

## Warm Memories of the Weeders

When Ken and I moved back to Chicago in 1970, our three daughters were in elementary school. We settled in Glencoe, with Ken's parents living in nearby Winnetka. Mom Harkness, Cynthia, was an avid and expert gardener. She'd been active in the Weeders since its launching in 1935. It was an honor when she proposed me for Weeder membership. I was part of the "next generation," and I loved the intergenerational aspect of the group! It was a group of delightful and very active civic leaders who sincerely cared about landscapes and hardscapes in the community. They prized the value and pleasure of meeting regularly with fellow garden-lovers, of learning together, of working together, of sharing fun and friendship.

I quickly offered to have the December holiday meeting, since our yard featured very little in the way of a garden!! Each year, our daughters made a gingerbread house, which we carefully preserved as a centerpiece for the next year's luncheon. We ended up with a gingerbread village in the center of our dining room table, and Margaret Magie would always read her favorite verse, "The Gingerbread Lady." As Civics Chair, I stored 40 small Christmas trees, which we annually decorated and delivered to Great Lakes Naval Station for the holidays. There was much to learn, and I felt like a sponge. Periodic in-club flower shows at Betsy Pocock's house were eye-opening and instructive. Monthly luncheon meetings produced delicious recipes and fascinating discussions.

Our move to Los Angeles meant non-resident status for ten years, followed by another decade of inactive status, while I was working at the Newberry Library. It was a joy to jump back into the Weeder fold upon my retirement. I served as President from 2006-2008, and rallied support for undertaking a "facelift" for the Library Memorial Garden. It had been installed fifty years earlier, when Mom Harkness was President. Our re-design by Dora Albregtse included hearty new plantings, benches to create a peaceful sanctuary, and an underground sprinkler system to ensure its well-being. AG Krone and I happily dug up and restored the Winnetka Weeder plaque which had literally sunk into the soil. I served as Library Garden Chair with AG as Co-Chair until 2018. We set up a close working relationship with the Library Director, the irrigation company, and a corps of weekly summer volunteers to monitor the garden. What a pleasure to dig in the dirt with Weeder friends and maintain a Weeder tradition! Since the facelift was completed, we've been constantly reminded by passersby of the happiness and love that a garden can generate.

There's truly a sense of continuity in the Weeders today. Once again, there's a "next generation," having the same fun and holding the same values as the founders. It's most gratifying to have been a part of this special group of women over the past 45 years.

Toni Harkness  
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