

The Yak

Newsletter of the Fraser South Rhododendron Society



Fraser South Rhododendron Society
is a chapter of the
American Rhododendron Society

Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the
third Wednesday of each month at:
United Church Hall
5673 - 200th Street
Langley BC

www.flounder.ca/FraserSouth

Volume 19 Number 1 January 2006

This Month's Meeting: Wednesday, January 18, 2006

AGM

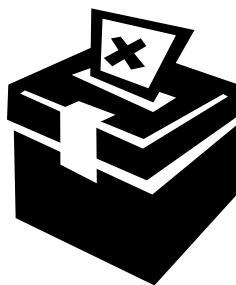
FOR OUR 18TH YEAR AS
FRASER SOUTH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY

AND OUR
FOURTH ANNUAL DESSERT EXTRAVAGANZA

2005 Officers

| | |
|-------------|--|
| President: | Bobby Ogdon 604-572-9993 |
| Vice Pres.: | Dalen Bayes 360-933-4596 |
| Secretary: | Mary-Anne Berg 604-853-5737 |
| Treasurer: | Alan March 604-532-9062 |
| Directors: | Harold Fearing - 3 rd yr Les Clay - 2 nd yr Colleen Forster - 1 st yr |
| Membership: | Wenonah March |
| Newsletter: | Brenda Macdonald 604-990-5353 |
| Website: | Chris Klapwijk 604-888-0920 |

Quick Hits



Well, it isn't enough that the Federal election is hurtling towards us, but we are expected to exercise our democratic duty at Chapter meetings also! Don't forget that the January meeting is always the venue for our Annual General Meeting, when we elect new Officers, listen to annual reports, and voice our appreciation for those members of our Society who have contributed so much toward the continued success of the FSRS as an organization, and the continued horticultural development and general enjoyment of all its members.



However, we, unlike those more concerned with political correctness, can offer shameless bribes, right up to and including the day of the election. Too bad the Federal candidates have not demonstrated the kind of creative electoral manipulation that we have in organizing our 4th Annual Splendiferous Desserts Gala as the spoonful of sugar to make the political medicine go down.

Come, enjoy!



From the President

REMEMBERING MIKE TREMBATH

She touched our lives, making a positive impact, and often we were not even aware of it. She was, well, just always there, assisting in many ways at nearly every meeting. She got in at the ground level, so to speak. It was the early 60's and the American Rhododendron Association, Vancouver Chapter (as it was known in those days) was in its infancy. Mike Trembath's infectious enthusiasm for the genus Rhododendron could be observed by her involvement in the newly formed horticultural Society. Officially, her given name was Margaret, but anything other than "Mike" was foreign territory to her friends. If you called her Margaret, you did not know her.

Mike's presence at meetings of the Vancouver Rhododendron Society was as expected, welcomed and reliable as a fresh spring shower. It felt right to be greeted by Mike at a rhodo meeting. Ever the eager learner, she was also adept at teaching and tutoring, reveling in the opportunity to share her considerable knowledge with neophyte gardeners. She was never too busy to aid in another's quest to learn. She willingly shared her horticultural passion and opinions.

Mike's comfort zone required her to stay in the background, encouraging, supporting, advising, teaching, and ever ready to assist meeting any need in the society. I cannot remember our first personal introduction, but I recall her rabid interest in the annual competitive shows. Her eyes sparkled as she excitedly and efficiently aided the various show committees.

She was at her best at Vancouver's annual show. Few could measure up to the high standards Mike set for classification of the trusses for showing. In fact she was instrumental in revising the classes and reorganizing them in a more reasonable fashion. A subsequent paper listing the diverse offerings of rhodos for showing is unparalleled, and used by many other show committees. She carefully ensured proper placement of the plants and trusses, both for equitable judging and for the best viewing. When requested to judge in a show, she did so with a customary fairness and expertise that brought credit to the judges and exhibitors alike. Her thorough knowledge of species and hybrids alike enabled Mike to understand the nuances of the competitions.

Mike was born in Cobourg, Ontario in 1924. She studied at the University of Toronto and U. of T. medical school in preparation for her profession as a physician. Her marriage to James took place in 1950 at Bracebridge, Ontario. They moved to British Columbia, settling initially in Mission before moving to Surrey; and finally to Langley. Her medical skills as a General Practitioner were demonstrated in Surrey and at Surrey Memorial Hospital. Mike retired nine years ago after a fulfilling career as a family physician

In 1989 the Fraser South Rhododendron Chapter was formed, and Mike eagerly became one of the twelve charter members. The subsequent success and growth of this group is due in no small way to Mike's constant encouragement. For many years Mike capably served as the editor of our newsletter. Her literary skills coincided with her love for rhodos to produce a first-class publication of chapter news. She understood the significance of maintaining communication with all members in the FSRS, which meets in Langley. Later, she edited and produced "The First Ten Years," a year-by-year history of the chapter. Few regular monthly

meetings took place without Mike in attendance. She was also a fixture at executive meetings of the society, often hosting us in her home, and of course leading us in tours of the garden.

R. 'Lionheart' was one of several of Mike's own hybrids, of which she was justifiably proud. Unfortunately the gorgeous yellow trusses show their obstinacy by reluctantly appearing too late for entry to most of our shows. When 'Lionheart' was in bloom, visitors to her garden were able to experience, with her, the joy of her personal accomplishment. Other wonderful hybrids she registered are 'Ellalibetta', 'Canadian Kaleidoscope', 'Nameless Beauty', and 'Milton's North Star'. Mike was as creative in naming plants as in hybridizing. To walk through her garden is to wonder at the variety and great sizes of many of the plants. Most of our gardens are younger with less mature stock. Her diverse garden is a testimony to the many years of careful nurture Mike invested in her plants.

Herself a bronze medal winner, Mike knew the importance of recognizing the contributions of others, and joyfully served on awards committees as a way to extend that thankfulness. Mike was a great encourager to others, particularly as they intersected her areas of interest. She was involved in supporting an association called Pacific Riding for Developing Abilities, an society that uses horse riding as a means of therapy. Her role as medical director was invaluable to the health and safety of the disabled, and she was able to raise awareness of the needs of disabled people of all ages through working with this association.

Mike was supportive of the elephant sanctuary in Hohenwald, Tennessee, the home of Tina, the elephant who was transferred there from Aldergrove. Mike was part of the support group network caring for elephants in both countries. She was also involved for many years with the United Way.

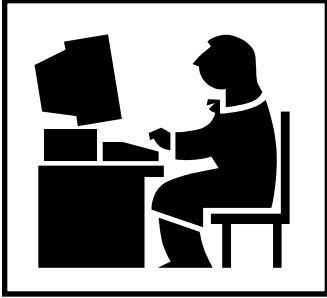
On January 1, 2006, we lost a friend. Margaret, "Mike" Trembath is survived by her husband of 55 years, James, and her daughters Ann, Margaret, and Catherine.

At this time there is no scheduled service of remembrance, however, the family is planning an open house sometime in the future as a celebration of Mike's life.

Bobby Ogdon



R. 'Nameless Beauty'
(photo Mike Trembath)



From the Editor

This Month:

January is the month for our Annual General Meeting during which we elect new Chapter officers, review and approve the annual reports (including the financial report for the past year and projected budget for the new year), and recognize and honour those members who have made special contributions to the success of our organization. And, for the fourth year in a row, we endeavour to increase the joy factor of this meeting by interspersing these sometime less than irresistible business activities with a number of pauses for some completely irresistible desserts.

Don't forget to bring a little something good to share: perhaps something sinfully indulgent smothered in whipped cream and calories, or perhaps something refreshingly fruity, filled with healthy vitamins and smug virtue, all depending on what stage you

are at with your New Year's Resolutions. Tea, coffee, plates and eating utensils will all be provided, but please bring whatever serving utensils your contribution will require.

The Nominating Committee proposes the following slate:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| President | Dalen Bayes |
| Past President | Bobby Ogdon |
| Vice President | Harold Fearing |
| Treasurer | Alan March |
| Secretary | Mary-Anne Berg |
| Director - 1st year | Sean Rafferty |
| Director - 2nd year | Colleen Forster |
| Director - 3rd year | Les Clay |

Nominations will also be accepted from the floor.

Last Month:

Last month we all had a wonderful time at our Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner. As usual the food contributions were delicious, the company was most enjoyable, and punch bowl B was just as festive as we had hoped. On behalf of all of the members I would like to extend special thanks to Bev and Les Clay for preparing the delicious turkey, Karen Linton for organizing the correct mix of appetizers, main dish, side dish, and dessert contributions, Colleen Forster for organizing our official rhodo-related game, and Dalen Bayes for being Santa, as well as all the other little elves (Mary-Anne Berg, Sue Klapwijk, Patti and Mike Bale, etc. etc.) who helped organize, set everything up, provided the centerpieces, did the dishes, took everything down, and otherwise just generally helped out. A splendid time was had by all!

Next Month:

Next month Garth Wedemire will provide a presentation on "Species Rhododendrons of Yunnan"

Brenda Macdonald



Moon Shadow
(photo - Ken Gibson)

Hybrids Using *R. wardii*



High Gold
(photo - Ken Gibson)



Rhododendrons of Yunnan



This photo by Sean Rafferty
Yunnan, China, May, 2005



Rhododendron wardii

This illustration by Margaret Stones was first published in 1969 in Curtis's Botanical Magazine. The subject was a Ludlow & Sherriff plant grown in Sherriff's garden in Ascreavie, Scotland, from seed collected in October, 1938, at about 13,000 ft. in the Kongbo district of Xizang (south-west Tibet).

Beloved by hybridizers everywhere, *R. wardii* is a compact shrub or small tree (to 26 ft), remarkably tolerant of wind, shade, transplanting, and pruning. It flowers freely and precociously, with blossoms usually of a deep butter yellow - sometimes with a red/purple blotch - and usually late enough in the season to avoid all but the most unseasonable of frosts.

Although lacking indumentum and not particularly handsome, the leaves of *wardii* are at least quickly diagnostic: usually rather broadly oblong/oval, with a blunted obtuse tip and somewhat cordate (heart-shaped) base.

R. wardii is widely distributed and displays great variation over its range. For some years the various forms of *wardii* enjoyed species status, but as the range and variation of the species became better known, these "species" were, as they say, sunk.

Ranging in blossom colour from deep yellow to white, and often with a rosy tinge on the unopened bud, *wardii* has been the basis of many popular hybrids including 'Goldkrone', 'Sunspray', 'Hotei', and the wonderful 'Crest'.



R. Hotei

Hybrids Using
R. wardii

(all photos by
Ken Gibson)



Top Banana



Sunspray



Rolls-Royce



Marie Starks



Crest

Mike Trembath (1924 – 2006) - A Lionheart

After several years of failing health we are all saddened to learn of the passing of “Mike” Trembath. Mike was a lady gifted with many talents. Whether as a wife, mother, physician, pilot, grandparent, benefactor, gardener, or naturalist, she inspired enthusiasm and excellence.

Born in Cobourg, Ontario, on April 9, 1924, Margaret Louis McKee attended school in Baltimore, Ontario. She subsequently attended the University of Toronto where she gained her medical degree in 1947, and where, for reasons that remain obscure, she acquired the title of “Mike”. She met her future husband, Jim, during the course of post-graduate training, and they were married on December 26, 1950. Her post-graduate studies were interrupted however, by the births of daughters Ann, on February 21, 1952 and Marky, on March 12, 1954. The family moved from Ontario to Mission, BC in July of 1954, and their third daughter, Catherine, was born on September 3, 1958. Shortly after their establishment in Mission, they met and befriended Dr. Jim Marcellus, and it was this meeting that this resulted in Mike's life-long passion for rhododendrons. The family moved to Surrey in the summer of 1956, established a rhododendron garden, subsequently moved to Aldergrove in 1972 where they established a much larger garden with many more rhododendrons, and have remained there ever since.

In 1962 Mike joined the Vancouver Chapter of the A.R.S. and served as Secretary, Treasurer, and Director, and involved herself enthusiastically in many committees. Together with Vern Finley, they developed and evolved a new classification system for the annual Vancouver Rhododendron Truss Show. She was awarded the ARS Bronze Medal by the Vancouver Chapter in 1990. The citation reads: “In appreciation of your service to the society for over 28 years as secretary, treasurer and director, for your untiring efforts classifying entries at spring shows, your contribution for raising rhododendrons and for your generosity and encouragement to others.”

With the encouragement of Harold Johnson and others, Mike became a founding member of the Fraser South Chapter in 1989. The establishment of a new Chapter necessitates a great deal of effort by a few people, and Mike wholeheartedly provided much energy, enthusiasm and advice. She was a member of the Executive committee and the Editor of “The Yak” for many years, and she was central to the creation of “The First Ten Years”, an historical account of the Chapter. Among the many contributions made by Mike, one which became a tradition, was the donation of a large, baked ham for the annual Christmas dinner.

Despite difficult health issues she was an enthusiastic member of all the Chapter's activities and involved herself fully in the bus tours to Vancouver Island and to Washington State. She was an enthusiastic supporter and participant in the “Species Study Days” at the Rhododendron Species Foundation, and made good use of her motorized scooter in order to gain access to whichever particular plant was under discussion.

One of Mike's passionate projects was the preservation of the Dr. McKee rhododendrons in Abbotsford. Together with other members, she identified, propagated and distributed the plants among other Chapter members, in order to preserve these very earliest of specimens and save them from destruction by the property developer. It may be no coincidence that her interest in this project was piqued by her own maiden name.

Mike had a very critical eye when assessing hybrids and it is not surprising that from a large number of crosses she carefully selected only five for registration: ‘Lionheart’, ‘Ellalibetta’, ‘Canadian Kaleidoscope’, ‘Milton's North Star’, and ‘Nameless Beauty’. In 2000 Mike received the FSRS Chapter's ARS Bronze Medal award with the citation: “In appreciation of the many contributions you have made to the Society through your knowledge of the genus rhododendron and your willingness to share your expertise with others, for organizing the annual truss show, for the many hours you have committed to the production of our excellent newsletter.”

Mike pursued her professional activities throughout her life. In later years she remained active by assisting in the operating room, where she no doubt continued to share her wisdom and advice with the presiding surgeon. She became computer literate and communicated across the globe with other computer enthusiasts and rhododendron aficionados. She was an enthusiast of the "Yahoo" Rhododendron chat group and periodically contributed to the dialogue. She was active in many community functions and in 1995 was awarded the W.J. VanDusen Community Service Award in recognition of her outstanding humanitarian service to the community. She was also an avid supporter of, and benefactor to, the Pacific Riders for the Disabled Association, and 1999 she was awarded an honorary life membership for her years of commitment to that organization.

She had a great love for animals and over the years had horses, chickens, ducks, geese, dogs, and cats. Her most recent acquisition was through the rescue of a young Leonberger pup "Megabyte", which subsequently grew to become an enormous dog and committed house pet. "Meg" served as a most faithful companion to both Mike and Jim, and was taught to ring the doorbell in order to notify the occupants whenever she wanted to come into the house. During the past two or three years Mike became interested in the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. To this end, she involved herself in making scarves and ornaments for the organization so that the proceeds could be used for their preservation efforts - a eloquent reflection of the generosity of spirit present in everything that she did.

Mike is survived by her husband Jim, three daughters, five grandsons, three granddaughters, two great- grandsons (with two great-granddaughters-in-law) and one great granddaughter.

We have lost a great friend and mentor and the A.R.S. has lost a faithful supporter and enthusiastic contributor, but it is certain that her influence and encouragement will continue to benefit the society for many years to come.

Mike Bale



R. 'Lionheart'
(photo Mike Trembath)