

# The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



## Alexander Dean

Alexander Dean first comes into our history in 1969 during the construction of the Martha Crone Shelter. During the planning for the Shelter a fireplace or a Franklin Stove was considered, the stove having the advantage of stretching limited funds. (1)

Some of the funds pledged for the shelter were in the form of memorials. In July 1968 Mr. and Mrs. Dean lost one of their three children, daughter Kathleen Dean Hillman who was recently married and 25 years old. Knowing about the Shelter plans they donated funds to build a fireplace with a heat-o-later insert and a copper hood.

The exterior of fireplace and chimney is cut stone from Wisconsin. Many of the finishing details for the Shelter were custom ordered leading to some construction delays. The fireplace contributed as the stone was shipped to Iowa by mistake.

Dean wrote in 1977: "It is not in grandiose physical growth and development that I see the Wild Flower Garden, but as the expression of an idea which is held in the thoughts of people, cherished and nursed for those who come in search of its sanctuary. That is why I am so interested in it, and that is why my daughter Kathleen was interested in it." (2)



The Wisconsin stone chimney of the Crone Shelter.

Some of the memorial money also came from Kathleen's Girl Scout friends. A memorial plaque is on the wall to the right of the fireplace hood. On August 25, 2007 those friends visited the Shelter and

volunteer Phoebe Waugh was there to get a photo of them in front of the large copper hood.



Alexander Dean was born and educated in New York state. After working for the government as a forester and for Weyerhaeuser for a while he came to Minneapolis and entered the insurance business. Eventually he was the owner and president of the David Insurance Agency. He served on the board of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, was chairman of the Hennepin County Republican Party, and served on the Hennepin County Park Board.

Mr. Dean was on the Friends Board of Directors from 1973 until May of 1980. He was the Friends vice-president in 1975 and served 3 years as president, 1976 through 1978.

As the new president in 1976 he wrote this:

When we think of our little society as embracing all those members who, for whatever reason, lay aside from time to time their urgent daily tasks and devote time, thought and energy to help perpetuate the wildness and the wildings of our dear Garden, we realize how aptly we are named---"Friends of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden"! It is more than a lovely plot of ground holding countless lovely creatures no longer common to the City in which it exists. It is a quiet corner in thought for each to come to for the refreshment and inspiration which the contemplation of God's ideas expressed in nature always bring to mankind.

And so I come to the office of President of this "Friends" following those who have served it so well, with a deep sense of gratitude for all that has helpfully gone before, Also with the conviction that the new Board working together with the new officers and the "Old Hands" will have a fun and highly constructive year. To keep our Garden wild needs not our "wild" thoughts, but our helpful ones and we hope to have some of these from all of you. (3)

He passed away at age 91 in Alexandria VA.

Reference: Minutes of The Board of Directors and other documents of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc. Text by G D Bebeau.

Note 1: Friends Board Minutes Sept. 5, 1968,

Note 2: *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup>, vol. 26 No. 4

Note 3: *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup>, vol. 24 No. 3