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OCTOBER 2022 NEWSLETTER

## MURDER AT THE PLANTATION

*presented by*



**Lt. Ken Rexroth**  
Retired Moline Police

**Monday, October 17th – 6:30 p.m.**

**CITY VIEW CELEBRATIONS @  
Trimble Funeral Home & Crematory  
701 - 12th Street, Moline**

Our October program will have a Halloween theme with a local connection. A robbery and murder at The Plantation restaurant in 1979.

Our presenter will be retired Moline Police Lt. Ken Rexroth. He served on the Moline Police Department for 33 years. His assignments included the Patrol, Traffic, Bike Patrol, Undercover and Investigation Divisions.

Lt. Rexroth also chaired the committee that oversaw the writing and publishing of the book entitled: *Moline Police Department, 1844-1994, The First 150 years.*

### **Villa Velie Miniature For Sale**

Available at Lagomarcinos, WaterMark & at October program



[www.molinepreservation.org](http://www.molinepreservation.org)

# UPCOMING MPS EVENT

Wednesday, November 19th - 6:00 p.m. . . . . 100 Years at the LeClaire Hotel

## *Award Memory*

In May of 2008 the Moline Family-Business Heritage Award was given to the **Meyer family** for the longevity of their business Meyer Landscape & Design, Inc. and its contribution to Moline's history. Here is the presentation from that evening.

Ed Meyer, Sr., loved to grow dahlias, tulips and iris, graciously giving them away. At the age of 14, Ed Meyer, Jr., made a business agreement with his father. He would sell the perennials for 25¢ each and split the proceeds with his father. Ed remembers his largest order for 50 Larkspur plants going to Mr. William Haberer of Deere & Company. Through high school Ed took care of 5 yards earning 35¢ an hour. In 1942 at the age of 18, Ed joined the John Deere Plow Works workforce with a beginning wage of 49¢ an hour. He retired after 32-1/2 years in April of 1974.

Ed met his wife Gayle Cramer at the home of Frank Traeger. Mr. Traeger, a friend of Ed's father and Gayle's uncle, owned and managed Feliciana Gardens at 2819 - 47th Street, Moline. Frank was also the caretaker and dug graves for the cemetery across the street. His nickname was "Dynamite" because of his knowledge of blowing up tree stumps.

Ed and Gayle married on April 23, 1949. Uncle Frank had passed away the previous year. Ed and Gayle purchased the one room house and four acres of land from the estate in the spring of 1950 beginning their business Meyer's Flower Farm. They sold wreaths and grave blankets at Christmas for the cemetery. Selling well, the family pitched in. With a two-room addition to the house completed in 1951 the business was operated out of the kitchen with the showroom in the garage. Rose bushes, tulip bulbs and iris were sold. Jack was born in 1952 followed by Kurt in 1954. Gayle stayed home and ran the business with the help of 2 part-time employees. Ed loaded the truck in the evening for the next day's deliveries. With 4 in the same bedroom now, Ed began the rest of the house addition taking two years to complete.

After Ed's father passed away in 1954, they moved approximately 4,000 Iris bulbs from his home to their flower farm. 100-foot rows of Iris and Tulips filled the property.

When flower sales slowed, Ed planted maple trees which he harvested from Ralph Taylor's farm south of their property. Gradually the trees filled the flower rows. Maple trees were advertised at \$18.50 per tree planted. When an order for 125 trees was placed by Versluis Lumber Co., for the newly designed Hampton Bluffs, the business name was changed to Meyer's Tree Farm. The year was 1963.

The boys started young helping their parents with the family business. Jack recalls earning 5¢ per tree hole he dug and he could dig pretty fast. During their high school years they harvested pin oak trees, costing \$1.50 each, from a swamp area in Iowa to expand the nursery's stock. Shrubs were also added. Kurt recalls one February being covered with red and black volcanic rock dust as they unloaded 2 full train cars of the rock into company pick up trucks. Once back at the nursery, they bagged the rock to sale.

Meyer's Tree Farm was blossoming into a small landscape and nursery business. Their first commercial landscape job, in 1974, was for the newly built Boar's Head and Tortilla Flats restaurants. Jack and Kurt remember Dad dropped off 60 tons of rock, which they then moved by hand for placement.

Both Jack and Kurt graduated from the University of Illinois with Ornamental Horticulture & Design degrees in the mid 70's and officially entered the business.

Over time 16 additional acres were acquired adjacent to their 4-acre property. In 1974 Ed designed and built a new office and warehouse building. Ed and Jack laid every foundation block themselves and Kurt hammered every shake shingle.

Jack's first commercial bid was to landscape the grounds of the John Deere Parts Distribution Center in Milan. Dad panicked at the prospect, but Mom said, "Go for it." He won with his \$42,000 bid. The next bid was \$26,000 higher. Jack was soon to learn he had missed including 4,000 feet of red wood edging and rock. They spent many evenings treating lumber to complete this portion of the job. They did squeak out a \$4,000 profit.

A 140-acre farm in the Andalusia area was soon purchased for the purpose of growing nursery stock and an additional 120 acres was purchased in the same area at a later date.

Ed, Jack and Kurt worked long hours out with the crews during the day, appointments in the late afternoon, and design work at night. Gayle managed the office until her passing in 1986. In 1980, the first non-family designer was hired, Skip Everett Asjes. Skip came from a family landscape business in Kansas. Jack and Kurt began doing less work out with the crews and more time in the office designing and bidding.

The office was expanded in 1988 adding an additional 1,000 square feet to the ground level and a 1,000 square foot lower level. The new addition provided additional space for

6 designers, an irrigation manager and improved the in-store traffic area.

The 90's brought all sizes of residential and commercial projects. The Mark of the Quad Cities irrigation system was the largest Meyer's installed to date. The John Deere Commons, Radisson Hotel, and 7th Street Trinity Medical Center were landscape and irrigation jobs. Meyer's was evolving as products changed. Wall systems changed from wood to cast block. The availability of more patio material options allowed for a wider variety of design to meet customer's dreams. Garden art and perennial plant inventory was increased.

Container growing was added. With the combination of field production and container growing, more inventory is readily available for landscape contracting needs and garden center customers. There is around 1.5 million in container growth inventory at one time. This includes 45,000 perennial plants, thousands of flowering shrubs, and small shade trees. The containers are wintered in 22 Quonset Huts or Hoop Houses. In the summer the Hoop Houses are uncovered and the plants are spaced out to allow for growth. These plants are watered by a very efficient drip irrigation system to minimize water loss. The plastic pots that are used are recycled when possible back into production.

In 1997 a small house next to the office was remodeled and opened as a gift shop named The Cottage Garden. Nancy Stevens managed the gift shop for 11 years which offered interior decor, unique garden items and gifts. The shop has since relocated and is no longer owned by Meyer.

The office was again enlarged and remodeled in 1999 to create additional design offices, a conference room, and new entryway. Different roofing and siding was installed to eliminate the added on look. The sales yards were reconfigured to create individual display areas to showcase the nursery stock and unique garden art.

Wanting potential customers to realize they were more than a tree farm, the name was changed to Meyer Landscape & Design as they celebrated their 50th year in business in 2000.

Meyer Landscape & Design was honored with a Better Business Bureau Integrity Award in 2002. The Integrity Award recognizes those firms whose business practices and related activities exemplify the Better Business Bureau's mission and principles.

The grounds of Trinity's Terrace Park Hospital in Bettendorf features a Healing Garden. Using designs from a Chicago firm, Meyer worked with the general contractor and owner redesigning to meet budget constraints and site changes. Kurt designed the waterfall featuring stone from Pennsylvania. All the planting and irrigation system were installed by Meyer's union labor and employs from Local 309 union in 2004.

In honor of Ed's 82nd Birthday, Founder's Day was celebrated Saturday, August 19, 2006, at the Garden Center. Customer's had the opportunity to visit with Ed and receive discounts off of their purchases.

In 2007 Meyer Landscape & Design received a Silver Excellence in Landscape Award from the Illinois Landscape Contractors Association. The project submitted was for residential landscape construction.

In 2006, the two growing division farms were sold and 200 acres were purchased in the Taylor Ridge area along Hwy 192. With the new growing division established and because of better visibility, the Taylor Ridge Garden Center opened just this month to the public. Various trees, shrubs and other plants are offered. Professionally trained staff is available to assist all customers.

Today Meyer employs 1 certified irrigation designer, 3 landscape architects, 4 landscape designers, and 75 to 85 others for crews and the garden centers. Family is still very much at the center of this landscape business. Kurt's wife Jan started by helping after school with invoicing at the age of 18. Today she is the office manager of Moline. Jack's wife, also Jan, is managing the new Taylor Ridge location. You'll still see Ed around. He says he gave up designing when computers came in the office so he moved outside. Ed remarried in 1987. He met Janet at the Garden Center while she was looking for a tree. Although she did not purchase a tree, Ed called her to see if she would go out with him anyway. Janet helped in the office and outside selling on Saturdays for ten years. The next generation is college bound and it is unknown if they will end up working in the family business. Ed & Janet still live in the original remodeled house on the property. Jack and Kurt both built homes on the Moline acreage.

Meyer's Flower Farm, Meyer's Tree Farm, and now today Meyer Landscape & Design has always based their endeavors on a foundation of family values, community service and customer satisfaction. As their byline reads . . . "the difference is in the details."

It is a pleasure to recognize the Meyer family for 58 years of dedication to their family business – Meyer Landscape and Design, Inc.

