

## **History of the Country Garden Club of Mount Laurel from 1964 to 1973**

**By Pat Kelly and Catherine Sommi**

Mount Laurel was really considered the country in 1964, with many apple and peach orchards and farms. There were few housing developments but a few intrepid women decided to start a garden club. Are we happy!

The Country Garden Club of Mount Laurel had its first meeting on Monday afternoon, April 27, 1964, at the home of Mrs. Richard Browser (Carol). Mount Laurel was very limited in streets with completed houses, but 25 ladies showed up for the meeting. Word of the forming, and formed Country Garden Club of Mount Laurel was spread by eight newspapers covering Mount Laurel as were the meetings and club activities. The first installation of officers was held at a luncheon meeting, at the Holiday Inn on June 15, 1964. Elected for the 1964 -1965 year were:

President - Mrs. Robert Keane (Barbara)

Vice President - Mrs. L. Stanley Hayslip (Mary)

Secretary - Mrs. Samuel Meredith (Carol)

Treasurer - Mrs. Hector Weston (Elinda)

According to Florence Guess the luncheon was very formal- dresses, hats and gloves worn.

The Club was a diverse group; older women with knowledge and experience of garden clubs and others like herself, young but eager to learn.

The By-Laws were adopted and dated September 1964. A copy can be found in the Memory Book.

Membership to stand at 40

Under New Members - New Members will be proposed by a member and approved by the Executive Committee.

Dues - \$3.00 per year, payable by September 30. Delinquent after Dec. 31<sup>st</sup>.  
Delinquent members may be dropped from the roll.

Professional speakers were used from the very beginning. At the second meeting, on May 18, 1964, Daniel Kensley, Agricultural Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Burlington County presented. Speakers between 1964 and 1970 included Mrs. Beulah Epting, Cook's Florist, Moorestown, Mrs. R.B. Kenny, Delaware Valley Society of Chrysanthemums; Mrs. Chester Rose of Mount Rose (Christmas); Mr. John Lister, Delaware Valley Iris Society; Mr. Stephen Stillwell, Bob Lavite Florist, Mt. Holly and Mr. J.F. Paul, horticulturist, Longwood Gardens.

Some of the current events of 1964 were the passage, by Congress, of Medicare and Medicaid and the Civil Rights Act; Martin Luther King Jr. won the Nobel Peace prize; the Beatles came to the United States and were on the Ed Sullivan show and the Oscar was won by "My Fair Lady".

For the 1965 -1966 year, the President of the Club was Mary Haslip. Meetings were held in member's homes. The formality of the time continued. The members voted and approved the purchase of a silver tea service (exact year unavailable) which was used when refreshments were served. These light refreshments were always dessert type. There were, at times, joint meetings with other Garden Clubs (Moorestown, Marlton) as well as Women's Clubs. As fund raisers the Club had a card party in the Moorestown Mall on March 15, 1965, and a Christmas House tour (donation \$.50). Dues remained at \$3.00 for many years. In the first yearbook the member's phone numbers are shown as the last four digits. It was accepted that everyone's exchange was BELMONT. Some interesting happenings of 1965 - The Voting Act was passed by congress; the first space walk; The Oscar was won by "Sound of Music" and the Song of the year was "Hello Dolly".

June Collier was President from 1966 to 1968. The November 7th luncheon cost to members was \$1.25 .As fund raisers the club sponsored a Fashion Show and Novelty Party (donation - \$1.75) and a Christmas bazaar in December, 1966 at the Parkway School. (In later years the bazaar was combined with the November luncheon). The Club started a large civic project -landscaping the Parkway School. Mary Louise Devereaux, professional Landscape Designer and Club member did the planning, members plant~d - and some things never change, husbands were "drafted" to do the heavy work. The Club Members raised \$900.00 for this project and continued to raise funds for the maintenance. Our club won awards in the Courier Post Flower Show. A Blue ribbon in class 1 for a hybrid Tea Rose and a Red ribbon in class F Annuals {Petunias}. Interesting happenings in 1966: Medicare begins, Har khorana finishes deciphering the DNA code; (fA Man for All Seasons" won the Oscar.

In 1967 The Country Garden Club budget was \$270.00. In that budget \$100.00 was set aside for speakers. The club planted 50 cherry trees at the Parkway school. "In the Heat of the Night" received the Oscar this year, Communist China explodes the first hydrogen bomb and Thurgood Marshall was sworn in as the first black US Supreme Court justice.

The President of the Club for 1968 - 1969 was Ruth Schermer. The Club undertook, with the help of the Ramblewood Civic Association, "Operation (Japanese) Beetle Control". Quote from The News Chronicle, Moorestown "Rarnblewood is one of the first new communities in South Jersey to undertake a beetle control program on a community wide basis". As fund raisers a Dessert Bridge and Fashion Show was held at Strawbridge and Clothier, Cherry Hill

(Tickets \$2.00) and a bake sale at the A & P in Maple Shade and Acme, in Moorestown on Nov. 15th. They netted \$150.00. In the Wanamaker Flower Show, members entered the Table Decorating Class. The judge's comments were *If* Lovely, elegant, fine taste, well done". Bus tours to the Philadelphia Flower Show were sponsored by the Club for Mount Laurel residents. Price in 1969 was \$4.00 which included admission and the bus. In 1968 the first heart transplant was performed; Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy were assassinated; Start of the Women's Liberation Movement. Apollo 8 orbits the moon and *If* Oliver" wins the Academy award and in 1969 Nixon is inaugurated; Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldren walk on the moon.

Our President for 1970 -1971 was Dorothy Metz. We had 40 members and 10 inactive members and the dues were \$4.00. Meetings continue to be held in member's homes. A Flower Show was held at Wanamaker's in November. The theme was "I'll be Home for the Holidays". November Christmas Luncheon was held at the Rancocas Inn. The charge was \$4.00 and the menu: Fruit Cup, Entree, Green vegetable, Tossed Green Salad, Rolls and Butter, Dessert and Coffee. A wreath making workshop was held in December. In February there was a meeting of seven of the local Garden Clubs at the Moorestown Community Center. Another trip to the Philadelphia Flower Show (\$4.25), sponsored by our Garden Club. Trees were planted around the Middle School and Parkway School for Arbor Day. The Club continues to maintain the plantings at the Parkway School. There were several intra club flower shows, held before the monthly meetings. A Garden Tour, sponsored by the Club, was held in May. Irene Borchert noted that a fund raising plant sale was always held in conjunction with Garden Tours. The Annual June luncheon was held at the Hedgerow Inn. Interesting happenings in 1970: Kent State shootings; Earthquake in Peru kills 50,000 people; Bar codes introduced; Beatles break up and *If* Patton" won the Oscar.

Dorothy Metz continues as President for the 1971-1972 year. This year we had 37 active and 10 inactive members. Dues were \$4.00 for active members and \$3.00 for inactive members. A Flower Show was held at the Cherry Hill Mall for the area Garden Clubs. Our club took home many ribbons. At the October meeting we had a flower show for members. Ribbons were awarded to winners. The Christmas luncheon (\$4.50) was held at the Holiday Inn in November. There was a Holiday Bazaar which featured handcrafted items for sale that had been done by members of the Garden club. In December Christmas Wreathes were made and distributed to community service buildings and Buttonwood, the county nursing home. In February there was a luncheon and meeting of six of the local Garden Clubs at the Moorestown Community House. At the March meeting members shared their crafts and hobbies. The Garden Club went to the Flower Show. In May the Club had a covered dish luncheon with an intra club flower show. They also chose officers for the coming year. In June

the annual luncheon of the club was held at the Hedgerow Inn, where officers were installed. Seeds, bulbs and garden supplies were sent to the Children's Department of Ancora State Hospital for the children's use in their garden. Mount Laurel celebrated their centennial in July and at the celebration our Garden Club served coffee and donuts. Interesting things that happened in 1971: Twenty sixth amendment to Constitution lowering the voting age to 18 was passed; All in the Family debuts and "The French Connection" won the Oscar.

For the 1972 -1973 year, Elenor Shoop was President. We still had 40 members and 20 inactive. Dues remained the same - \$4.00 for active and \$3.00 for inactive. The Christmas luncheon was held at Kenney's Suburban House. We then held a Christmas Bazaar, at the Parkway School selling Christmas ornaments, pressed flower pictures, bottle candle holders, calico flower baskets, holiday aprons and pinecone items. The Wreath making Workshop was held in December. In January an intra club flower show was held. A combined Garden Club meeting was held at the Moorestown Community House in March. Trees were planted at four Mt. Laurel Schools for Arbor Day. In April a lecture and lunch was held at the Moorestown Community House for area Garden Clubs. The Garden Club took a bus to Longwood Gardens for a tour. In June a catered picnic was held at Ann Ricci's home, where officers were installed. 1972 outstanding events: Nixon visits China 11 athletes killed at the Olympics in Munich; Start of Watergate scandal (break in); Cat scan is developed; Electronic Mail is introduced; "The Godfather" won the Oscar. 1973: End of Vietnam War; Supreme Court rules on Roe versus Wade; "The Sting" won the Oscar.

We are still carrying on in the footsteps of the first ladies who started our club and we are very grateful to them for this endeavor.

We thank Charter members Irene Borchert and Florence Guess for sharing their memories of the first ten years.