

Atlantic Coast Camellias

**The Journal of the
Atlantic Coast Camellia Society**



Linda Carol

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President's Message **By Patrick Andrews**



What a hot summer it's been! Some days, the only way to get through working in the garden is imagining the cool winter weather and the garden filled with beautiful camellia flowers. Judging by the buds already set on the shrubs this year, we're going to have a bumper crop of blooms. The ample rain has been a great help.

The officers and board of directors met for the spring board meeting on Saturday, April 22, at the Garden Club Council of Greater Columbia Building, 1605 Park Circle, Columbia, South Carolina. The meeting was followed by a fantastic auction and a delicious barbecue dinner. Plans for the September meeting were finalized.

One of the highlights of the year for me is the annual ACCS Convention. It will be at the Litchfield Beach Golf and Beach Resort on September 15 and 16. Activities include the Friday night barbecue dinner at the beach house, Bloody Marys and Mimosas before the Saturday morning meeting and auction, two educational talks (Fred McKenna has lined up two exciting speakers), a Judges' Reaccreditation Symposium, and the Saturday night banquet (with another exciting speaker). Check out our website (atlanticcoastcamelliasociety.org) for information about the guest speakers, and to download your convention registration form.

One change you'll notice in the convention schedule is that the Judges' Reaccreditation Symposium will be on Friday afternoon from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. so that it won't conflict with the two educational seminars on Saturday.

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Be sure to check the ACCS website
for information about the Convention
in September at

<http://www.atlanticcoastcamelliasociety.org>

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President's Message — continued from inside front cover.

Other activities include visits to area parks and gardens and, of course, shopping. Brookgreen Gardens in Murrells Inlet just north of the resort has an exquisite collection of outdoor sculpture in addition to beautiful gardens. True Blue Nursery in Pawley's Island always has a great variety of plants and camellias. There are other places of interest as well. Check out our web site, and ask any of the ACCS members who have attended meetings in the area over the past few years.

Once again I'd like to thank Mack McKinnon for securing our meeting venue, Richard Mims and Mary Kay Hall for their dedication in publishing our journal, *Atlantic Coast Camellias*, and Richard Buggeln for his tireless efforts in creating and maintaining such an outstanding web site for the ACCS.

See you in September. Sign up a friend and bring them along to celebrate the camellia with all the good people of the Atlantic Coast Camellia Society!



Michael Bledwell, Donna Denton, Patrick Andrews

A Memorable Lady: The Story Behind the Name *Lady Ruth Ritter* By John and Dinh Swanson

Ruth Starkey (Ritter) was born in 1912 and spent her early childhood in West Greene and later in Eutaw, Alabama before her father, a doctor, moved to South Texas. At age four, her grandmother noted that Ruth was a charming little lady with good manners and sweet ways. This picture confirms that description, and the name "Lady Ruth" stuck.



It was in South Texas while in school that Ruth met Clovis Ritter. A special relationship developed and eventually led to their 1933 marriage while Clovis neared graduation at Texas A&M. After Clovis graduated, he taught Vocational Agriculture in Texas and during those years they reared two children, Charles (Chuck) and Mary. Clovis joined the army in 1944 and worked on classified security duties. After the War was over, Clovis stayed in the Army and

their family travels began, first in other states, then internationally, to Japan, France, and Okinawa.

After a successful Army career, Clovis and Lady Ruth retired to Satellite Beach, Florida. After Clovis died, Ruth moved first to Melbourne, Florida and then to Gainesville to be near to son Chuck and his wife Bev. Not long after, daughter Mary Ritter Bast also moved to Gainesville and Ruth moved in with her to spend the final 16 years of her life. During her years

in Gainesville, Lady Ruth developed an increasing interest and concern about environmental issues.

Lady Ruth (Starkey) Ritter passed away on April 15, 2017 after having spent a full 104-year life devoted to her husband and family. She was a very special lady. Her mother-in-law noted that she appreciated the "spunky attitude Ruth had and was grateful that she was able to take a poor schoolboy (Clovis) and help make him a finished product." Lady Ruth was cremated and her remains joined those of Clovis in Arlington National Cemetery this summer.



At her memorial service, it was moving to include the poem by R. Tagore entitled "Peace, My Heart" that seems such an appropriate send off.

*"Peace, my heart, let the time for parting be sweet
Let it not be a death, but completeness
Let love melt into memory and pain into songs.
Let the flight through the sky end in the folding of the
wings over the nest.
Let the last touch of your hands be gentle like flower of
the night.
Stand still, O Beautiful End, for a moment, and say your
last words in silence.
I bow to you and hold up my lamp to light you on your
way."*

Several years earlier Chuck Ritter had searched for a camellia suitable to name in honor of his mother. He coordinated with Hulyn Smith in that endeavor and the result was the Reticulata *Lady Ruth Ritter* which was registered in 2009. As more growers have acquired scions it has become one of the top winners in the medium Reticulata category.

Wondrously, Chuck was notified just two days before Ruth's memorial service that the bloom *Lady Ruth Ritter* is the 2017 winner of the American Camellia Society's Charlotte C. Knox Reticulata Award. It will be officially announced at the ACS Meeting in Covington, LA in January, 2018.

Lady Ruth Ritter is pictured below. It is a Memorable Bloom for a most Memorable Lady. Chuck says he'd be happy to honor his mother by providing scions to any interested Camellia Society members.



Camellia Growers of Prominence: Ed and Lou Powers

By John and Dinh Swanson

Ed and Lou Powers are prominent members of the Tidewater Camellia Club in Wilmington, N.C. with a beautiful residence and acreage that includes well over 300 camellias. They have been and continue to be active in the ACCS and the ACS, and Ed served with distinction as President of both organizations.



Ed was born in Bogalusa, LA and spent his early years there, and although his parents were not active camellia growers, he noticed camellias at the home of a neighbor and came to appreciate their beauty and utility. Lou is from Tifton, GA and her mother was an early ACS member and was significantly into camellias.

Ed attended VMI with chemistry as his major. WWII intervened before he finished and he spent two years in the Navy on a mine-sweeper. He returned and finished up at VMI and then went on for graduate work in Organic Chemistry at Emory University in Atlanta.

Lou received her education at Sullins College in Bristol, VA , and then took a job with Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and Smith, Inc. in Atlanta. They both ate their meals at a boarding house in Atlanta, and as they ate, Ed and Lou liked what they saw across the table. They began making plans for the future. Ed made a trip to Tifton to seek permission from Lou's father for the two to get married. But, since Ed was still in grad school and had no job, both Lou's and Ed's father's response was "No, not until you have a job." Such were the traditions in the late 1940's. Well, this did not deter Ed and Lou, and as soon as Ed got a job with Hercules, permission was granted, and in January, 1949 the two were married in an elaborate wedding in Tifton. Here is a photo from their wedding and it is noteworthy to observe the many garlands and bouquets of the wedding party are largely made up of camellias that Lou pulled together (perhaps with a little help from her mother).



Hercules sent Ed to MIT for three months of executive training and soon the newlyweds were on the move, building a home in each of seven work locations, after Milwaukee, Atlanta, New Orleans, Savannah, Franklin, VA, Spartanburg, SC, Wilmington, Delaware twice, and finally built and settled into their current home. During their moves and work they reared three daughters. A son was also born, but died in infancy.

During his career, Ed was deeply involved in developing man-made fibers and later rose to being CEO of the joint venture firm which he brought to NC. After several years on the job in Wilmington, Ed retired over 30 years ago and he and Lou have been serious camellia addicts ever since. From the purchase of their first camellia, a *Mathotiana Rubra* while in Savannah those many years ago, they now have an excellent large collection.

Their commitment to growing camellias began shortly after they moved into their Wilmington home in 1978. Ed noted that it was "all Lou's fault" when she signed up for an air-layering class being held on a night when Ed was not on the road. They went and applied their skills in air-layering 30 plants, 29 of which took, and they were hooked. Their involvement in showing came after Ed had retired in 1986 and he went with Carl Allen to a show in Wilson, NC. Ed only brought one bloom, a *Ville de Nantes* and it won its class. Carl called Lou, saying, "we've got the 'boy' hooked," and so it was. The Powers have won many awards over the years, but that first one is the only one proudly displayed in their home.



A particularly impressive win was at a Norfolk, VA show when Doug Simon of Norfolk commented that "They should have named the show the Ed and Lou Powers Show, since they won so many classes." Their successes in the show circuit result from a teamwork approach. Larry Barlow noted that the Powers are very competitive at shows, but also very sharing of their knowledge of camellias and their plant materials to expand

interest among the community. Ed focuses on growing the plants, pruning, disbudding, fertilizing, controlling insect pests, etc, to produce the blooms. Lou takes over and is in charge of prepping the blooms to display them at their best for placement in the shows.

The majority of their plants are for producing show blooms, but there are also many plants that serve as specimens for their well-landscaped yard.

Their involvement with camellias was facilitated by the actions of many mentors including Fred Hahn, George Ross, Carl Allen, and Hulyn Smith; with help from nurserymen—especially George Gerbing and Bob Black. More recently, Diane and Marty Clark have been most helpful by providing logistical support like transportation to shows and information technology use.

In 2013, the local newspaper, did a feature story entitled "Flower Powers" recognizing Ed and Lou's successes and their contribution to the beautification of the Wilmington area.

Their management skills led to their leading the local club, the ACCS, and the ACS in the Mid 1990's and early 2000's where Ed successfully initiated reforms that were completed some years later.

They list their favorites as: *Jacks*, *Julia France*, *Edna Bass Variegated*, *Ville de Nantes*, and *Elaine's Betty*. but they enjoy them all. Ed has registered *Lou Powers*, *Ed Powers*, and *Pretty Peggy*, and has helped a neighbor prepare and register *Caro-Lan*.



In addition to securing plants by air-layering, Ed also grafts, and favors using *Kanjiro* as the rootstock, and also does high-grafting on existing plants. Some plants are obtained from nurseries, and others from friends.

Ed prunes year around to keep their camellia blooms within reach without using ladders; and also removes any branches below knee level. To get good growth he fertilizes with 16-4-8 about the first of April and 4-8-12 near the end of September. Gibbing is done starting 6-8 weeks before a show and continues as long as there are shows remaining on the schedule. For show blooms, he disbuds leaving only one large bud at the end of primary branches.

Their suggestions for recruiting and retaining members are to get them involved. Assist new members on how to plant, grow and care for plants. Share blooms with church groups, social organizations, and friends to develop and maintain interest within the community. Be willing to serve as mentors for new members. They found that the spirit of sharing is contagious among camellia lovers. We much enjoyed meeting them and learning of their success professionally and with camellias.



Scenes from the Spring ACCS Board Meeting and the MCCA Picnic and Auction

Photos by John and Dinh Swanson



Patrick Andrews, President



Randolph Maphis, 1st VP



Fred McKenna, 2nd VP



Carol Selph, Secretary



Fred Jones, Treasurer



Dinh Swanson, Historian



David Sheets, Director



Fred Binder, Director



Mack McKinnon



Bonnie Serpas



Jim Dickson, former ACCS President and President-Elect to the American Camellia Society, with his wife, Carolyn holding Ozzie



Fred Binder, Fred McKenna, Mack McKinnon



Jim Dickson, Geary Serpas, Director



Carol Selph



John Swanson, Historian



David and Anna
Sheets

Mid-Carolina officers
Sharon Baughman,
Secretary and
Julie Small,
Vice President



Randy Brooks and
John Maker



John and Catherine Maker, MCCS President and First Lady



Geary Serpas models sweater on auction while Richard Mims, auctioneer, looks on

Editor's Column – A HodgePodge of Thoughts and Information

CORRECTING MISINFORMATION - Occasionally, a camelliaphyte will detect incorrect or obsolete information when someone with other-than-camellia expertise happens to be the presenter at a Society meeting. While it could be very embarrassing to the speaker to correct them in front of everyone, what would be the best way to convey the correct information to the membership? The telephone or email is available for expedience in furnishing the information for the secretary to include along with the minutes. If the incorrect information just happens to be in the minutes, it may be corrected at the meeting the minutes are approved. Another option to correct the information would be when “old business” is brought up at the next meeting.

PRESENTING INFORMATION - When writing or doing research for a talk or speech, be certain reference material is the latest available. Look at old publications to get ideas. Look at modern publications to get latest facts that could back up your personal observations. Better ways to manage procedures pertinent to the growing and showing of camellias such as fertilizing, controlling diseases, pruning, grafting, and propagation are being found all the time. For certain, what you are doing is probably “good enough,” but you want “better.” Is there a way that will save time and be more successful? Know whether an insecticide has been discovered that works that is environmentally and personally safer than the old one; whether a rooting or grafting hormone has been discovered that bests the old. And, above all, when you get specific information rather than general, be sure to give the person credit who first wrote or told about it. There are few personal awards in the camellia world if you are not that excellent grower. The least we can do is to congratulate the researcher and thank the person who

gives us the “better” information.

ANNUAL CONVENTION - Educational meetings are usually enlightening for the grower or shower. An educational afternoon is always a must at the annual Atlantic Coast Camellia Society Convention at Litchfield. Let us support that educational meeting and, indeed, the Convention itself with our attendance. This get-together is a prelude for the camellia season. At Litchfield, one usually views the first camellias of the season due especially to the efforts of Chuck and Bev Ritter, who go through much trouble with VERY EARLY gibbing to honor us with the first blooms. Litchfield and the beach area are just fun places to be as well as being a great place to hang out with friends and corner the persons from which you want information or those special scions.

REPETITION OF INFORMATION - Some repetition of subject matter at a convention or local society meetings is necessary. Listen closely and you will remember something you may have forgotten or learn something new each time—rooting when the growth first hardens around July; spraying when the weather modifies in fall and spring; grafting in late January so hardening takes place near growth time; pruning in spring after the beauty of the flowers were enjoyed. Why repetition? Not only do most clubs get new members each year who will hear it for the first time, but also because you will usually hear something new—something someone has discovered since the last time the program was presented. Kudos to everyone who discover new techniques for old tasks which improve our common interest in camellias! I look forward to hearing everyone’s secrets when we hang out at Litchfield.

A CAMELLIA IS A CAMELLIA - If the Camellia were named Squash and the Squash were named Camellia, it would still be my favorite flower. Gertrude Stein’s poem, *Sacred Emily*, stated this best using the rose instead of camellia in the famous line, “A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.” I have said it before and I’ll say it

again--When I walk out on a cold morning and see a camellia that bloomed overnight, I say then and there, "Thank you, God, for just letting me see this bloom." If you are a show person like me, you also think: "Now how am I going to get that magnificent bloom to a show looking fresh and prim with no bruises and the petals enjoying equal space." I have found that the best way to do that is to pick the bloom right then-- the first day it opens or no later than the second day. The best chance to win ribbons is to show flowers picked the day before or the day of the show. Sheen, fresh stamens, turgidity, bright color—get them all before the elements take their toll. A refrigerator can hold even temperatures and moisture and may be used to store the blooms for the second-best chance for a ribbon. Every camellia grower's garage should have a refrigerator exclusively for camellia blooms. Of course, if your camellias are like my camellias—you don't think any specimen could be better. Alas! When you get to the show there are frequently blooms the judges (not you) think are better.

CHILDREN AND CAMELLIAS - I love to attend flower shows and I love children. It bothers me to go to a show and hear someone bark out to a child, "Don't touch that flower." It is my opinion that we should keep ALL spectators (adults, children, etc.) out of flower areas until the judging has taken place when bruises are ribbon disqualifiers. After judging, if you see a child touching a flower, instead of admonishing them, "Don't touch!" – EDUCATE them by showing another flower with a bruise and tell him/her that touching can cause the bruised blooms and that just looking is best. That way they will learn without being chastised and causing future disinterest in these beautiful blooms. Many will most likely never touch another and appreciate the kind attention you gave them. You may also take that opportunity to tell them more about camellias—like most don't have a smell and then let them personally smell one to find out. The main reason I am mentioning this is that if we want to recruit young people to love our

hobby, we do NOT want to alienate them at an early age by admonishing or scolding. I might also go so far as to suggest that there be a children's section set up at shows with non-show blooms where a child may experience the textures of the leaves and petals. Then they may experience firsthand the consequences that physical touch may have on these delicate blooms.

LANDSCAPING - What is so wonderful about camellias is that they have years as a shrub with beautiful evergreen leaves before they become a small tree. Some leaves margined, some veined, some variegated, some large/small, serrated-- the coloring and beauty of which make them fantastic landscaping vegetation. Leaf shades of every green—a display of green contrasts that will please the most artistic among us. The most important thing to know about landscaping with camellias is that they are long-lived and, as it is with old people's ears, they keep growing. This need not be a setback, buy or borrow a nomenclature book and you will find that the originator of a variety will tell us whether a variety grows slowly, is an average grower, or is vigorous; whether it is compact, upright, spreading, willowy, etc.; what season you may expect most blooms; and also detail the color and size of blooms. There are more things you can know about a camellia plant before you plant it than any other landscaping plant I know of. Be sure to remember that when you are landscaping, purchase the camellia that the originator says will grow into the shape you need for the desired view in the landscape—columnar, spreading, etc. The camellia, through careful pruning in late spring of each year, can be kept the size and shape you desire.

SINGLE, SEMIBOUBLE, ANEMONE, PEONY, ROSE FORM, FORMAL - Can any other plant cultivar under the sun boast of so many forms? I believe whomever chose Rose Form was snidely telling the world: “the rose might smell good but its form is only one of the many when Camellias take the forefront.” I dearly love

to stand beside the *Pink Perfection*, *Sea Foam*, and other formal double sections at shows to hear viewer remarks. Almost always someone says, “Is that flower real?” Try as you may, you will never fit every bloom into one of the six forms listed above although a hybridizer “must” because they are the only options when registering new varieties. What the hybridizers register is what the Head Judge must use for certain categories in a show. Now, we are witnessing new forms that do not fit in any of the categories with blooms that look like two flowers from one bud, with fluting that resembles several forms and sometimes even looks formal.

COLOR - Hybridizers also specify the color of registered camellias—as with *Elegans Champagne*. I think it is an excellent white flower that would be “Best White” at many shows; but, alas! Nuccio’s disqualified it from being white by registering it with “cream center petaloid.” In my opinion cream or yellow is in the center of all flowers except formal doubles (in the form of stamens or petaloid which might possibly be pseudo stamens) (of course this is tongue-in-cheek to get back at a head judge I know...). Basically, camellias are red, white, pink and mixtures of the three with several variegations (moiré, striped, blotched). Tints of orchid, purple, deep blackish-purple and other tints and hues appear and are mentioned in nomenclature if characteristic of the variety registered. Many colors are influenced by soil types and chemicals that are applied such as gibberellic acid. What is so very interesting is looking through the *Nomenclature* published by the Southern Californian Camellia Society and look at the names for the pinks and reds. The grower naming the flower usually makes up a name for the color the pink or red resembled—peach pink, apricot pink, rose pink, and so forth. I just wish I had seen the peach, apricot or rose they were looking at when the bloom was named—like Turkey Red (have you ever seen a red turkey?) Some of the deep pinks look red and some of the reds look pink. I must give the hybridizers credit for trying to get accurate color descriptions.



Join NOW!

(Membership is a great gift for friends & family!!!)

The Atlantic Coast Camellia Society

We are a society that wants more members to help us promote the science of Camellia culture by exchanging knowledge & ideas with Camellia specialists, provide information about shows & social events & join us at our annual meeting the third Saturday in September each year. Annual dues are \$15.00 per year for singles or couples. A membership entitles you to a journal published in January, May, & September. To join, send your check & personal information for receiving communications & journals to:

**ACCS
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**Membership Form
ACCS Annual Dues, September 2017– August 2018
Single or Double \$15.00**

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Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Telephone Number (include Area Code): _____

E-Mail: _____

