

Libby Frey

(1919-2013)



Libby Frey, Helen Trueblood, Sara Kinne and Kay Cunningham take a break from setting up the show, 2010.

Libby became a member of the Bloomington Garden Club in 1955 and was named a Distinguished Member, the highest honor awarded for "exceptional contributions to the Club." She was a stalwart supporter of Hilltop Garden and Nature Center at IU for more than 50 years and worked closely with Hilltop's founder, Barbara Shalucha, in establishing the Youth Garden Program. She generously provided daffodil bulbs for an annual fall sale at Hilltop. With the proceeds from the sale, plus additional gifts, she endowed a fund at the IU Foundation, to be used for the maintenance of "Libby's Garden" at Hilltop, where her prize daffodils play a starring role.

Libby transformed the grounds around her home into terraced gardens, most notably for daffodils, day lilies and hostas. A twenty-one acre plot of land further up South Smith Road was purchased as a future home site but instead became the location of one of the most impressive displays of spring blooms in Bloomington, rewarding visitors with an unforgettable show of countless varieties of daffodils. She was inspired by her friend Helen Link's example of growing vast quantities of daffodils and she purchased bulbs from hybridizers around the world. She was known to be very generous with sharing her bounty of bulbs and of cut daffodils during bloom season. Libby was a charter life member of The Indiana Daffodil Society and a longstanding member of the American Daffodil Society. In the 1990's she advocated including more color photography in The Daffodil Journal and influenced IDS to contribute to the initial fund; today the Journal is

entirely color. Libby was also an instructor for many daffodil Judging Schools and judged at shows throughout the Midwest. The quintessential image of Libby arriving at a show included more flowers than anyone could possibly enter. When questioned about this, her response was they were for the public. She would make arrangements for the public and would give away multitudes of bouquets. Libby was a fierce daffodil show competitor and was awarded the coveted national Quinn and Tuggle Awards more than once.

Libby remained a committed environmental activist her entire life. She opposed the completion of the Marble Hill Nuclear Power Plant and was arrested at an on-site protest. She was a tenacious foe of clear cutting and belonged to Protect Our Woods. Since 1976 she devoted herself to holding Westinghouse (CBS) and the EPA accountable for extensive and long term PCB contamination in Bloomington that resulted from the manufacture and improper storage and disposal of capacitors. She sued the EPA in 1990 and 2000 and vehemently opposed the PCB incinerator proposed by Westinghouse. She is the chief plaintiff in the ongoing 2000 lawsuit, Sarah Elizabeth Frey vs United States Environmental Protection Agency, which argues that the clean up plan adopted by the EPA for three PCB Superfund sites in Bloomington (Bennett Stone Quarry, Lemon Lane Landfill, and Neal's Landfill) is entirely inadequate to protect the public and the environment. The third appeal of this lawsuit is pending in the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago and oral arguments are scheduled for November 15, 2013.

Sarah Elizabeth Frey passed away at the home of Jan and Michael Lamm on November 7, 2013. She was born July 4, 1919, in Bellaire, OH to Thomas S. and Fern (Mertz) Jones.

She grew up in Riverview, OH on the 100 acre family farm on the bluffs overlooking the Ohio River and learned to love horticulture and the natural world at an early age. The family grew an extensive array of vegetables, fruits, and flowers which were sold on site, through a grocery store in Bellaire, and at a market stall in Wheeling, WV; as well as for the family's own use. She learned the virtues of self-sufficiency growing up on the farm during the Great Depression.

She attended Hiram College (AB1941), Smith College (MA in Zoology, 1943), and the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she earned her PhD in Zoology in 1947. At Madison her major professor was Arthur D. Hasler, one of the seminal figures in the study of freshwater ecology. She also studied with Aldo Leopold, a founder of the conservation movement, ecologist, professor of wildlife management, and author of A Sand County Almanac. Prior to Leopold's untimely death in 1948, he and Libby co-authored a paper on phenology.

Libby met her husband of 45 years, David G. Frey, at the University of Wisconsin. They married in 1948 while Libby was teaching Zoology at Duke University and David was an Associate Professor of Zoology at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. They moved to Bloomington, Indiana in 1950 when David was hired to teach Limnology at Indiana University. Bloomington became the home base for the rest of Libby's life and she raised a family of three children in a house on the edge of a ravine with a wonderful view of the oak woods. There were extended periods of travel and living abroad in

Vienna, Austria; London, England; Hillerod, Denmark; Marawi City, the Philippines; and Dublin, Ireland; but the family always returned to Bloomington. A remarkable trip in the summer of 1968 took the family to Taiwan, Japan, Cambodia, Thailand, India, Nepal, Iran, Israel, Greece, Italy, and Spain.

Libby received numerous awards that recognized her lifetime commitment to protecting the environment including the 2009 Barbara Restle Founder's Award given by the Sassafras Audubon Society in thanks for a lifetime of support; The Barbara Shalucha Award for Service and Support given by the Hilltop Garden and Nature Center; The 1994 Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the Hoosier Environmental Council "for a lifetime of vision, commitment, and sacrifice on behalf of the environmental cause in Indiana;" the National Audubon Society Meritorious Service Award; the Ashley Norcross Award given by the National Civic Garden Centers in recognition of her distinguished community service in the field of youth gardening and horticulture; and, particularly dear to her, the J. J. Turner Society Award for Excellence in Science awarded in 1999 by her alma mater, Hiram College. The Bloomington Eco Center presents an annual award in Libby's honor to an individual who demonstrates the commitment to stand up for the principles of environmental activism through their life's work: The Frey Eco Warrior Award.

Libby will be remembered both for the breadth of her interests (ranging from art, music, literature, botany, and ornithology, to NASCAR and, especially, IU basketball) as well as the depth of her singular focus on the natural world as a gardener and an environmental activist. Her wide range of interests not only led her to study ecology with Aldo Leopold but also art history with Sir Anthony Blunt at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. She brought a remarkable level of passion, commitment, drive, and tenacity to whatever she set her sights on.

Libby was preceded in death by her parents; her brothers Mertz, Charles, and Fred; her sister Mary Louise; an infant daughter Sarah; and her husband David G. Frey.

She is survived by her three children: Karl Frey and his wife Rosemary Courtney of Harlingen, TX; Barbara Frey and her husband Thomas Seawell of Commerce, TX; Katharine Frey and her husband Scott Martin of Phoenix, AZ. Also surviving are four grandchildren: Sarah Courtney Frey of Austin, TX; Brian Wallace Frey of Houston, TX; Erich Aldo Leopold Frey of Wimberley, TX; and Jay Turner Frey Seawell of Washington DC.

The family would like to express heartfelt thanks to Jan and Michael Lamm for their devoted and loving care of Libby during the final chapter of her life. She was in the best place she could possibly be. Her sitting room looked out on the back yard with the sycamore trees, the organic garden, and the chickens, and she could feast on home grown tomatoes to her heart's content. The family would also like to thank Sara and Pete Kinne for their steadfast friendship with Libby and for their continuing stewardship of the daffodil fields; and Mary and Sean McNerny for all they have done for Libby and the family.

A memorial will be planned for April 12 in Bloomington when her daffodils will be in full bloom and we can honor and celebrate her legacy.

Memorial contributions may be made In Memory of Libby Frey to the Hilltop Garden Maintenance Fund - IU Foundation Account # 037IU02045.