

# “Azalea Spring”—a Poem by Byron Kay Giles

By William C. Miller III — Bethesda, Maryland

While ankle-deep in a clean up effort in my home office, I happened upon a physical file that I had not visited in many years. As I thumbed through the items, I noticed a golden-colored piece of parchment computer paper. The color made it really stand out from the other pieces of paper in the file. It was a poem in four stanzas entitled “Azalea Spring.” The poet was identified as Byron K. Giles and it was dated May 4, 1996. A box in the lower left corner of the paper indicated that the poem was written exclusively for the Oconee Chapter of the Azalea Society of America.

I didn’t remember receiving the poem. My copy was in pristine condition and it had never been folded or mutilated which certainly suggests that it didn’t come via the US mail. My working theory is that it was distributed at one of the ASA National Meetings. I don’t remember meeting anyone by the name of Byron K. Giles, but I now had an excuse to pause my office clean up effort.

Letting my fingers do the walking through the internet, I found an obituary that revealed that Byron Kay Giles was born on March 3, 1942, and passed away on April 26, 2019. The obit was not extensive but it revealed that he lived in Conyers, Georgia... or what I call... Jim Thornton country. For those who might not know about Jim Thornton, Jim was one of the driving forces behind the Pennington Chapter and the driving force behind the Oconee Chapter on the local level, and he served as vice president and later president of the ASA. Knowing Jim as I did, my impression is that he knew everyone in Conyers and that he had probably tried to get them to join the Oconee Chapter at least once.

To my great surprise, I found no evidence that Byron Giles was ever a member of the ASA. I checked the online ASA membership records, and I went through my collection of ASA membership rosters. His name did not appear. Finally, in the hope that someone online might have more information, I posted a request for information on the ASA mail list. There was no reply.

It’s a nice poem that should be shared... and it rhymes.

## “Azalea Spring” By Byron K. Giles, May 4, 1996

The shrub forever grows, in winter evergreen,  
As cold north winds blow, I think of Azalea Spring.  
Soon the winter’s cold, will bow to warmer days,  
And soon the budding shrub, will earn its glory  
praise.

The passage of winter’s cold, comes greening  
of the fig,  
The blooming of the Jonquil, new leaves upon  
the twig.  
A deciduous Oconee shrub does thrive, within the  
Georgia clay,  
With blossoms beyond beauty, that will brighten  
your darkest day.

The miracles of spring, surrounds the months of  
April-May,  
Azaleas blooming everywhere, a gift from God’s  
bouquet.  
From the brightest reds... pink, purple, and white,  
They brighten up our days, like the stars and moon  
at night.

The countryside now painted, with God’s beauty  
in the wild,  
The shrub with all its glory, fresh as a newborn  
child.  
With early dew upon their leaves, the morning sun  
will bring,  
The beauty of the season, behold.... Azalea Spring!

### About the Author:

William C. Miller III is a recipient of the Brookside Gardens Chapter’s Frederic P. Lee Commendation (1988) and is twice the recipient of the ASA’s Distinguished Service Award (1995 and 2002). He was chairman of the ASA’s Glenn Dale Preservation Project, and co-chairman of Dick West’s Ten Oaks Glenn Dale Project. He is past president of the Brookside Gardens Chapter, a former vice president of the ASA, a past member of the ASA Board of Directors, past co-chairman of the ASA’s Membership Committee, past chairman of the ASA’s Public Information Committee, the longest serving member of the ASA’s Editorial Advisory Board, and a frequent contributor to *The Azalean*.