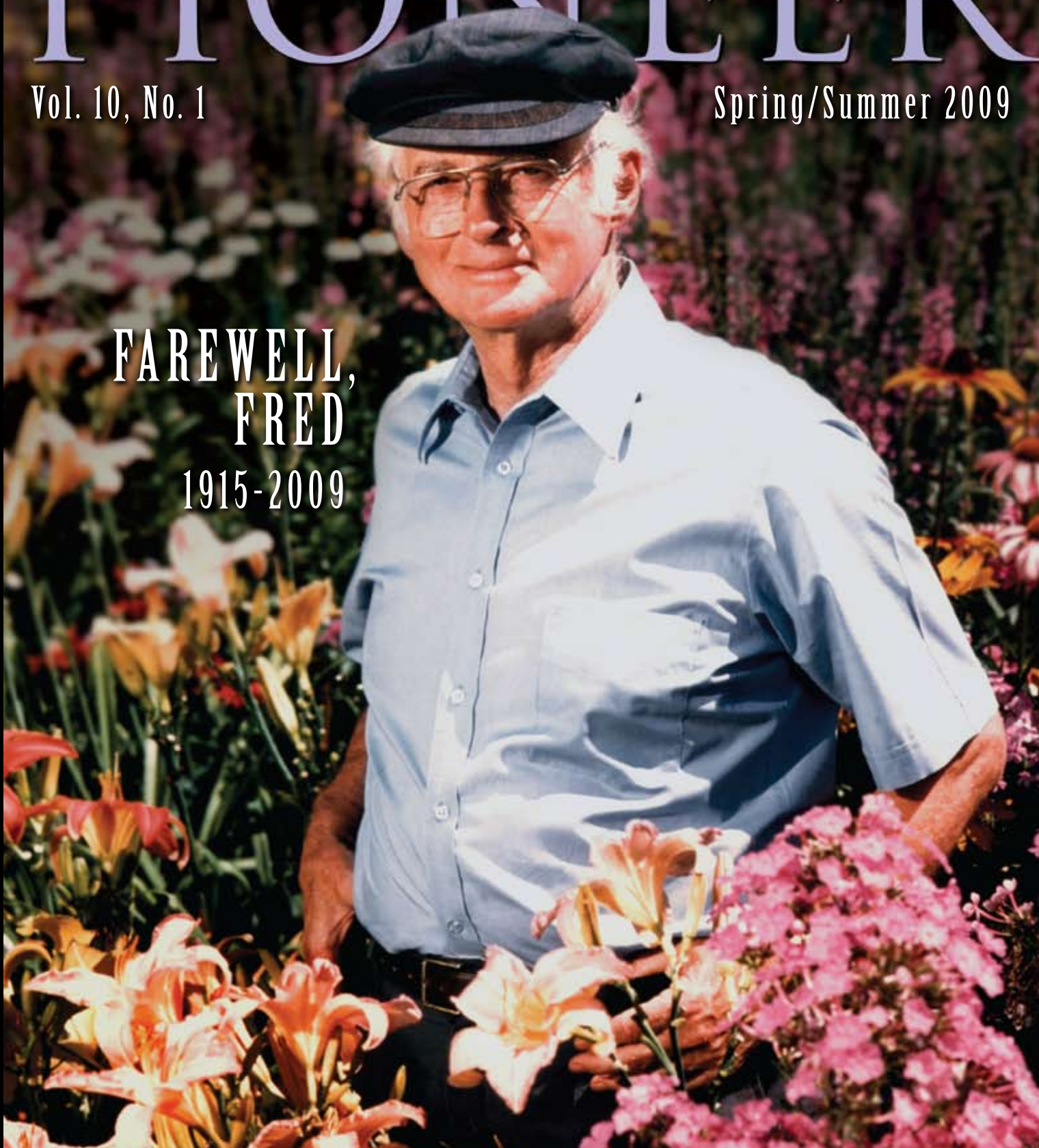


# THE DAYLILY PIONEER

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FAREWELL,  
FRED  
1915-2009





# REMEMBERING

# FRED.

by Kyle Billadeau

**T**HE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY today is peppered with celebrities known only by one name. Madonna and Bono are often in the news; go back a few years and we had Charo or Cher. One need only say that single name and an instant picture pops into your mind of that person.

For over four decades, Region One had its own special 'one-name' celebrity of sorts. Frederick P.W. McDowell may be the name he used to author his many contributions to books and articles over the years, Dr. McDowell was how he was known to his university students, but to many members of Region One, he was simply "Fred."

*continued >>*

*For over 40 years, Fred welcomed visitors through the white picket gate of McDowell's Daylily Splendor Garden in Iowa City, IA (photo by Lynn Stoll)*

Margaret and Fred preparing the garden for visitors, 1999  
(photo by Lynn Stoll)

With the 1999 closing of McDowell's Daylily Splendor Garden in Iowa City, Fred and his wife Margaret retired from gardening, but that was not the end of Fred's affection for his favorite flower. Until his death at age 93 on March 5, 2009, Fred continued to inspire and encourage Region One hybridizers, just as he had since his passion for daylilies began in the 1960s.

"Fred's. There's probably no other garden that can be so thoroughly described by using just one word. ('Are you going to Fred's?', 'Have you ever seen Fred's?') If you've ever been there, you know. And even if you haven't, chances are that you know anyway. ('I've always wanted to see Fred's')" – Gary Wiederhoft, Fall 1999 Region One Newsletter.

Gary's words describe Fred's garden as members of Region One and beyond remember it in its full glory, when it grew to include over 2,200 different cultivars, primarily large-flowered tetraploids. But like many daylily enthusiasts, he wasn't always just a daylily gardener.

#### The Budding Daylily Enthusiast – The Early Years

Although he grew daylilies from the time he planted his first garden, Fred's real daylily interest was sparked in 1958. From his first article for *The Hemerocallis Journal* in 1973, "Daylilies and A Changing Garden," Fred wrote:

*"As with others who did their first gardening before the second war, daylilies were not my first love, mostly because they did not exist in the 1930s and the 1940s (one is tempted to add the 1950s) as they now exist. If they were not a first love, they are my last love and will never be supplanted in that regard. Although I have gardened in Iowa City since 1953, I did very little with daylilies until 1958 when Gretchen Harshbarger introduced me to REVOLUTE, MIDWEST MAJESTY, EVELYN CLAIR, HESPERUS, GAY TROUBADOR, and her own SHENANDOAH... these varieties quite bowled me over with their beauty and responsiveness. I got along with these and other older kinds until the second phase of my interest began about 1967."*

Did you smile when you read that? How similar is it to your own path and those of your fellow daylily enthusiasts? To watch the newly-converted daylily gardener journey from that initial discovery that daylilies come in colors other than orange and yellow, to the eager collecting phase is one most of us can relate to quite well. We often start with the 'older' varieties and then discard them in favor of new, more exciting cultivars as time goes on.

By 1969, Fred's garden was already well-known locally, enough to be invited onto the very first garden tour hosted by Iowa City's Project GREEN, a fundraiser for the city's beautification project that is still thriving



Fred banked the soil in his beds from back to front like the seats in a football stadium (Gail Korn)  
(photo by Lynn Stoll)

*"Daylilies...if they were not a first love, they are my last love and will never be supplanted in that regard."*



today. Daughter Elizabeth remembers that the garden was frequently on the annual tour, as many people would purchase tickets just for an opportunity to view the McDowell garden.

Articles authored by Fred, or by others covering his garden, frequently appeared in local newspapers, and began to appear in regional and national gardening magazines starting in the 1970s. The unique nature of what Fred had nurtured and built was expressed in "The Professor Dotes on Day Lilies" (*The Iowan*, Summer 1981). Here Janet Brown wrote: "A professor of English at the University of Iowa, McDowell has been growing day lilies since he planted his first garden thirty years ago; they have been his specialty since 1966. His is the only garden in Iowa to be honored with exhibition status by the American Hemerocallis Society."

Stop and reflect for a moment how different it was to be a daylily enthusiast thirty years ago. There was one display garden in all of Iowa, compared to almost twenty throughout Region One today. There was no internet for instant gratification with its seemingly infinite supply of gorgeous photos, no constant procession of flashy full-color catalogs arriving in the mail. A visit to a garden with the resources that Fred amassed on his ¼ acre city lot was truly an event to be eagerly anticipated. "We make our annual 'pleasure trek' to this delightful yard each July, taking a picnic lunch and staying all day. We use six hours of this time for going and coming." – Suzy Wood, Fall 1977 Region One Newsletter.

Indeed, the word about 1118 East Court Street was spreading to other communities in Iowa. Helen Settle of Marshalltown, Iowa

remembers many travels to Iowa City during those years with her husband Kempton. "We loved Fred, we were in his garden many, many times for hours at a time, more than once a summer. We heard about him, and we just had to go. And that was quite a drive in those days because it was nearly 100 miles away. Fred was always glad to see us. And he was always the same, always positive, always seemed to be a happy man. His wife would have us in, since often it would be a hot day, she would serve iced tea. They always made us feel welcome."

During this time period, Fred reflected on his shift from the all-purpose gardener to the passionate daylily grower in that first *Journal* article of 1973:

*"Looking out from my study windows on a snowy March day, I find it almost impossible to recapture*



Fred in his aptly-named Daylily Splendor Garden, 1999 (photo by Lynn Stoll)

*the breath-taking beauty of a July garden which features daylilies. And yet I know that the now bleak landscape will truly blossom by July. For me, summer is the great garden season, as it is for most gardeners unless their interest runs toward the earlier blooming bulbs, iris, and roses, or to the later blooming annuals or chrysanthemums. For almost two months, a garden which limits itself to daylilies and the perennials which bloom then can be spectacular, especially if one is blessed with good prairie soil and can supply the equivalent of one inch of water per week when the rains do not come.*

*I used to be an all-season gardener; and when I look at a bed of tulips in the spring or the bold splendor of chrysanthemums in the October sun, I often wish that I had all the time and all the energy to be a 100% gardener for all seasons. But over the years, I have followed the other course. With the demands of university teaching, scholarly writing, a large family and travel, I have had to cut down-not the amount of garden space cultivated so much as the range of gardening activity. The rewards have been as great, I think, as the sacrifices.*

*During the last ten years I have gone from an*

*all-season garden to a one-season garden. But it would not have been so easy to do so without one plant to rely on as the staple around which to organize the garden. That plant, of course, turned out to be the daylily.*

Fred talked about his future garden plans at that time, saying "Since then [1967] I have been collecting daylilies and eliminating other plantings in my garden, until I now have over 600 varieties. I plan to expand a bit more by eliminating a large Iris bed (in some ways I hate to do so); at this point I shall be rounding off my holdings at about 700 kinds. Thereafter I shall replace some of the older cultivars with newer ones that are improvements."

Well, as you know by now, it didn't exactly turn out that way. From fellow CVIDS member Gary Wiederhofs in 1999 – "Each time we have visited Fred's, we are aware that the borders coming out from the house have grown wider, the area along the back yard has become smaller – and what was a plain, grassy border along the neighbor's fence a few years ago is now a bed at least ten feet long and 3 deep with daylilies!". Yes, Fred would succumb to the seduction of the daylily and enlarge his collection to over 2,000 varieties by the time he retired from gardening.

### The Years of Daylily Splendor

From 600 varieties in 1973 to 800 varieties in 1981, the garden grew by the mid-1980's to include over 1,200 cultivars, and became Iowa's only official AHS display garden. With the solid border of white picket fence squashing any hopes of reckless garden expansion, one instead envisions strips of sod mysteriously disappearing each year, and daylilies tucked into every corner of the foundation. But Fred's vision of his garden wasn't completely just daylilies. As he wrote in 1973, "much as I love daylilies in and of themselves, I would never wish to see my flower beds devoid of companion plants."

In a 1986 interview, Fred was asked "How do you grow your daylilies?" and his response shows the value he placed on the role of companion plants. "I feel that daylilies need other plants to set them off and a planting with only daylilies tends to be somewhat monotonous. So the companion plants mean a lot to me, though they are a lot of work. They add greatly to the spectacle, however."

In several of his articles, Fred mentioned his love for large displays of Phlox. While noting that Phlox could be challenging to grow, he felt them worth the effort. Throughout the

beds, he interspersed many smallish clumps of common perennials – blue platycodon, white shasta daisy, purple coneflower, lythrum, achillea, Asiatic lilies, monarda (preferring the red varieties to the pinks), gloriosa daisies and gaillardia among the daylilies, and filled the front borders with low-growing forget-me-nots, petunias and begonias.

To find the newest, most exciting varieties to add to his collection, Fred would often journey to hybridizer's gardens. Pat Stamile recalls that Fred would arrive on an annual expedition along with three companions from Missouri – Dr. Hal Daum, Olin Frazier and Oscie Whatley. They visited the Stamile garden both in New York and later in Florida. Iron Gate Gardens of Van Sellers (North Carolina) was also a favorite. These annual expeditions gave Fred an opportunity to view new advancements in tetraploids first-hand, but also the temptation to add dozens more to his collection each year. Helen Settle remarked that "What amazed me was that every time we heard about a new daylily, Fred already had it! He had a certain place on the west side of his house that he had new ones that he was always watching, so Kemp had to go over there first to make sure...he got a chance at it."

By now named "McDowell's Daylily Splendor Garden," repeat visitors came back often

to view cutting-edge varieties, as well as the dazzling array of colors. Suzy Wood wrote in the 1977 Fall Region One Newsletter, "This garden changes from year to year. Many new Hems are added that Fred selects in his travels – he ends each year with at least a hundred new ones, some acquired through trading with other growers and some only to be gotten from using hard cash...One has to see to believe the mass of colors in the borders. Here we see the importance of handling color correctly in a garden. The colors in these borders are all in perfect harmony."

Color and the abundant daylilies growing near the McDowell house were Gary Schaben's first impressions when he first viewed Fred's garden. "Fred's sharing of his garden and his evangelism of daylilies had really spread into the neighborhood. It was an old-fashioned kind of neighborhood where people walked around every evening. When you stepped through the gate into the back yard, the intense color of that back yard actually hurt your eyes," said Gary of his 1994 visit. He continued, "Of all the years I've been in daylilies, I've never seen another garden grown so well. Except perhaps for Elizabeth," mused Gary, "she grows daylilies just like her dad."

By the mid-1990s, the testament of Fred's ability to provide daylily conversion experiences



### The Eloquent Advocate

*"IT WAS A SUMMER DAY of the finest variety with an intensely blue sky and temperatures warm but not too hot. It was the perfect day for touring a legendary daylily garden. I was not new to daylilies at the time but had only joined the AHS the year before and had not had the opportunity to go on any tours. I was intensely anticipating this trip with its singular objective of visiting the McDowell garden in Iowa City, Iowa.*

*As we drove into his modest neighborhood I was struck by what an amazing ambassador of daylilies Fred McDowell was. It seemed like almost every home for several blocks had some level of daylilies on display. They were like speed bumps, for as anxious as I was to reach Fred's garden the pristine day and the intense color of so many daylilies in peak bloom made me slow down to take it all in. Fred and Margaret were holding an impromptu daylily seminar in their front yard with some neighbors who had been walking by as we pulled to the curb in front of his house.*

*I was amazed, I do not remember what I was expecting of this famous garden but I do remember I was surprised at its simple, clean border layout. There was no specific landscaping only a pristine border that surrounded the tiny yard and house with hundreds of varieties of daylilies magnificently displayed. As impressed as I was with the front yard I was not prepared for what I would experience as we passed through the gate to the back yard. It was a total sensory overload, with the intensity of colors; there were thousands of daylilies in bloom in an 8-foot border surrounding the garage and back yard. As we passed through that gate we were immediately surrounded by this brilliant rainbow of daylilies. Fred explained that each fall he lifted every daylily, divided and replaced it with a 3 to 5 fan clump to get this effect year after year.*

*Always soft spoken, always the gentleman, Fredrick McDowell was indeed the 'Eloquent Advocate' of daylilies."*

gary Schaben, Monticello, MN

The front porch of the McDowell home provided only a hint of the treasures that awaited visitors behind the picket fence in the back yard (photo by Lynn Stoll)



“Fred’s garden and personality inspired hundreds to begin growing daylilies. Many were awestruck when walking into his backyard and seeing 2,000 well-grown magnificent daylilies of all colors, forms and sizes. One of his biggest satisfactions was that his garden started others’ interest and brought about other good gardens in his area. His garden beds were 8 feet deep around the perimeter of his house and yard. He kept the clumps small, well marked and so tightly packed that the very narrow paths allowed only Fred in swimming trunks in for deadheading.

Fred was instrumental in starting our Cedar Valley Iris & Daylily Society club (CVIDS) in April 1990, which is prospering today. At our meetings he was proud to show his slides of individual flowers and point out the “classics” that would be popular forever. He did the same in his garden as he took you on a personal tour and Margaret would bring refreshments. What a joy it was to visit them! He liked tetraploids – especially those of Stamile and Munson, but didn’t care much for small flowers or spiders.

Fred was awarded the AHS Regional Distinguished Service award in 1994, which was well-justified. He had been a member of AHS since 1966, and before our club was formed put on some Region One meetings almost singled-handed. He wrote many interesting daylily articles in newsletters and for the Daylily Journal.

One was made to feel you were his special friend, and I shall treasure my memory of him forever.”

Gerald Hobbs, Ft. Madison, Iowa

similar to his own was spreading beyond the Iowa border. Mary Baker of Omaha, Nebraska wrote in the Fall 1996 Region One Newsletter about her first visit to Fred’s. “After reading a magazine article about Fred McDowell’s garden, I decided to see it for myself. That initial visit to Fred’s wonderful garden began an incurable addiction. In fact, I purchased my first named daylily, *H. ‘Secondhand Rose’* (Moldovan 1982) from Fred. I have a special fondness for Fred McDowell and his garden. Many “hooked” daylily addicts were heard to exclaim to him, “It’s all your fault!” in a joyful manner. Fred is a wonderful person who is responsible for introducing many to the joys of daylily culture, including me. He deservedly was the third person in Region One...to receive the Regional Service Award from the AHS.”

After the final summer tour of Fred’s garden in 1999, Gary Wiederhoeft wrote for the Fall Region One newsletter “What a unique garden. Until one sees it, one can’t imagine how many daylilies can fit into such a small, urban yard...the newest acquisitions are started on the side of the house, then are moved to the bed that runs the length of the left side of the driveway. Eventually they get ‘promoted’ to the back yard. It’s like a treasure hunt, because chances are what you saw here a year or two ago is now somewhere else!”

#### First and Foremost, a Teacher

A professor of English at the University of Iowa, Dr. McDowell’s teaching skills extended naturally into the garden. Lynn Stoll of Atalissa, IA says, “in many ways, it served as a reference garden for all of the Midwest;

Peeking through the garden gate (photo by Lynn Stoll)

immaculately groomed, meticulously labeled, and lovingly tended. Fred loved to have visitors in the garden, and always took time to share his knowledge, and especially his infectious passion for daylilies. He was unfailingly gracious and patient, even when he surely had to answer the same questions (“Which one is your favorite?”) a dozen times a day. He truly felt that he had a mission to convert casual visitors into daylily lovers who could also experience the joy he found in his beloved daylilies.”

Educating others was not limited to just hosting garden visitors. Lynn Stoll remembers how Fred loved to spread the “gospel” about the daylily to a wider audience. “In his ceaseless effort to educate the public about daylilies for Northern gardens, Fred gave many informative slide presentations for local and regional events. In addition to articles in local and regional newspapers, the garden was the subject of full-color feature articles in national magazines, including *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Flower and Garden*, and *American Home*. Fred was always very pleased to have these opportunities to educate a broad segment of the public about the modern daylily, and he always helped the reporters find just the right quotes and background information for their articles.”

With the rapid advancement of tetraploid daylilies during the 70s and 80s, Fred found it impossible not to increase his collection. In his own words “I add about 100 each year and discard about fifty.” In a 1986 interview, Fred stated “I am a collector rather than a hybridizer. I place much emphasis on how the plants do in the garden. Although I add new introductions all the time to the extent that I can afford them, I am not able to determine their garden potential sometimes for four or five years, so I grow both the old and the new.” Fred’s aptitude for studying, researching and evaluating the daylily was evident.

Growing the newest, best cultivars in one garden was a valuable asset to many AHS garden judges during those years. Lynn Stoll relates that “Fred was a conscientious and thoughtful garden judge for thirty years, beginning in 1975. Importantly, the extensive display of award-eligible cultivars



in his garden attracted many garden judges from Region One and surrounding Regions, who appreciated the opportunity to see and evaluate well-grown established clumps of many of the daylilies on the ballot each year.”

Fred’s teaching and mentoring traveled far beyond his little city lot in Iowa. Gary Schaben recalls being an impromptu student of Fred one evening. “The biggest thing he taught me was to enjoy my garden in the twilight. When you hybridize you’re up so early in the morning, by one or two in the afternoon you’re exhausted, and all you want to do is drop. But Fred taught me how to enjoy my garden in the evening.” Upon getting a dinner-time phone call from Fred saying he and his family were on their way to visit, Gary immediately protested, feeling there would not be anything to see, everything would surely be melted after the hot summer day. But Fred insisted, saying, “You’d be amazed by what you can see in the twilight.”

Gary remembers “I wouldn’t have believed it, but we walked the entire garden that night, the seedling beds and everything. And I had to help him, he wasn’t walking so well by then, and my hills were hard for him, especially after a long day visiting gardens. But it was a very memorable occasion, and very flattering to have him come. I wouldn’t have believed it before, but things I normally wouldn’t see

because I focused on the peak of the bloom, I now saw through Fred’s vision. Since then I’ve often enjoyed my garden in the twilight because of Fred McDowell’s influence. He had a way of teaching you to look at a garden through his eyes.”

#### Writing His Daylily “Gospel”

Fred did have a special knack for teaching others to see the garden through his own eyes, and that talent extended to Fred’s writings on daylilies. As Fred became more of an authority on daylilies, he began contributing frequently to his local club and regional newsletters, as well as *The Hemerocallis Journal* (later to be renamed *The Daylily Journal*). Fred was not shy about expressing his opinions, as shown in this excerpt from his 1979 article “*Shall We Try To Establish A Hemerocallis ‘Tradition’?*”

“The Hemerocallis enthusiast can only regard with something of dismay, as well as pride, the fact that each year, on the average, seven hundred new cultivars are registered and added to our flower population. In this population explosion how can we sort out the few hundred varieties from the past that are still worth growing? Not all of us can grow every worthwhile daylily. Yet one must resist the temptation to regard, in every case, ‘new’ as being best. One must also, I believe, emphasize the desirability of establishing some kind of canon of excellence in daylilies.”

Fred continued to evaluate and record notes on every daylily in daughter Elizabeth’s garden, years after his own was retired, c. 2005 (photo by Elizabeth McDowell-Pepple)



Top: Fred noted *H. ‘Buddha’* (Whatley, 1969) as “impeccable dark red”

Bottom: *H. ‘Ed Murray’*, (Grovat, 1971) was described: “...the glowing maroon flowers always command attention.” (photos by Kyle Billadeau)

Fred's vivid descriptions of each daylily are at once technical and poetic. These are from his 1984-85 series of articles for *The Daylily Journal*:



H. 'Real Wind'\* (Wild, 1977)  
"Imposing rather than delicate flower and plant, tangerine to peach with prominent cranberry eye; a massive plant."



H. 'Russian Rhapsody'\* (RW Munson, 1973)  
"Red-violet to purple that is vigorous and spectacular in a clump."



H. 'Baja'\* (Durio, 1974)  
"A glistering red of good substance, that has now become accepted as standard in its class."



H. 'Dance Ballerina Dance'\* (Peck, 1976)  
"The most sought-after daylily in recent years and lives up to its reputation, with me it is more melon than pink, but beautiful in any case."



H. 'Gay Cravat' (Peck 1976)  
Description: If only DANCE BALLERINA DANCE multiplied like this great garden plant! In two years when you get a gorgeous clump; flowers are ruffly tan to beige with a sparkling, wine-red eye, and yellow edging.



H. 'Dancing Shiva'\* (Moldovan, 1974)  
Description: Though the budding and branching could be better, this is still the pinkest of the pink tets, with the individual blooms ruffled and heavy-substanced.

Photo credits at left, top to bottom:  
Ginny Byers, Deb Browne, Karen Newman,  
Robin Calderon, Coral Kincaid, Gail Morgan

In this article, Fred made a vigorous argument for establishing a list of daylilies that represent "the best of the twenty-five great years of hybridizing since the early 1950s," something that would complement the lists of recent Stout Medal and Lenington All-American winners. As he would do in future Daylily Journal articles, Fred ended his article with his own list of recommendations, which at this time was comprised of diploid daylilies introduced through 1972. With a short, descriptive note following each entry, Fred's lists were surely devoured by AHS readers. One imagines many a Journal with entries heavily underlined and page corners turned down!

Fred's next contribution to *The Hemerocallis Journal* was his 1981 "Tried and True Tetraploid Daylilies." Covering introductions through July 1973, Fred again stressed to the reader the importance of growing the classic daylily. He writes "But as in all other endeavors, the fancier and the hybridizer work out of the past; and taking stock of past achievements is as much an obligation as keeping abreast of the new."

Once again a list of 100 favorite cultivars was offered, and this time the descriptions were a little longer, almost poetic. A sampling:

*"Aztec Autumn (Munson). A pioneer cultivar in the orange blends; vivid and brilliant.*

*Bradley Hardy (Griesbach-Hardy) Stupendous orange-gold blossoms, the most admired of all my 1000 or more daylilies in 1980.*

*By Myself (Peck). One of the most striking golds; all-time great, and unforgettable in clump.*

*Evening Bell (Peck) The great ruffled yellow that has reshaped daylily history and hybridizing.*

Again arguing for preservation of the best evaluated cultivars, Fred wrote "Perhaps my list might serve to remind us of the great flowers that we have inherited from the first eight or ten years of breeding tetraploid daylilies, say from 1963 to 1973...in the forward surge of producing new cultivars, it is easy to forget that some of our most beautiful garden tets are precisely those that have been tested by time for all-round merit and great beauty."

"I first became aware of Fred McDowell from the series he wrote for *The Daylily Journal* on modern tetraploids. As a beginner collector at that time, I used the information he gave and read and reread those articles many times. The daylilies he wrote about became the foundation of my collection.

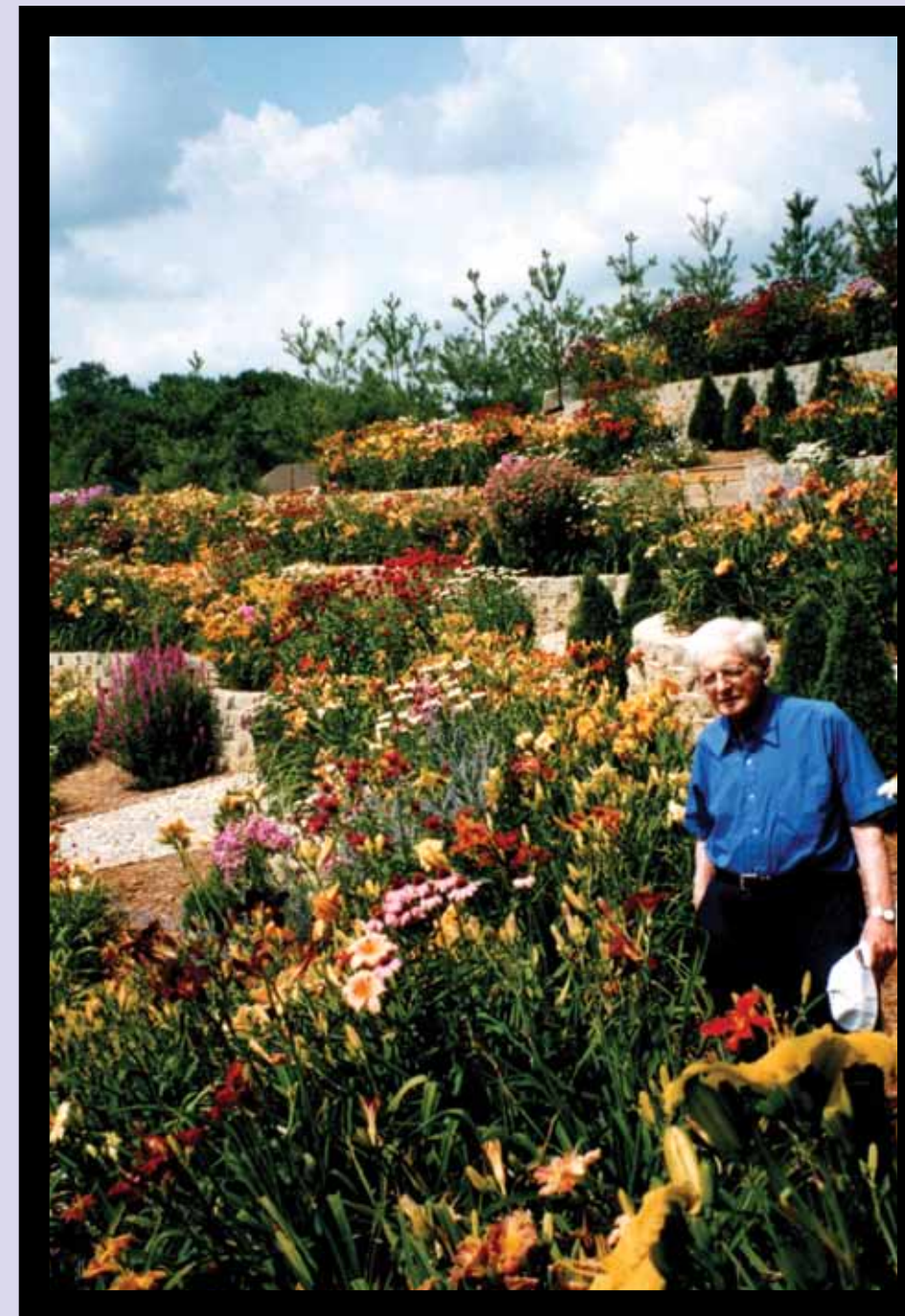
I didn't meet Fred in person until his garden was on the regional tour. What a daylily wonderland! At that time he had 1100 varieties as well as some other complementary perennials, and I made copious notes. I recall often his garden design. In the back yard, he had banked the soil so that he could plant those daylilies 8-deep. Every label could be seen. There was a little grass in the middle of the yard. Think of a football stadium with daylilies in the seating area. It was an ingenious design that I've never seen repeated anywhere else. There is no doubt in my mind that Fred's garden inspired a great many people to grow daylilies."

Gail Korn, Wayne, NE

"He had a way of teaching you to look at a garden through his eyes."

— Gary Schaben

Right: Fred's gardening legacy and his collection live on in daughter Elizabeth's daylily garden (Kentucky, 2005) (photo by Elizabeth McDowell-Pepple)



Fred's longest daylily article was a five-part series for *The Daylily Journal* in 1984-85. Taking up where the 1981 article left off, over 150 cultivars were listed and eloquently described. In the introduction, Fred writes of his selections "Some of the task of judging has already been done for me by my fellow enthusiasts, in that half or more of the cultivars I will be describing have received awards: Junior Citation, Honorable Mention, or Award of Merit... I am surprised, though, at some omissions in these awards, and some of the most beautiful and satisfactory daylilies on my list have received no award. I think, for instance that some of the Reckamp and Moldovan introductions have been passed over."

Fred was neither a hybridizer nor a scientist, but his essays on the daylily were just as significant as those written by his contemporaries. He was a recognized authority on the daylily, and he strove to share his observations through his writings, the same way he shared his garden in person.

**Sharing with the World**

Fred and Margaret raised five children at 1118 East Court Street, and the family had a peaceful view of the garden from a porch out back. July bloom often meant looking out during dinner to people quietly wandering through

their back yard. Youngest daughter Elizabeth recalls, "we lived in an old neighborhood where people took walks, and they wouldn't ring the doorbell or anything, they'd just go straight out back. There always seemed to be about thirty people in our garden every evening."

However, being a McDowell kid meant not getting to play football in your own yard. Elizabeth says, "we always joked the grass was shrinking every year, because the beds kept getting just a little bigger, and we used to have such a big back yard. Pretty soon we were sent to the school two blocks away because you couldn't play ball in the back, you might knock

**1937** – B.S. degree in Education from University of Pennsylvania

**1938** – M.A. degree in English from University of Pennsylvania

**1941** – entered military service and eventually attained the rank of Major in the U.S. Army, serving in the United States and the Phillipine Islands

**1946** – retired from active duty but entered the US Army reserve as a Lieutenant Colonel, where he served for 15 years until 1961, remaining active in Command and General Staff studies as a student and instructor

**1949** – Ph.D. degree in English from Harvard

**1949** – Began teaching at the University of Iowa, leading to a long and distinguished career specializing in British and American Literature of 1830-1950. He would be a Research Professor six times at the University of Iowa, write several books, and contribute to numerous other journals and books.

**1953** – Married Margaret Louise Blaine, who became a fellow Professor at the University of Iowa, and together they raised five children

**1966** – Became enamored of the daylily

**1973** – wrote first article for The Hemerocallis Journal "Daylilies And A Changing Garden"

**1973-74** – Senior Fellow with the National Endowment for the Humanities

**1976-77** – Served as Regional Publicity Director and Newsletter Editor for AHS Region One

**1978** – McDowell's Daylily Splendor Garden honored with AHS Display Garden status

**1978-79** – Served as Regional Vice President and Newsletter Editor for AHS Region One

**1979-81** – Produced two more articles for The Hemerocallis Journal, "Shall We Try To Establish A Hemerocallis Tradition" (1979) and "Tried and True Tetraploid Daylilies" (1981)

**1980-81** – Fulbright Appointee at the University Paul-Valery in Montpellier, France

**1985** – Retired from the University, at which time the Frederick P.W. McDowell Graduate Scholarship Fund was established in honor of his specialty, British Literature from 1850-1950

**1990** – Instrumental in the founding of the Cedar Valley Iris and Daylily Club

**1994** – Selected to receive the Region One Service Award by the AHS

**1999** – Closing of McDowell's Daylily Splendor Garden, and Fred's retirement from gardening



Elizabeth and her father Fred in her garden in Minnesota, circa 2005 (photo by Elizabeth McDowell-Pepple)

a scape off. And you couldn't let a dog into the back, because he might knock off a scape!"

No dogs allowed, but Russians are welcome! In 1988, Shirley Ruedy wrote for *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, "So renowned is McDowell's garden that on any given summer day, visitors can be found strolling along the blaze of beauty – visitors from Iowa, visitors from surrounding states, and this particular summer, even from Russia. About 40 Russian peace walkers stopped by during their recent march."

As a young girl, Elizabeth peered into the backyard one day to see an unfamiliar group of people strolling about. Spotting a neighbor among them, she asked "Who are those people?" He told her "They're from New York. They're a ballet troupe." Her neighbor, involved locally with the arts, had brought the group to see the garden.

The University of Iowa held writer's workshops each summer, from which renowned authors occasionally ventured to the garden. Elizabeth remembers, "the thing that was neat growing up there was, there was no local daylily society at the time, and he wasn't into hybridizing, it was really a community garden." And for Fred, community was not just his family, or his neighbors, it was whoever stopped in to enjoy the daylilies.

### Life After Gardening

With the closing of McDowell's Daylily Splendor Garden after its farewell season in 1999, a chapter in Fred and Margaret's life also closed, but the next one began as daughter Elizabeth and friends Lynn and Barry Stoll inherited the daylilies that Fred so lovingly collected over the years. Each clump was divided into at least two pieces, one for Elizabeth and one for the Stolls. Many were also given to garden helper Cassie Wilkinson, who was hired by Fred after he had a heart attack, and worked in the garden for over a dozen years.

Fred took great satisfaction in that the fact that his fondness for daylilies rubbed off on Elizabeth, writing in 2007 "My 'retirement' from daylilies became short-lived, mostly due to Elizabeth's becoming a daylily addict and upgrading my 'state-of-the-art' garden from 1998." Each summer Fred traveled to Elizabeth's for an extended visit, timed during the peak of daylily bloom season, as she moved from Iowa to Minnesota, to Kentucky to North Carolina, and currently to Palm City, Florida.

In 2001, Fred's contributions were recognized by the club he helped found, when the Cedar Valley Iris and Daylily Society (CVIDS) voted to make the McDowell's life members. Ever gracious, Fred wrote a thank-you to the CVIDS club, saying, "We are honored to become life members of CVIDS, an organization with which we have felt a vital affinity since its

founding. This recognition has formed a fitting conclusion to our forty years of growing daylilies in Iowa City. We are touched by your efforts to establish a bed of daylilies in our honor and we wish you success in this project. We in turn wish all of you the best of gardening years ahead and more striking and beautiful daylilies than ever in your future." Fred was named an Honorary Judge for Region One in 2001, and while he could no longer vote the ballot, he continued to take an active interest in evaluating daylilies and eagerly pored over new color catalogs from hybridizers.

Fred's interest and influence on Region One hybridizers continued until the end of his life. Lynn Stoll writes that "Fred was excited about my hybridizing, and very encouraging; he felt strongly that we needed more Northern hybridizers, and...he had drummed into me the importance of good plant habit, foliage, branching, bud count, and vigor. He revered the work of Steve Moldovan along these lines. Unfortunately, by the time I had my hybridizing program well established, Fred was no longer able to travel readily. However, I visited his garden several times a week, and often brought a blossom or two to show him."

Gary Schaben recalls talking with Fred about his hybridizing efforts, "We talked about hardiness a lot, and Iowa City compared to much of the daylily world really is the far north. He was excited that someone up here was using the most cutting-edge plants and evaluating them for hardiness here. He was very interested in discussing what I was doing, philosophies of different bridge plants, color, and plant habit. He had an amazing eye, he would examine a seedling bed and notice things that I wouldn't see and I look at my seedlings every day." Both Gary and Fred agreed wholeheartedly in evaluating a daylily from the bottom up, something that Gary continues to emphasize in his hybridizing today.

Karol Emmerich writes about her memories of meeting Fred for the first time in July 2000, when Fred, Margaret and Elizabeth visited her garden in Edina. "When he saw my seedlings, he was insistent that I should start introducing them and that I shouldn't wait forever to do

### Reminiscences of Fred

by Lynn Stoll

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I WAS HONORED to be asked to write a series of articles for The Daylily Journal about northern-hardy daylily cultivars. This series of articles was intended in many ways as a tribute to my friend and daylily mentor Dr. Frederick McDowell, who had written a similar series of articles for the Journal some twenty years previously. Fred's articles covered large-flowered tetraploid daylilies of the 1970's and early 1980's. My articles picked up where Fred's series left off, with the primary emphasis on proven cultivars introduced in the late 1980's, 1990's, and early 2000's, and adding spiders, unusual forms, and small-flowered daylilies, in addition to the large-flowered daylilies that Fred preferred.

Fred was very actively involved in AHS Region One activities, serving as RVP, RPD, newsletter editor, and chairman of two Region One tours. Fred's garden was also a source of spectacular displays for the news media. In addition to articles in local and regional newspapers, the garden was the subject of full-color feature articles in national magazines, including *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Flower and Garden*, and *American Home*. All of these articles helped to spread Fred's "gospel" about the daylily and AHS to a wide audience.

Personally, Fred had an enormous influence on my own life in the world of daylilies. I was blessed to live close enough to be able to spend many hours in his garden every year over a period of almost twenty years. It was Fred who taught this neophyte the importance of looking past the

the pretty faces and considering the plant as a whole. "Oh, how can you ever choose?" was one of the questions I heard visitors ask him over and over. I am grateful that I was able to spend enough hours with Fred that I came to be able to answer that question, and my own judges' training sessions now try to share with others the awareness he taught me about plant habit, proportion, branching and bud count, healthy foliage, consistent performance, sequence of bloom, and distinction. Like any beginner, I was initially attracted to the flashy ruffled beauties in the bed of recent introductions along the side of the house (we called that bed "Michigan Avenue"). But Fred would smile and nod, and then lead me gently over to a much less flashy plant (to my eye) and say, "Now this is a Moldovan daylily" (his ultimate compliment) and point out all the fine qualities that weren't obvious to me at the time.

Barry and I were honored that Fred chose us, along with his daughter Elizabeth, to take over his collection when he realized he could no longer maintain the garden in 2000. With Fred as our inspiration, we are striving to carry on his tradition in Region One. Our own garden of over 2,500 different daylily cultivars includes many of the large-flowered tetraploids that Fred especially loved, but also includes hundreds of spiders and unusual forms and many miniatures. We hope that many of you attending the Region One meeting in Marshalltown this summer will take the time for a visit to us, as well as the outstanding gardens to be seen in Marshalltown.

it. What a boost to my confidence! I figured that if my things were good enough for Fred's critical eye, then I shouldn't be reticent."

Fred continued to follow Karol's hybridizing progress, as he evaluated selected Emmerich cultivars grown in daughter Liz's garden each summer. "I have become attached not only to

your lavenders and purples, but to your reds...my life has been richer for 'Fear Not', 'Storm Shelter', 'Man of Sorrows', 'Precious Promises', 'Ephesus', 'New Every Morning', and 'Coronation Day'. I wish you the greatest career ever, even though I will not see the conclusion. The start is wonderful and auspicious – signs of the creations down the road."



Fred and Margaret, at home in 1999 (photo by Lynn Stoll)

**Farewell, Fred**

“I remember Fred very well, first from his series of articles in the Journal, then articles about his garden in national magazines, so I was so thrilled to be able to visit his garden...to meet Fred in person and to see the garden so often photographed in national magazines. Fred was a mentor to Barry and Lynn Stoll and inspired many, many others to grow daylilies with his splendid display garden and his wonderful writings.

He would often visit the garden with Dr. Hal Daum, Olin Frazier and Oscie Whatley (all three were from Missouri and well-known and supportive of the AHS). Since he grew daylilies to be part of a perennial border he liked daylilies that had great color and plant habits like I do. He not only purchased a number of mine, but also from Steve Moldovan, Bill Barrere, James Marsh and others who bred for a good plant and a pretty flower. Fred was a wonderful person and I miss him. Anyone Fred touched was affected by him.”

Pat Stamile, Enterprise, FL

Fred may be gone now, but we can still share in his vision for the future of the daylily, which is timeless. In his 1986 interview with Betty Kann, he was asked “What do you think of the future for the daylily?” He answered: “The future is immense. You feel that the peak in beauty has been reached with the flowers you already have, and then you visit great gardens... and you realize what else may lie ahead...I expect every season to be enthralled by some new daylilies.”

Loving husband and father. Professor, teacher. Scholar and patriot. Welcoming garden host. Daylily ambassador. Mentor of many gardeners and hybridizers.

There are many ways to remember Fred McDowell. But Gerald Hobbs puts it simply and eloquently for many who knew Fred. “One was made to feel you were his special friend, and I shall treasure my memory of him forever.”

*Editor’s note: Many thanks to everyone that contributed to this memorial article. Without you, the full picture of the power that was ‘Fred’ could never have been painted.*

*Grateful thanks to Kathy Larson for finding and marking old Daylily Journals, regional newsletters and other articles about Fred. What would we do without historians like you?*

*Very special thanks to Lynn and Barry Stoll for the use of their photos, their thoughtful contributions, and their time answering zillions of questions about their dear friend. Thanks again.*

*And finally, thank-you to Elizabeth McDowell for sharing your family’s collection of photos, newspaper clippings, magazines, and most especially – memories of your dad.*

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A COUPLE OF BUCKEYES wandered into Marshalltown, Iowa one day in mid-March. Turns out they were headed to meet up with a bunch of Hawkeyes, a few Minn-e-snow-tans, a couple of friendly Illini, and one lonely Volunteer. Now what were these fine representatives of several states coming together to do? Get their spring fix of daylilies – that’s what!

Now if you’ve never attended the Pollen Dabbers, let me set the scene for you. A full hour before the event is to commence, the attendees have eagerly grabbed their seats, since the room is already filled to standing room only. The coffee is on, a large table of sweets and treats is at the ready, and the projectors are ready to go. All this for the privilege of sitting in the dark for the next eight hours watching picture after picture after picture...really?

Yes, to the non-daylily enthused, this would sound like some strange form of torture, but for a bunch of northern, daylily-deprived folks on this sunny Saturday in Iowa, there is no place they’d rather be.



H. ‘Super Model’ (Gossard, 2009)



H. ‘Outer Limits’ (Gossard, 2008)

Before we get to the famous Buckeye’s presentations, we are treated to seedling photos from a bevy of eager hybridizers, and the ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’ commence. And the laughs begin with ‘honorary’ CIDS member Lee Pickles who travels all the way from Tennessee just to get a Maid-Rite sandwich each year and show off his fancy, round, ruffled beauties bred back in the Volunteer state.

Now the witty repartee begins, especially after an innocent comment from Nan Ripley (Marshalltown) that will become a recurring source of laughs throughout the day. It seems

Nan thought one of the most fascinating things about Bob Wilson’s recent introduction H. ‘To Every Season’ was the fact that “I can fit my finger through that curl on the end of its sepal.” Of course, this led to much teasing of the good-natured Nan all day, as several slides gave opportunities to suggest the many places where dear Nan might put her finger.

But on to the main event – those two Buckeyes that traveled many hours on planes and automobiles just to talk to this enthusiastic group. Jamie Gossard gives two presentations – one on his hybridizing program and one about conversions entitled “Diploid Conversions, why, how & wow!” A number of Jamie’s newest introductions are from converted diploids. Jamie also shows us slides from Steve Zolock illustrating how to convert daylilies in the ground, as opposed to potted daylilies.

Jamie’s hybridizing program is, in a word – massive. So many directions, producing such a range of size, form, patterns and colors that there is truly something for everyone in Jamie’s cultivars. H. ‘Super Model’ is notable for its large size, tall scapes, saturated raspberry petals and slate-grey watermark. Jamie’s ‘cover shot’ introduction this year is H. ‘Outer Limits’ which features a very thick ¾” toothy, rippled edge. Both parents come from crosses of (H. Forestlake Ragamuffin x tet Spindazzle). In the very large category, H. ‘Papa Smurf’ is a Ufo crispate with a huge 10 ½” bloom in a deep, vibrant purple, and is also dormant. Some great possibilities here for those hybridizing for northern hardiness!

The other Buckeye is truly a man on a journey through the fascination of patterned eyes.



H. ‘Papa Smurf’ (Gossard, 2008)



Diploid seedling of Bob Faulkner

Getting oh so close to his first introductions, Bob Faulkner has been breeding for patterned eyes for 14 years. Before he can show us his program, Bob has to first give us his reasons for entering into the obsessive world of daylily hybridizing (just to save a buck), which cost him...you guessed it...lots of bucks. Bob also breeds pigeons, and he has found the genetics of coloration in pigeons useful as he crossed over into daylily breeding. Starting with diploids and now moving in to the tetraploids, viewing Bob’s seedlings is a spellbinding experience, punctuated with an occasional “Wow!” from this rapt audience.



Diploid seedling of Bob Faulkner

Eight hours after we began, with tummies full of sweet treats and brains full of literally thousands of daylily images, the attendees stumble out into the bright light of a warm, sunny Iowa afternoon. All of us have a heightened anticipation of the daylily season to come. And so the Pollen Dabbers meeting concludes until next March, when yet another stranger will trek to Marshalltown to excite another fervent crowd of passionate daylily-lovers, and leave with many new Hawkeye friends.

To view the amazing programs of hybridizers Jamie Gossard and Bob Faulkner, visit [www.daylilytrader.com](http://www.daylilytrader.com)