

In Memory

Vaughn Lionel Banting

Vaughn Lionel Banting, age 61 years, died on Saturday, October 11, 2008, at Ochsner Foundation Hospital in New Orleans, Louisiana, following a short illness.

He was born August 23, 1947 in Red Wing, Minnesota and lived in the New Orleans area for more than 50 years. He was a well known horticulturist, and his service company, Nicholas and Banting, designed and maintained some of the finest gardens and plantings in the city. He was also well known for his work with bonsai.

Mr. Banting was a U.S. Army veteran of the Vietnam War and a Purple Heart recipient. He was a member of the Jefferson United Methodist Church.

He is the son of the late Cyril K. and Irene Weston Banting and is survived by four sisters, Ruth Chauff (late Lowell), Beth Perkins (Skeeter), Joy Phillips (Gary), and Ivy Schlegel (Mads). He is also survived by numerous nieces and nephews, including Christopher Segar, who was central to Vaughn's care and support during his battle with brain cancer.

Memorial contributions in memory of Mr. Banting are suggested to the American Cancer Society, 2605 River Road, New Orleans, LA. 70121 or your favorite charity.

Nancy Caroline Smith Swell

Nancy Caroline Smith Swell, of Richmond, died June 30, 2008. She was born August 25, 1927 in Salem, West Virginia. She received her bachelor of science degree from West Virginia Wesleyan College in 1949 and master of science degree in Microbiology from George Washington University in 1950.

She worked at the VA hospital in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and taught at Virginia Commonwealth University. She brought her love of the mountains and native plants with her from West Virginia to Richmond in 1964. She was involved with garden clubs, botanical gardens and plant societies in the U.S. and in England. Much of her life was spent in her beautiful garden growing and propagating azaleas, ferns and other shady perennials.

The Ghost Fern and the 'Pocono Pink' azalea have been credited to her and are enjoyed by many. She and her husband, Leon, operated a gardening business, Swell Azaleas, for 23 years.

She is survived by her loving husband, Dr. Leon Swell, to whom she was married for 57 years. She is also survived by three daughters, Janet Swell of Travelers Rest, S.C., Barbara Swell of Asheville, N.C., Laura Wright of Montpelier, Va., their spouses, and eight grandchildren.

Donations may be made in her name to the Tuckahoe Volunteer Rescue Squad, 1101 Horsepen Road, Richmond, Virginia 23229.

Denise Stelloh

By Bob Stelloh

Denise 'Deni' Stelloh died peacefully on August 13, 2008, at age 71, in the company of her husband and three of her best friends. She is deeply missed by her husband Bob Stelloh, daughter Michelle Stratton, sister Paulette Sager, brother Jack Harang, Bob's daughters Kathleen and Jennifer Stelloh, and scores of loving friends.

Deni was a beautiful, passionate, gracious and talented woman who lived life to its fullest. Born and raised in Long Island, New York, courses at the University of Arizona were the prelude to an entrepreneurial career as colorful as she was. She traveled the world as a stewardess with Pan-Am, before she began as an account representative for Medical Billing Services, Inc., in Oakland, California and rose to become its President. She began a dog training company in Maryland, and a fashion consulting company and a contract bridge club in North Carolina. She was superb at making new friends, and at finding new interests and challenges to learn about and master.

Deni and Bob became interested in azaleas soon after they married and moved from Walnut Creek, California, to Potomac, Maryland, in 1970. Typical of her enthusiasm and boundless energy, Deni jumped into gardening with both feet, soon filling up their townhouse lot, front and back, with evergreen and deciduous azaleas. One of the first was 'Kintaiyo', rooted from a discarded spray after a Potomac Valley Chapter-ARS truss show and still in their garden today. Active in the Brookside Gardens Chapter-Azalea Society of America soon after it formed, Deni eventually became their show chairman for at least 10 years, and received their highest honor, the Frederic P. Lee Award, in 1988.

After a few years they moved from their townhouse to

▼ Denise Stelloh and 'Deni's Delight', May 4, 2006



Photo © Stelloh

a house on a half-acre lot. When that filled up with azaleas, they charged their real estate lady to “find us about five acres of oak trees with a house.” Once there, they began planning and planting “Kairaku” (Japanese for “joint pleasure”), a large wooded hillside garden, just in time to be on tour as a young garden of promise for the 1988 ASA convention. Their tastes soon expanded to include rhododendrons, ornamental trees, conifers, groundcovers, vines, grasses—almost any ornamental plant. Her artistry and keen sense of color and texture helped create a garden of year-round interest. That was on top of being the office manager and convention planner for the International Sugar Research Foundation, and later becoming the office manager of a large ophthalmology office.

Deni’s interest in people as well as plants soon led to annual garden parties. Together with her interest and skill in cooking, the parties also became famous for her refreshments as well as the flowers. After taking several years of Chinese cooking classes, the high point was a sit-down chicken curry dinner “made from scratch” for 80 garden guests—that involved picking apart (not cutting!) a lot of chickens. A student flutist hired for one of the garden parties became a very close friend and eventually came to live with us. That led to concerts in the garden by our own resident flutist and her musician friends for about five years.

Deni’s friendship with George Harding, one of the founders of the ASA, led to her and Bob having lead roles in the design and planting of the George Harding Memorial Azalea Garden at River Farm, headquarters of the American Horticultural Society in Alexandria, Virginia, dedicated in 1994.

A love of animals was an important part of Deni’s life, fostered by having been raised with Great Danes. It started with housing a Seeing Eye female between litters in California. That continued in Maryland with Natasha, a pre-trained guard dog when Bob started traveling. Later, Deni trained Elke, a long-haired German Shepherd, to earn a Companion Dog certificate when less than a year old, in 1981. After that she started a dog training company, and we always had one or two long-haired German Shepherds in our lives from then on. Our last, Kaitlin, was well known to all the dog walkers on our street and to our garden visitors in Hendersonville for her sweet disposition and friendliness, until she died of cancer in late 2007.

Upon retirement, the Stelloh’s followed such horticultural giants as Henry Skinner, Augie Kehr and John Creech to Hendersonville, North Carolina in 1996. They found two sloping acres of mature oaks, tulip poplars, pines, sourwoods and dogwoods, *R. maximum* and mountain laurel, and even a few native *R. calendulaceum*, *R. arborescens* and *R. viscosum*—with a house. Soon a more manageable one-acre Kairaku emerged, with over 600 mature plants from the old garden, in time to be toured on the 2001 ASA convention as another young garden of promise...and again on the 2008 ASA convention as a more mature garden. Deni thoroughly enjoyed “holding court” on the back deck to greet many of

her gardening friends again at the 2008 convention, for, as it turned out, the last time.

Many good things happened between those two conventions—major additions and growth at Kairaku, Ikebana classes, annual open-garden tours, garden tours by local non-profit groups and artists, show chairman for the Southeastern Chapter-American Rhododendron Society for a number of years and receiving their Bronze Medal in 2001, opening a Color Works! fashion consulting company, and studying and passing a test to become a contract bridge director to teach bridge lessons and run her own Breakfast Bridge Club. She also had her own namesake deciduous azalea, ‘Deni’s Delight’, registered in her honor in 2006.

Unfortunately, many bad things also began happening to Deni during those same years—breast cancer in 2003, a broken back during Hurricane Ivan in 2004, ever-worsening lung disease from the aggressive radiation therapy received to overcome her breast cancer, and a broken arm in 2008. She was admitted to hospice care in 2006. Although she graduated from hospice in 2007 due to an excellent support team and her fierce efforts in fighting her health problems, those problems had taken their toll. Deni had to gradually begin giving up her interests—first her gardening, then her cooking, then her bridge, and finally her life.

Deni loved life and lived it fully, enjoying people, animals, cooking, gardening and bridge. Her life was an inspiration to everyone she met. It was my privilege to have had that inspiration for 38 years.

Call for Articles

The Azalean needs articles about azaleas, their care, and their use in the landscape. Ideas for topics include:

- Articles describing new public gardens or special azalea collections being created in your area.
- Descriptions and photographs of Society members’ gardens.
- Current research in azaleas being conducted at local universities, extension service gardens, or junior colleges.
- Information about azalea festivals and sales.
- Historic garden restoration stories.
- Articles about noteworthy azalea hybrid groups or new species or cultivar introductions.

Articles should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. Illustrations are highly encouraged with color print photographs, high resolution digital photographs (minimum 300 dpi), slides, or black-and-white drawings.

Submission deadlines are: January 1 (Spring issue); April 1 (Summer issue); July 1 (Fall issue); and October 1 (Winter issue).

Submit articles to: Pam Fitch, Editor, *The Azalean*, P.O. Box 632537, Nacogdoches, TX 75963 or e-mail theazalean@gmail.com.