

Longtime Member Joy Davis

By Donna Ahrens

Joy Davis has been a lifelong visitor to Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and a longtime member of the Friends. She served as membership chair from 1996 to 2009, staying in touch with many Friends members over the years; on Joy's retirement from the board of directors, President Pam Weiner referred to her as "our own lady of letters." Now Joy does most of her gardening at her lake home in northern Minnesota, where, she reports, "Yellow ladyslippers love our silty soil and through the years have spread to over 200 glorious flowers that bloom in June. The deer leave them alone, too!"

I caught up with Joy just before she and her husband left their home in Minneapolis to spend the summer at the lake, and asked her about her involvement over the years with the Garden and the Friends.

How did you find out about the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and become interested in being involved in the Friends?

I have more than 60 years of memories of Wirth Park and the Garden. I grew up in north Minneapolis and enjoyed biking over to Wirth and experiencing its beauty. We have movies of our two daughters as preschoolers walking the paths of Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, and we were delighted to introduce our granddaughter at age 3 to the Garden. So I have visited the Garden off and on through many decades.

After volunteering in the shelter for a couple of years, I was asked to serve on the Friends board and agreed to become its membership chair. I served in this position for a number of years and thoroughly enjoyed coming in contact with our members. Many of them wrote notes along with their membership checks, all praising the natural beauty of the Garden. Annually I received

photo by Judy Remington

a lovely handmade note card from Vi and Dan LaBelle. On its cover was a photograph taken in the Garden and inside was a personal note about the photo and the inspiration they received from the Garden. Those kinds of personal contacts were very important to me.

Cary George served as Garden Curator from 1987 to 2004. The Friends has embarked on a wetland project to commemorate his service. Can you talk a bit about Cary and his service to the Garden?

About 20 years ago I became almost a daily visitor and met Cary George, who could always answer any question I had of botanical interest. I became a volunteer in the shelter and through that experience got to know Cary and his thinking on the Garden. He was a believer in not tampering with nature any more than was absolutely necessary. Cary's respect and reverence for the Garden will be honored by the Friends wetland project done in his name.

What has the Garden meant to you over the years?

The Garden has done many things for me. It has soothed my soul during difficult times. It has filled my heart with joy when I've gazed at a showy ladyslipper, seen the first snow trillium, smelled the earth awakening in the spring, spotted an indigo bunting and heard the call of a pileated woodpecker. Though we now spend much of the warmer months at our lake home, when I return to the city I always visit the Garden. The Garden is a sacred place to me.

– Donna Ahrens is a member of the Friends board of directors.



From the Mailbox:

(Anna Berquist, Golden Valley)

I was very interested to read about the lovely Forget Me Not – one of my favorite flowers. I found the poem in one of my books and I thought you might be interested in a different version [of how it got its name].

In Italy where I lived long ago, I also saw pink ones in the deep wood.

*When to the flowers so beautiful
The Father gave a name,
Back came a little blue-eyed one
(All timidly it came);
And standing at its Father's feet
And gazing in His face,
It said, in low and trembling tone,
"Dear God, the name Thou gavest me,
Alas! I have forgot!"
Kindly the Father looked Him down
And said: "Forget-me-not."*

– Emily Bruce Roelofson

