

# The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



## Our Memories - Section One

**Note:** On these "Our Memories" pages will be found a collection of stories, photographs and remembrances contributed by current and former members of the Friends who shared their experiences during The Friends 50th Anniversary in 2002 and were published in *50 Years of Friends*. There are three separate sections, with the contributors arranged alphabetically.

### Harriet Betzold - 50th Anniversary Thoughts

**Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden** has been a favorite place to visit forever, it seems. When our two children were very small they would accompany me on my visits to the Garden, at least twice a month. I found they had at least as great an interest as I did; they always found something new to investigate. That interest still remains.

For the last 50 years, the Friends of the Garden have played a vital part in protecting this small corner of our metropolitan area, within the Minneapolis Park Board's Wirth Park. The Friends have helped to sustain Eloise Butler's dream of a wild botanical garden for the edification of botany students and for the enjoyment of the general public. I think she would be very pleased to know that many people have continued to experience the beauty and serenity of her special place for all these years.

Over the years, many improvements have been financed through the efforts of the Friends. **Building the Martha Crone Shelter was the first big project**, and has stood the test of time. Visitors continue to enjoy the programs and displays presented by the naturalists in this charming structure. I joined the Friends' board in the late '80s, and plans were already underway to erect a stone gate at the south entrance. A few years later, a similar gate at the north entrance was finished. Wrought-iron fencing surrounding the Garden to discourage deer from entering and eating the precious plants was also a part of this effort. Sturdy benches have been provided, as well as birdbaths and many other items too numerous to list.

I feel the future of this Garden will be in good hands. The visiting school children and other young people seem to have the same enthusiasm and awe I experienced on my many visits to the Garden over the years. It is my fervent hope that it will remain as pristine as it is today.

Harriet is a long time member of the Friends and was president of The Friends 1994 - 1997



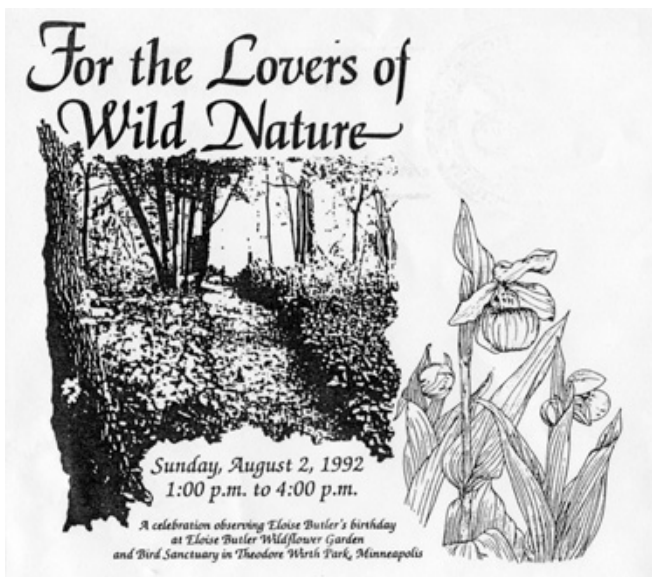
## Betty Bryan - Recollections

On a cool May morning a few years back, I sat in the Martha Crone Shelter with others attending the annual meeting of the Friends. Warming heat issued from the fireplace as one of the officers gave her report. I sat near a window on the west side, looking out occasionally at the woodpile. Suddenly my eyes caught a flash of black, white and red. A rose-breasted grosbeak flew in, to land a few feet away in a bush yet leafless. Having not seen one for several years, my attention was diverted as I admired this handsome, active visitor.

Then, however, another grosbeak arrived — and another and another — until there were six actively inspecting the bushes. How could one keep from calling attention to the scene, yet suffer the rudeness of interrupting the report? Bird-watching won as I raised my hand and totally interrupted, saying, “Don’t everyone move, but look out these windows to see several rose-breasted grosbeaks very close.” Everyone had a look at the self-absorbed birds cleaning the bushes before they moved on. I had an experience I remember now, but I cannot summon any memory of the report.



I recall the Board meeting when we chose the message that would crown the new front gate. Many suggestions came as a result of a month’s thought, ranging from a phrase from Betty Bridgman’s poetry to “Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden,” with emphasis on the “Wild Flower” rather than the “Wildflower” preferred by the Park Board. Cary George had been silent through the debate. In a lull he said he would like to offer “Let Nature Be Your Teacher.” My recollection is that this is one of Eloise’s favored Wordsworth quotations. Silence followed, some questions, a bit of discussion and then, total approval! I read it each time I enter the Garden. It wears well.



An exciting event for the Garden was Sunday, August 2, 1992, when the U.S. Postal Service came to set up for the introduction of the first class stamp of the State Flower collection, and to issue a special



cancellation commemorating Eloise Butler and her Wild Flower Garden. A Friend with contacts to the Post Office had pursued the entire process. Stamp collectors know what such an event means, but none of us knew. The Shelter became a Post Office where mail could be deposited and stamps bought, and special envelopes were available. Traffic control of the lines of stamp collectors was our job.

**In the open area the Friends welcomed Martha Hellander** (photo on previous page) back to autograph her book, *The Wild Gardener*, and to celebrate Eloise's birthday. Guided tours of the Garden and Quaking Bog were given, and representatives from Minnesota's Native Plant Society and local nurseries were available. Many people were introduced to the Garden that day. As Membership Chair, I purchased a two-year supply of those lovely stamps. Eloise was surely the star of that day.

### **Robert & Betty Dasset - Remembrances (as told to Pam Weiner)**

**In the spring of 2002**, Robert Dasset, the seventh president of the Friends (1971-1975), passed away at the age of 86. Just weeks before, his wife Betty was gracious enough to spend an hour on the phone, sharing memories of their Garden experiences, answering some questions and relaying some of Bob's comments and remembrances.



Both of the Dassetts grew up in Minneapolis and became familiar with the Garden as youngsters. Betty recalled being 10 or 12 in about 1930, and going to the Garden with her parents, where they would see Eloise Butler, "a cute little lady." After school at West High, in the mid to late '30s, Robert would ride out to the Garden on his bike to talk to Martha Crone, early in her tenure as gardener.

The Dassetts both loved the woods and wild places, and Robert had some pals who were very fond of the Garden, too. He liked to remember his friend Whitney Eastman, "a real bird man" and a great baseball fan during the Millers' era. Whitney had his own version of a double-header, Robert recalled; he'd watch the first game, bike to the Garden to eat his sandwich and talk to Martha, and then bike back to see most of the second game.



The rustic restrooms, a project of Robert's years as president.

**Robert and Betty were frequent visitors** to the Garden during the Martha Crone years. He talked about helping her and Mr. Odell put out a prairie fire before the shelter was built. Once, Robert and Betty were there when Martha's husband Bill discovered a barred owl perched rather close on a tree branch. All four went to gaze at it, and the owl just sat and stared back at them, seemingly curious and unafraid.

During Robert's years as President, his friend Cal DeLaitre helped raise funds to build the **restroom buildings just inside the front gate**. Whitney Eastman's daughter, Betty Peyton, and her husband Morrow, were also active Friends in those years.

Although Robert and Betty hadn't been able to visit the Garden for several years at the time that we spoke, they both offered fond memories and wishes for the Garden's future as the wonderful retreat they enjoyed. For them, Betty said, it was "the neatest place in the whole world."

## Marie Demler - Memories of a Volunteer Leader & Faithful Friend

My experience with the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden began more than 35 years ago, when Dr. Marian Grimes recruited me to become a volunteer. When she retired, she asked me to take over the task of seeking new volunteers and coordinating their service. Later, I teamed up with another volunteer, Natalie Adler, and we shared those duties.

When the Garden opened in early April, I'd come down the path and smell Ken Avery's roaring fire in the Martha Crone Shelter. When there were few visitors — some days were really cold — I had my friends, the books at the shelter, waiting for me.

We volunteers gathered our energy, brooms, pails, polish and sandwiches to prepare the shelter for the annual meeting. We made the place shine!

We had a good time when Natalie and I decided to invite all volunteers plus spouses or friends to meet for appetizers and to get acquainted. Eventually it was time for someone else to take over and enjoy our experiences. Shirley Schultz was that special person, and she continues to be involved with volunteers to this day.



A wonderful event for me and my husband Max was our 50th anniversary celebration at the Garden in 1985. We had over 90 people come from all over to wish us well. Ken Avery gave a lovely talk to our group about the Garden, some of the plants and the history.

When I think about my times at the Garden over the years, I remember many visitors from near and far, even from other countries, and I realize how much I enjoyed meeting and talking with them. I still come to the Garden to be soothed and

healed, and to have my senses put in tune once more.

All photos are courtesy of members or the property of The Friends