Great Village Garden Club Turns 60

By Linda Harrington

The first to see of the Great Village Garden Club was held on January 24th, 1952 at the High School (now Great Village Elementary School) and sixty years later the club is still going strong. The Club celebrated their 60th Anniversary at Faith Baptist Church on April 24th.

Present at the first meeting in 1952 were Jud Chisholm, Marion Giddens, Helen McLaughlin, Bernice Kennedy, Stella Leask, Percy Boyd, Tina Boyd and Cilda Forbes. Percy Boyd was elected as the first President, with Stella Leask as Secretary. Later meetings were held in member's houses.

Helen McLaughlin, the only remaining Charter member, held many meetings at her home over the years. Helen and her daughter Sandra were present for the 60th Anniversary Celebration for the Great Village Garden Club. (Harrington Photo)

Arthur Haskins, who says he came from the city back in 1975 into this small population, and it was nice to be accepted as a member.

Arthur showed slides of photos taken over the years and gave a historical account of the Club at its activities. Some of the first projects involved looking after the Monument Grounds and cleaning up the dump in the Village. Both very ambitious projects. Later projects included a Wild Flower Contest in the school, mapping of 1979 Dutch elm disease, Holland Glory Bulb Fundraiser, a tree nursery, community Christmas Tree, garden tours, annual flower shows and many more. Flower shows were held from 1956 to 1998 and in its hey day it was the largest in the Province.

The first "welcome" signs were installed in 1972 and have undergone a few changes over the years. Current signs are made of recycled plastic and seem to be better at standing up to the elements.

The first plant sale was held in 1975 outside the Fire Hall, with $30 raised. The annual event has continued to grow and moving first to the Masonic Hall and then to the Great Village School gymnasium. "Club members often refer to the rush of crazed plant buyers as 'the wave'," laughs Arthur Haskins. "We always sell out within an hour and now make over $1000 each year."

The Great Village Garden Club has tried to "educate themselves" with guest speakers at their meetings and simply talking gardening among the members.

Past and present members enjoyed looking at the collection of photo albums while reminiscing about good times. A magnolia tree will be planted at the cenotaph in recognition of the Club's Charter members A magnolia tree was planted there for the 50th Anniversary and it has been had gorgeous blooms the last few years.

Great Village Garden Club President Patti Sharpe presents Charter Member medallions with a plant for being a Club member for the greatest number of years. (Harrington Photo)

Helen McLaughlin cuts the 60th Anniversary Cake for the Great Village Garden Club. (Harrington Photo)

Sybil Flemming gives Patti Wyllie some planting information at the Great Village Garden Club's annual Plant Sale on May 5th. (Harrington Photo)

On Mother's Day itself on Sunday, Ella attended and was accompanied by her daughter Karen, her son-in-law, Louise D'Allaire, and her grand-daughter, Jacqueline Stevens, while her son Barry sang in the United Church choir. Her other daughters visited during that same Sunday.

Ella, born a Blair in Wallace, taught school while raising five children. Sometimes she was a substitute teacher and other times a fulltime teacher at Lower Wentworth, Folly Lake, and West Wentworth, a total of 16 teaching years. She is now a member of the Wentworth United Church, of the Wentworth United Church Women of the Wentworth Pioneer Club, of the UCW Quilters, and of the Wentworth United Church Women who work many hours each month at community events.

It was when Ella was a teacher in West Wentworth that she met and married Roy Patriquin who was the first Fire Chief in the Wentworth Volunteer Fire Department and was a member of this Fire Department for 31 years. As well, the late Roy Patriquin worked at many jobs such as 'work in the woods', and work with R. K. Chappell (building company). Later, Roy owned and operated for many years a service station which combined a gas station, a garage, a restaurant and three double tourist cabins in West Wentworth.

As her children showed her so much caring and love, Ella remained true to her particular Mother's Day with gratitude and happiness.

The program for the evening, '60 Years of Club Memories' was presented by

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