

My Life With Lilies

By Julius Wadekamper

My love for plants was inherited from three grandparents. I grew my first garden at age 3, a cabbage plant by the edge of the woods. By age 6 I was a full-fledged gardener.

My start with lilies came in 1936 at age 6. My mother bought for me three regal lily bulbs from Farmer Seed and Nursery Co. in Faribault, MN. I planted them in my fenced garden south of the farmhouse. One never came up, another came up but had no flowers but the third one had three glorious fragrant white trumpet flowers. I thought there was no beauty like them.

A few years later my grandmother gave me some small bulbs of Tiger lilies grown from bulbils. I planted these in my large new pasture garden, a garden my father had made me in a very select pasture spot. This was native soil, nothing ever grew here but pasture grass. The tiger lilies grew twice as tall as me. I was 12 years old.

In 1949 my high school friend and I took a trip around the United States, east coast to west coast. On the way we stopped and visited Jan and Peg de Graaff. Mr. de Graaff truly impressed me. He took the time to show two high school graduates the fields and all the magnificent setting of Oregon Bulb Farms. He invited us into his home and Peg made us a wonderful lunch. Everything was first class at Oregon Bulb Farms, and for a man of such stature to take so much time with us was impressive. It was the beginning of a long friendship with Jan and Peg de Graaff.

Somehow I got separated from lilies after high school since I joined the Brothers of the Holy Cross at Notre Dame and for the next 16 years my life was spent in southern states and 10 years in Brazil on the banks of the Amazon River. Learning Portuguese and teaching Chemistry kept me busy. The last four years I was made Director of Colegio Dom Amando. I left the Brothers in 1964 and returned to Minnesota. In the fall of 1965 I ordered some trumpet lilies from Interstate Nurseries of Iowa. I was concerned about their hardiness in Minnesota so I planted them three feet deep. They came up around July 1st but never amounted to much.

I started a real lily garden in 1967 and had some glorious lilies including 'Jasper'. This was the same year that we founded the North Star Lilly Society of which I was elected Vice-President. I didn't tell them that I had planted my lilies three feet deep. With the help of Earl Tesca and Louise Koehler I started hybridizing lilies. The first North Star show was held at the Richfield Bank in Richfield, MN. Earl and Louise brought beautiful seedling lilies including those that were later to be registered as 'Hawaiiin Punch' and 'Earl of Rochester'. The North Star shows continued every year thereafter and we sponsored three North American International shows.

I joined the North American Lily Society in 1969. The same year I participated in the IV International Lily Conference in England and Holland. After the conference some of us took an extended tour through Germany, Switzerland and France. Mary Wais, Peg Basler and Jasper Berenke were in the group.

I was elected to the Board of Directors of NALS in 1970 and in 1972 I was elected President. As President I appointed Dr. Robert Haring editor of the Quarterly Bulletin. The was the first time color appeared in the QB's I also appointed a committee of Henry Payne, Bill Happich and Dr. Ray Allen as chairman to write the really first official NALS judges Handbook.

As president I started the winter Board meetings. The first one was held at Kingwood Center in Mansfield, Ohio. These have continued every year since.

I also initiated the Lily Popularity Poll and asked Mary Wais to be chairman. She has run the poll ever since for over 22 years. I feel this is an important contribution to the society since it gave the many members who were not able to attend the annual meetings a chance to participate in some activity. It also indicated which lilies grew well for the members. The Popularity Poll gave birth to International Lily Hall of Fame. If a lily appeared number one for 3 years on the popularity poll it was initiated into the Hall of Fame. 'Black Beauty' and 'White Henry' both of Leslie Woodruff were the first two lilies on the Hall of Fame. Later we adopted another method for a lily to gain Hall of Fame status. Three members could nominate a lily and present the nomination to the Board of Directors. Peter Schenk of Holland, Ed McRae and myself nominated three lilies, 'Enchantment', 'Connecticut King' and 'Journey's End.' They were all approved by the Board of Directors at their meeting in Mesa Arizona and thus were added to the Hall of Fame. Later 'Casa Blanca' was added by virtue of appearing first on the Popularity Poll for three years.

A question came before the Board of Directors while I was president of what to do with the many boxes of Yearbooks that were in the MacDaniels' barn near Ithaca, New York. Many members of the Board wanted to destroy them. I personally went to Dr. MacDaniels' place and boxed the books and had them sent to the Executive Secretary. The rest is history. We now know the value of these books, they are collector's items and some sell for as much as \$500.00.

Over the years I have written many articles for both the QB and the Yearbooks. I have also written lily articles for magazines such as Fine Gardening, Horticulture, The American Nurseryman, Flower and Garden, and many news articles.

I have given talks on Lilies all over the world including New Zealand, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Poland, and all over the U.S. and Canada. In 1994 I spent a month in Latvia at the Governments request helping select, propagate, and market lilies. This was under the auspices of Volunteers for Overseas Cooperative Assistance. It was a memorable time and I met many great people of the Eastern European lily world including the famous lily breeders Viktors Orekov and Janis

Vasarietis. Orekov developed the 'Tango' strain of lilies, those with peppered speckles instead of spots or brushmarks. He also developed many aurelians strains including the Latgale hybrids and many others. His work has gone virtually unnoticed in the western world and it is a shame.

I helped organize the North Star Lily Society, the Iowa Regional Lily Society, the Missouri Regional Lily Society, the Manitoba Regional Lily Society, the Pacific Northwest Lily Society, The Alberta Regional Lily Society and along with Dorothy Schaefer the Golden State Lily Society. Over the years I have given numerous judges training sessions, wrote a judges training handbook and started the judges instructors meetings. I served as Chairman of judges for many international lily shows and judged lilies in New Zealand, Germany, Latvia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, England, as well as the U.S. and Canada.

In 1972 I founded a commercial organization to make hybridizer's beautiful lilies available to the public. I introduced lilies for over 20 hybridizers and in the first few years paid over \$60,000.00 in royalties to these hybridizers.

In 1978 the commercial name was changed from LILIES to Borbeleta Gardens, Portuguese for Butterfly. The fields of flowers remind me of the beautiful tropical butterflies of Brazil. I also added irises and daylilies to the catalog so a new name was called for.

Borbeleta Gardens grew over the years and we introduced over 250 different cultivars of lilies, iris and daylilies. Over the years we won many awards for our lilies. 'Snow Lark' won "best in show" in London which prompted the Queen Mother to request lilies from Borbeleta Gardens for the wedding of Lady Diana and Prince Charles the following year. 'Gold Lode' won the best Asiatic lily in Holland. So good is Dr. Wallace Windus 'Gold Lode' that a Dutch company tried to pirate it and changed the name to 'Golden Melody' in our local garden center with a beautiful picture of 'Gold Lode' on the box. They did the same with Bert Porter's 'Flaming Giant' which was changed to 'Moulin Rouge' and with Henry Payne's 'Connecticut Beauty' which they changed to 'Medallion'. Even though I wrote an article in the QB correcting these pirated names I still see that a show report from 1995 used a pirated name. 'Gold Lode' also won a gold medal in Germany. Many Borbeleta introduced lilies have won Certificates of Commendation from the NALS and some have won an Award of Merit.

Twice I was honored with the Hornback Award for the lily showing the greatest advance in hybridization, once for 'White Prince' when it was shown as a seedling and also for 'Hot Fudge' shown as a seedling. The NALS honored me with the E.H. Wilson award and from the North Star Lily Society I was honored with the Koehler-Tesca Award both given for meritorious work with lilies. The Minnesota State Horticulture Society granted me their highest award, the Bronze Medal. Needless to say I am greatly honored and humbled by these awards.

My hybridizing efforts led to the introduction of 66 lilies from 1976 to 1995. My favorites among these are of course 'Purple Reign' which I worked on for 17 years. I also like very much 'Willowwood', 'Snow Lark', 'Miss Alice', 'Peach Delight', 'Pumpkin Pie', and many others.

I sold Borbeleta Gardens over a period of three years, 1993, 1994, and 1995.

My goals for the future are to continue hybridizing lilies, working with Orienpets, tetraploids and to develop a lily with $\frac{1}{4}$ " orange around the outer edge of the petals. I have finally realized a dream of over 20 years to move to Oregon. My friend Janine Sahagian and I have purchased 15 acres near Parkdale, 60 miles east of Portland and 15 miles south of Hood River in the beautiful fruit growing district. We are 20 miles from the peak of Mt. Hood and lilies grow beautifully there. There are native lilies growing on our property.

In 1995 at Edmonton I realized another dream, that of forming The Species Lily Preservation Society. It is off to a great start with well over 100 charter members.