

Mepkin Abbey Garden Volunteer Newsletter

February 2018



(Father Jonas)





The Abbey received 6-7 inches of snow! The Abbot emailed me that there had not been this much snow since 1973! The Volunteers were unable to reach Mepkin because the bridges had iced and were closed. I understand there was fun to be had. I hear there is a video of Father Jonas sledding down the hill from the top of the Cloister.

And then the bad news:



Compost Shed (Craig Clark)

One of the mushroom compost sheds collapsed from the weight of the snow!

The Volunteers were gone for several days, and when they returned, this is what they found:



Florida Anise in St. Clare



Damaged Papyrus in St. Clare



Damaged Sego Palms throughout the property



Frozen Lantana and damaged Fatsia in front of the Store



Damaged rose bushes in front of the Store



Damaged Camellia buds throughout the property

St. Clare was the worst. By now, we have cleaned it up and will wait for Spring and pray it will come back up! It could have been worse. We had no serious Live Oak damage. Lots of debris—three weeks later we are still picking it up. Despite all of this, here is the first of the Lenten Roses blooming!



First bloom of Lenten Roses

I will not be doing Garden Updates of St. Clare, Store, Luce or Walk to the Church this month.

GARDEN UPDATES:

Orchard:

The orchard crew will be on tender hooks 'til spring. We had some apparent damage to the citrus. The stems look green although the leaves were hit pretty hard.

Craig and Dottie did a great job of covering the plants but timing is everything. We are unfortunately not at Mepkin 24/7. I had 15 degrees in Summerville and imagine it was colder at the Abbey. That's the magic number for most hearty citrus. I hope our wrappings and light bulbs were able to get us through.

I've heard that February will be a warmer month but we need to wait and see while being prepared for that last minute cold snap. Thank goodness we aren't real farmers.

Howard

Columbarium:

The construction of the 2nd Stage of the Columbarium has moved primarily to the bridge and steps up to Laurens Cemetery. All is ready, as you saw last month, for the niches to be put in place.

Progress is continuing on the steps:



Steps up to Laurens Cemetery

Odds and Ends:

New Volunteers!

We have several new Volunteers—one group is a family who are interested in the Native Plants and are going to take on the Labyrinth. They worked with us on a day off from school and helped clean up St. Clare. I will try to have a photo next month.

Here is Chuck Dolesy, who saw our “plea” in the bulletin at St. Benedict and has joined us:



Chuck Dolesy

We have several new Mormon Volunteers:



Sister Olivia (who has been here) and Sister Candice



Elder Charles and Elder Nathan

Our cup “runneth” over! We are delighted to have these new “gifts”. We could always use more! If you have some free time, please contact Craig Clark, Director of Grounds and Gardens @ 843-709-8362.

How Mepkin Abbey Supports Itself:

This is the third in a series of how Mepkin supports itself. This month we feature the Mushroom Operation. It is managed by Jimmy Livingston whom you see below.



Jimmy Livingston

Jimmy not only manages the Mushroom Operation, but in the spirit of helping one another, he has been very helpful in getting the irrigation going in the Orchard.

Mepkin grows two types of mushrooms: Oyster and Shitake



Oyster Mushrooms



Shitake Mushrooms



Father Columba cutting up mushrooms for dried mushroom sales

The operation supplies restaurants in our area. I am sure you are aware of the many restaurants who feature “Mepkin Mushrooms” on their menus. Be sure and tell your waiter how good they are!

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 Greg Ewell. Greg has been volunteering at Mepkin for the past year and is also a part of the docent program. Greg is a retired engineer who uses his many talents to fix our worn-out garden equipment and tools. His attention to detail has been instrumental in suggesting and making improvements to many of the processes at Mepkin. He is also willing to jump in and help whenever asked – from painting to mulching.



Here is a brief bio from Greg:

I grew up in Alexandria Virginia, just outside of DC. After engineering school at the University of Virginia, I got a polite letter from President Nixon inviting me to spend two expense paid years at Camp Army.

Following that experience, I went to work at Newport News Shipbuilding, scratching a youthful itch to work on ships that I had developed as a kid after visiting the USS Constitution. Exciting work for a young engineer to crawl around nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers. After six years there, moved back to northern Virginia at an invitation to work for the Navy for another 37 and ½ years, on submarines and the SUBSAFE program at first, and then on all classes of ships, new construction and overhaul, and also shipyard infrastructure and equipment. Saw a lot of places in the world, but also missed a lot of family time.

Retired a little over two years ago and out of Virginia house a little over one year ago now full time in Mount Pleasant. Daughter Emily lives in Brazil with her family and daughter Ellen lives in Ohio.



Greg with his two daughters and Jill

1. Who would you want with you if you were stranded on a deserted island? Wife Jill of course; my best friend and great and resourceful helper! Plus, she makes me laugh!
2. If you could do anything you wanted right now, what would it be? Doing pretty much what I what I

am doing now; good health, travel when we feel like it, etc.

3. If money was no object, what would you do all day? Being retired, working for money is not an issue, so am happy to say we are comfortable enough not to change a thing!
4. Where do you most want to travel, but have never been? Traveled many places in the world in my job, but still haven't been to Australia and New Zealand, need to make a plan.
5. What is your favorite memory? I think being at the beach in North Carolina as a child - and seeing the shooting stars and the rest of the heavens that I could not see if the urban lights of the D.C. area.
6. What is your favorite movie? OK, favorite movie; I have not seen this movie since it came out in 1968, but the movie "Charly" with Cliff Robertson has always stuck in my head. Not a blockbuster, but check it out.
7. What is the one thing that should be taught in school that isn't already? Brand names! Now I know that sounds odd, but in Engineering school I learned the chemical or formal names of many materials; when I was working with engineers, they all conversed in brand names which left me at a loss. Don't know if is still a problem...? Maybe in High School, "shop" classes ought to be mandatory - to teach boys and girls how to handle the basic care and maintenance of their acquisitions.
8. What one thing would you change if you had to do it over? I am going to give you a boring answer, but I learned enough civil engineering after school to appreciate it and wished I had taken that instead of mechanical.
9. If you could share a meal with three people from the past, who would they be? Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Henry Laurens.
10. What actor/actress would play you in your life movie? I have to pick Gregory Peck, even though he is no longer around. A live actor I would pick Richard Gere.
11. Why do you volunteer at Mepkin? Jill got me started out a Mepkin and I am honored to part of this historical and Inspirational place. I feel I get more out of Mepkin than I

Many thanks to Father Jonas for all the snow photos, to Father Kevin for sending me photos (I suspect Fr. Jonas took) and to Craig for the photograph of the fallen shed and the Spotlight on Volunteers article, and to Howard for the Orchard Report. Unfortunately, Langhorne came down with the flu last week and is out

of commission. Join me in prayers that she make a swift recovery.

I hope your holidays were as joyful as mine were. I missed the snow, being in East Tennessee, but got a taste of the bitter cold. Coming back is like coming home. I find myself rejuvenated each time I return. Come see us if you need a day of calm and serenity. Happy Valentine's Day, dottie



Raised beds in Cloister