

this an ongoing feature of future sales. ASA conventions are the main forum for bringing together members of the society in one location and are the ideal place for Legacy teams to provide plants to society members. Legacy teams are encouraged to coordinate with convention organizers to provide copies of Legacy hybrids for plant sales.

In addition to providing a means of promoting azaleas, the Legacy Project can provide an excellent framework for, or a component of, a chapter's program and activities. It taps into a range of skill sets, not just horticulture. Society members and chapters are encouraged to consider sponsoring Legacy Hybrids groups...especially those that may be associated with the chapter or the geographic area they serve.

## References and Resources

<sup>1</sup> Stump, Barbara. Summer 2019. "2019 National Convention Report." *The Azalean*. 41(2): 52.

<sup>2</sup> Pollard, Jennifer. Winter 2019. "Lockerly Arboretum." *The Azalean*. 41(4): 86.

For more information, go to the Legacy page on the ASA website: <https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/>.

Richard (Rick) Bauer is in his second term as ASA President. Rick was part of the team which developed the Legacy Project in the Northern Virginia Chapter. He was also part of the team which digitized *The Azalean* and was co-chair of the 2016 Joint ASA/ARS Convention in Williamsburg, VA. He is a member and past president of the Northern Virginia Chapter and a former ASA director. He promotes the ASA and the Legacy Project to groups throughout the US and Canada.



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# Reflections on Harry Weiskittel and the Marshy Point Azaleas

*Donald W. Hyatt—McLean, Virginia*

The Azalea Society of America and the American Rhododendron Society lost a good friend when Harry Weiskittel passed away on May 5, 2019. He was 77. Harry had been suffering with Alzheimer's disease for several years, so we had not seen him around and he was no longer hybridizing azaleas. We will miss him, but we can be grateful for the wonderful legacy of spectacular azalea hybrids he left for us, the Marshy Point Azaleas.<sup>1</sup> (See Photo 1.)

What seemed ironic is that during the week prior to his death, I had been thinking about Harry almost every day. I had been working with Carolyn Beck to gather data on his Marshy Point Hybrids so that we could officially register them. As I took photos, recorded measurements, and struggled with the Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart trying to match flower colors against their color chips, my mind would wander back to Harry and a tapestry of events, conversations, and good times we shared in the ARS and ASA over many decades.

For many years, Harry ran one of the largest azalea wholesale nurseries in the region, but that was not his original career. He had enlisted in the Army after college and served as a counterintelligence officer based in Berlin from 1966 to 1969. When he returned from that tour of duty, he earned a law degree. Eventually, what started as a hobby raising azalea seedlings on his ping pong table evolved into a major wholesale nursery operation.

▼ Photo 1—Harry Weiskittel in one of his hoop houses with one of his double white azaleas.



Photo Donald Hyatt

## His Nursery

Harry often said how fortunate he was to have the land where the nursery resided. That property had been in the family for quite some time. He was officially Harry C. Weiskittel III, and I don't recall if it was his father or his grandfather who originally bought the land, but it was a treasure. Marshy Point is a scenic tract that juts out into the Chesapeake Bay at Middle River, north of Baltimore. The family originally used it for hunting, but Harry transformed part of that area into his nursery. He had acres of hoop houses, fields of plants, and an extensive automatic watering system to care for them. (See Photo 2.) He also had a beautiful display garden covering many acres near the home. During the 2004 ASA Convention in Bowie, MD, hosted by the Ben Morrison Chapter ASA, Harry's garden was a prime feature on the tour. Two years later during the 2006 Joint ARS/ASA Convention in the suburbs of Washington, DC, we toured his garden again. That event was hosted by the ARS Chapters in District 9 and the Brookside Gardens Chapter ASA.

As the nursery business grew, Harry's son Austin joined the firm as its vice president. They not only sold standard azaleas, rhododendrons, and other plants, but the main attraction was always the new azalea cultivars that Harry had developed. Those beauties were not available anywhere else.

## His Azalea Legacy

Carolyn Beck looked through as many catalogs as she could find and made a list of 78 cultivars that Harry had named. We have not been able to track down all of them. Harry also renamed some plants, which has caused confusion. We do not intend to register them all. Some cultivars are quite similar, so we need to evaluate growth habit, vigor, and foliage in addition to the flowers. Our goal is to determine the best, get them registered, and preserve his legacy.

This article is illustrated with some images of the Marshy Point Azaleas we expect to register. The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist<sup>2</sup> requires that cultivar names must be unique, so we have added 'Marshy Point' in front of most of the names that Harry used in our official registration documents. That will guarantee that cultivar names do not conflict with a name that was previously used

▼ Photo 2—The Marshy Point Azalea growing fields.



Photo Donald Hyatt

for another rhododendron or azalea. For more photos and additional varieties, check out the 'Legacy Project' heading on the ASA website.<sup>3</sup>

Every year I add new favorites to my garden. 'Marshy Point Daisy', formerly known as 'Anne Harris', is a gorgeous blend of soft salmon pink and cream with a green blotch. (See Photo 3.) More recently I have been enamored by the heavily ruffled blossoms of 'Marshy Point Love Lace', a pale lavender pink single. The edges of the petals are so ruffled and ornate they almost look Victorian. (See Photo 4.) I always seek landscape companions and I thought how nice that azalea looks with some of his ruffled whites like 'Marshy Point White Goddess', or 'Marshy Point Lady Baltimore' which has a lavender blush and chartreuse flare. Harry developed some gorgeous doubles like 'Marshy Point Annapolis' which is white with a green throat and 'Marshy Point Show Girl' which is white with a pale lavender flush. The blossoms are so ruffled and frilled they look like carnations.

Some of Harry's other single azaleas have huge blossoms like the deep rose 'Marshy Point Bopalula', the white 'Marshy Point Breathless', and rich purplish-pink, 'Marshy Point Berlin'. He selected a number of bicolor singles. Some are white bordered in pink like 'Marshy Point Hanky Panky',



Photo Carolyn Beck

▲ Photo 3—'Marshy Point Daisy'.

▼ Photo 5—R. 'Carol Kittel', registered with the IRRC by Harry Weiskittel in 1998.



Photo Donald Hyatt

'Ruth Foard', and 'Shannon OBaker'. Some are white to pale pink with red borders of varying thickness. 'Marshy Point Lolly' has a very narrow border. The striking 'Marshy Point Pam's Passion' and 'Marshy Point Soft Touch' are slightly wider. 'Pam Corckran' and 'Marshy Point Red Tape' can be even wider. Border width can vary from flower to flower and some blossoms can be solid color.

He developed several doubles with a white to pale lavender background and a purple border. Trying to decide which is best is not easy: 'Marshy Point Fancy Pants' has the most striking contrast and yet 'Marshy Point Lavender Miss' has awesome foliage. It is hard to overlook the pale lavender edge of 'Marshy Point Mary Ellen Thomsen', which is so lovely and delicate. In the landscape, these plants blend very well with other pastels like the double lavender 'Carol Kittel' (See Photo 5.) and hose-in-hose blush pink of 'Marshy Point Pink Sparkle'. (See Photo 6.)

He also introduced some eye-catching bi-colors like 'Kakie' with its striped coral and orange-red blossoms. 'Marshy Point Superstar' is supposedly a sport of Ben Morrison with a wider white margin.

He developed some excellent deep reds, as well, including 'Marshy Point End Zone', 'Marshy Point Touchdown', and 'Marshy Point Red Ringer'. He found some fall bloomers,

too, like 'Marshy Point Humdinger' and 'Marshy Point Autumn Glory'.

Harry did rename several plants, possibly to improve sales. He first introduced a dwarf witches' broom mutation that he found on the variegated azalea Silver Sword as 'Penknife'. Later he decided to call it 'Stiletto', since that name seemed more marketable.

For years I knew a soft pink azalea in my garden as 'Marshy Point Betty Christopher', but he did change the name to 'Laurie Russell'. It has been a landscape favorite in my garden. The pale pink semi-double blossoms harmonize beautifully with my yellow deciduous azaleas, pale pink *Rhododendron Janet Blair*, and beds of the blue wildflower, *Phlox divaricata*. It is very hardy, and Harry told me it had Elsie Lee in its background. In fact, his cross, (Mrs. Nancy Dippel x Schroeders White Glory), had Elsie Lee as a parent on both sides! I did ask him about the name change. He said Betty Christopher was his former mother-in-law, so he decided to use a different trade name after the divorce.

Harry had a great sense of humor. He infused his slide presentations with his clever wit and was a very popular speaker. He was always willing to share his knowledge with local plant society groups.

He was also extremely generous. When we were preparing to host the 2006 joint convention of the ARS and ASA in Rockville, Harry offered us the use of one of his nursery hoop houses so we could raise our own plants for the convention sale. We held several 'potting parties' at the nursery and grew azaleas from cuttings we had rooted, primarily new varieties developed by local hybridizers. The rhododendrons were from cuttings of rare varieties we had sent to Van Veen Nursery to root for us. I also started seedlings of the 'Red Max', a rare red form of *R. maximum*, and a red form of *R. vaseyi*. Those became banquet favors.

During the two years prior to the convention, I would frequently travel the 65-mile trip each way to Marshy Point to check on our plants. It was also a great time to 'talk azaleas' with Harry. When the convention finally arrived, we cleared out the hoop house and moved our plants to the hotel. They were beautiful, and the plant sale looked like a flower show.

Harry told us we could tour his Marshy Point during the

▼ Photo 7—'Marshy Point Sarah's Wedding'.



Photo Harry Weiskittel



Photo Donald Hyatt

▲ Photo 4—'Marshy Point Love Lace'.

▼ Photo 6—'Marshy Point Pink Sparkle'.



Photo Donald Hyatt

2006 ARS/ASA Convention but as the date approached, I became worried that we might be imposing. Harry was getting ready for the wedding of son Austin and fiancée Sarah. The reception would be in the garden the day after our visit, but Harry assured us it would not be a problem. In honor of the event and Austin's new wife, Harry named a huge double white azalea 'Sarah's Wedding'. (See Photo 7.)

After the convention, Harry and Carol, his wife of 25 years, started spending more time at their second home in Naples, FL, so we didn't see each other very often. He would be there to help Austin with shipments in the spring, and he always wanted to see his azaleas bloom. Our last meeting was in 2010 as we admired some new seedlings that bloomed that spring. By that time, I think he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, but it was not evident to me. However, gradually it took its toll. Family members have requested that any memorial gifts be made to the Memory and Alzheimer's Treatment Center at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore.

We have now included Harry's Marshy Point Azaleas as part of the ASA's Legacy Project, with a proposed display garden in Edgewater, MD, not far from Annapolis.

After discussing the Legacy Garden concept with officials at London Town Gardens, in December 2019 we moved another 27 mature landscape specimens of Marshy Point Hybrids to London Town Gardens. They had been housed at Carolyn and Paul Beck's home and were among many plants Austin had given the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA to assist with propagation, evaluation, and registration of his father's hybrids. Now and for many years to come, the public will have a place to admire the beautiful Marshy Point Azaleas developed by a local Maryland hybridizer, Harry C. Weiskittel III.

## References and Further Reading

<sup>1</sup> *The International Rhododendron Register & Checklist*, 2nd Edition. Compiled by Dr Alan C. Leslie, International Rhododendron Registrar. The Royal Horticultural Society. London, England.

<sup>2</sup> Potomac Valley Chapter ARS. Summer 2019 Newsletter, p. 3 ff. <http://www.arspvc.org/articles/newsletter.2019-07-web.pdf>. This article revised by Donald Hyatt for this issue of *The Azalean*.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the ASA Legacy Project on the ASA Web for more information: <https://www.azaleas.org/legacy-project/>

Don Hyatt has been actively growing azaleas and rhododendrons for over 60 years. His primary interests have been in hybridizing, propagation, landscaping, and the study of our native azalea species in the wild.

# Recognizing Generous ASA Members

*Paul A. Beck, Treasurer*

I would like to recognize and thank the following members who made donations totaling \$3,445 to the **Operating Fund** of the Azalea Society of America in 2019 and \$3,650 to the **Azalea Research Fund**. My apologies if I missed anyone.

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