Ferns



The Cloister:

The Volunteers outdid themselves in the Cloister for Easter. They cleaned and mulched everywhere! We will be separating some of the perennials in the next week, and putting in the Mexican Heather we wintered over in the GH in front of the 10man cottage. The Roses have also come to life!

At the entry to the Breezeway, Peter's Azaleas bloomed in all their glory. Remember that Peter Wallace developed these red azaleas and named them "Father Francis Kline" to honor the late Abbot. What a treat to have these here and on the opposite hill to the Columbarium every year.



"Father Francis Kline" Azaleas

The Orchard:

The recent cold spell set things back in the orchard. We had protected the most sensitive plants but not adequately as it turned out. Our most mature Satsuma oranges suffered the least damage due to the heavy cardboard insulation and are now flowering. The new Cara Cara oranges were heavily damaged and quite a bit of dead wood has been removed. There is new growth above the graft so the plants should survive but will be set back a year or so. The lemon lost some new growth but since it was not grafted should be OK.

The brambles have an abundance of flowers and the blueberries look very good although short of fruit. We have some figs but we need to wait and see if we get a second crop this year. The persimmons appear to be leafing out nicely although short of flowers and ultimately fruit.

Brother Juan has been a great help watering when he can and keeping an eye on the plants.

The battle with weeds goes on.

Howard and Norm

Dottie's comment: We are in planning stage of providing a watering system for the Orchard. Jimmy, mushroom operation manager, has graciously agreed to help us with it. It will be a great relief to both the garden group (who have been watering when the Orchard crew is not here) and Brother Juan (who waters on the weekends). With the hot weather coming, it is all we can do to keep the fruit picked at its peak with the crew only coming on Tuesdays. Thanks to all for co-operating on this.

Luce Garden:

The Luce crew has been busy weeding, pruning, feeding all month. We have had a number of weddings and they make every effort for things to be just right for our guests.

The pond lilies bloomed and were beautiful. The daisies are up and will be the next blooming feature, along with the Hydrangeas and Native Hibiscus. The cold snap did not get the Hydrangeas as it did at the Store.



Blooms at the Upper Pond

Odds and Ends:

This month we were lucky enough to have several Visitors to tour and help us.



Craig's parents, Karen and Hill Clark (Craig Clark)



Craig and a Retreatant Volunteer



Elaine, Ursula and Wayne's grandson (Craig Clark)

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

The Luce Era: 1936 – 1949

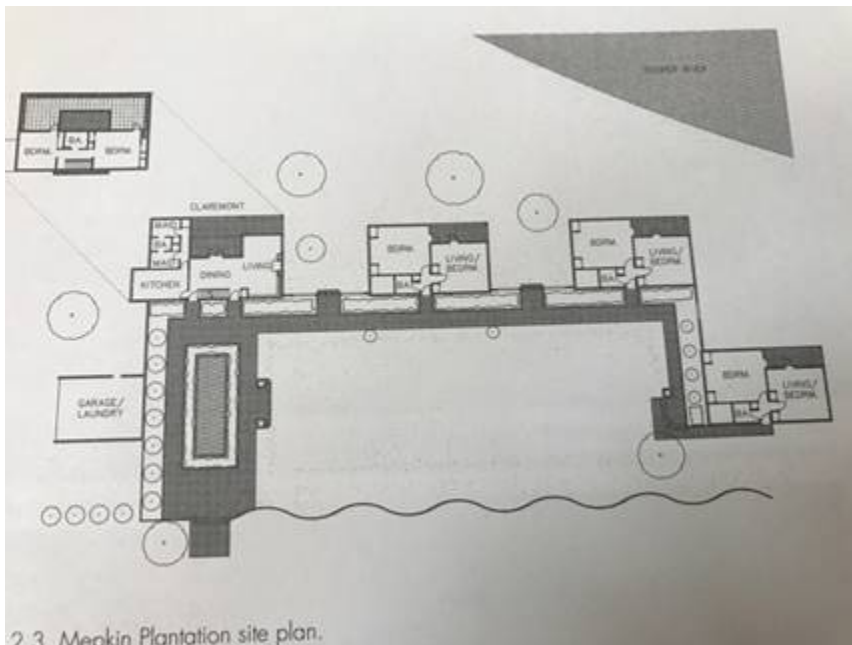
Editors note: We are presenting the Luce Era in several parts, as their time here was many faceted.

PART ONE:



Henry and Clare Booth Luce purchased the Mepkin property in 1936 from James Wood Johnson's daughter with the intent to use it as a winter destination to hold house parties. Henry was publisher of Time, Life, and Fortune magazines and Clare was a successful playwright, U.S. congresswoman, and ambassador to Italy. The pair are considered one of the great "power couples" in American history.

They had the Johnson home torn down and hired architect Edward Durell Stone to design a more modern and contemporary home. Stone was working in the international style at the time and was building the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. He designed for the Luces a low set of brick homes with the main residence on one side of a formal courtyard and three small guest houses located on the other side joined by a walkway.



The Main House was known as "Claremont". The other guests houses were known as "Strawberry", "Tartleberry" and "Washington", each named after a plantation.



Front Entry of Luce House, "Claremont"



Side view of Luce House with Guest House



Guest house from the River Side

“The rear façade of each, more exciting than the front, were designed to integrate the house with the Cooper River landscape. “ (Edward Durell Stone, Modernism’s Populist Architect.) These were located where the present Church and Cloister are.

Mepkin was a favorite holiday house for the Luce family—especially, Ann Brokaw, Clare’s daughter from a previous marriage. Henry Luce considered Ann his daughter. There was a barn with horses, hunting and fishing on the property. In a letter to Abbot Dunn (Abbot at Gethsemane Monastery from 1935-1948), Clare expresses how Ann loved “to run, laughing, through the gardens. Her brown hair flew in the wind when she galloped on her horse under the live oaks.”



Ann, on her pony



Clare and Henry skeet shooting on the property



Clare was often seen cruising around Mepkin in her red Jeep.

This closes Part One of the Luce Period. Next month we will talk about Luce Garden, designed by famous garden architect Loutrel Briggs. "The Camellia Garden."

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 Norm Moraux. Norm has been volunteering at Mepkin for over ten years starting with Father Guerric and his native grasses program. Nowadays Norm can be found in the orchard tending to the various fruits being grown for the monk's consumption. If he's not in the orchard, you will find him with his hair whipped back, holding on for dear life, as Howard carries him past in a gator at max speed or quietly sipping coffee outside the breakroom. Norm is an incredibly friendly man willing to help out wherever necessary and a wonderful person to volunteer beside.



Here is a brief bio from Norm:

My dad was in the navy, therefore stationed in Long Beach, CA. Dad's shipmates placed names in a cap and that's how the name Norman was picked. Twelve years of Catholic education. Earned the BSA Eagle award, worked in the scouting program and my love for the West. Attended Colorado State U., School of Forestry. Returned to Ca. and worked for a company making capacitors, met my wife and married. Plant closed and moved from the valley. Worked with a company in Burbank, Ca. making resistors, switches. The company had several plants on the East Coast and the desire to consolidate operations, asked me if I would help therefore the move to Moncks Corner. After three years and the Industry being taken over by Japan, I was given the choice to assist Quality Control. Asbestos operations became my home for 33 years. To name a few products: High Temp cloths, seals on the catalytic converters used on all Ford Motor cars/trucks, many parts used on aircraft today (Boeing, Lockheed, etc.) and high temp rubber used on missile programs and to insulate space vehicle on liftoff. I helped set up same inspection operation on the West Coast after the company was sold and the new company took over. Retired.

1) Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a deserted island?

- a) My wife, Ginger.
- 2) If you could do anything you wanted right now, what would it be?
 - a) Work on the house.
- 3) If money was no object, what would you do all day?
 - a) Travel.
- 4) Where do you most want to travel, but have never been?
 - a) Historic locations around the world and the U.S. which I haven't seen all of yet.
- 5) What is your favorite memory?
 - a) Watching my children grow up and become successful.
- 6) What is your favorite movie?
 - a) Growing up out West, I love westerns.
- 7) What is the one thing that should be taught in school that isn't already?
 - a) Planning a budget over a set period of time.
- 8) What one thing would you change if you had to do it over?
 - a) Complete college.
- 9) If you could share a meal with three people from the past, who would they be?
 - a) God, Ted Roosevelt, and my Mother.
- 10) What actor/actress would play you in your life movie?
 - a) John Wayne
- 11) Why do you volunteer at Mepkin?

The quiet, peaceful atmosphere that surround the property and the wonderful people you come in contact with on a weekly basis.

As usual, there are always “aha!” moments as I ride through the grounds checking on things. This photo is of a Fringe Tree in its full glory in the Columbarium. There is such beauty at Mepkin it takes my breath away. The serenity and peace we feel here is so healing. Thanks be to God for leading all the Volunteers to us. We receive so much more than we give.



Fringe Tree

My thanks to Howard for the Orchard Report, to Father Jonas and Craig for the photos, to Craig for the Spotlight on Volunteers and to Langhorne for editing. This month Craig and I co-authored the Luce Era, so blame it on me if there are mistakes!

Please come out and enjoy the joy of God's place—Mepkin Abbey.

Peace, dottie