

FEATURES

Flower Ladies withstand town's changes

By Nancy Johnson
Staff Writer

"Oh! How pretty!" the lady says smiling. "How much for that bunch?" The brightly-colored bouquet of choice seems much too striking for its rusty, water-filled tin can container. "Ten dollars," says the queen of the flowers with a kind, aged and slightly hopeful voice.

"I'll take them," the lady says and walks down the street with a rainbow in her hand, her step a little lighter. "Flowers make people happy," says Lillie Pratt, as she glances proudly over her make-shift garden on Franklin Street. And she should know.

For nearly 30 years, Pratt has been one of the famous Chapel Hill Flower Ladies. A long, gray braid spills over the shoulder of the stout, elderly woman as she sits in a chair with her home-grown flowers spread out around her.

A couple of blocks down, Dorothy May Barrington sits with a distinguished air inside NCNB Plaza amidst her own collection of daisies, irises and azaleas, smiling at potential customers, just as she has done for the past 50 years.

Amidst the traffic signals and exhaust fumes, the students with their backpacks and running shoes, Chapel Hill's Flower Ladies are a reminder of the way things used to be—a dinosaur struggling to survive the effects of modernization.

"I had a man tell me just today that he wouldn't buy nothing but home-grown flowers," Pratt says matter-of-factly. "That made me feel good."

Pratt, Barrington and six or seven other veteran Flower Ladies have been bringing their flowers to Franklin Street ever since most Chapel Hill residents can remember. The flowers are home-grown, arranged in bunches with a careful and loving touch.

No one can give the same account of how Chapel Hill's Flower Lady tradition began. Pratt says she and others used to peddle their flowers door-to-door when they were younger, before moving their gardens to Franklin Street.

Barrington says she and her mother started the tradition and that she and her sister helped as children and took over when they grew older.

"(Lillie Pratt) always tells that story about selling flowers from door to door, but I don't know how true that is," Barrington says suspiciously. "My mother started it, and all these others latched on."

The two ladies are cousins. When they first began, Franklin

Street was little more than a dusty thoroughfare with three or four stores. Students and residents bought their flowers originally for about 10 cents a bunch, and the Flower Ladies watched as the town grew up around them.

Then came the "hippie vendors," as Chapel Hill residents referred to them. In the late '60s and early '70s, Franklin Street became lined with vendors selling jewelry, belts and pipes made for things a little less legal than tobacco.

The Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen responded by passing an ordinance forbidding sidewalk selling. The hippies had to go, but they took the Flower Ladies with them.

"Everybody else tried to move out on the streets," Pratt says with a touch of anger. "It shouldn't have applied to us. We're a tradition."

Chapel Hill residents raised their voices high in agreement, and the Flower Ladies were allowed to return, but only to an alley off the street. The alley is the private property of the Intimate Bookshop, whose owner invited the ladies back with the alley as their new place of business, the place where they are still supposed to remain.

"I'm not supposed to be out here on the street right now," Pratt says, leaning down to whisper the confession. "As long as nobody complains, we're usually all right. I've been here for 30 years. It's nothing new. We're old."

Having weathered the storm, the Flower Ladies insured their place in history.

"We're famous," Pratt says. "We're all over the world. It does people good to see this beauty on the street."

She tells proudly of post cards and paintings made about the Flower Ladies and says she's been interviewed countless number of times.

As reliable and beloved as the Old Well or Bell Tower, Chapel Hillians have adopted the Flower Ladies as part of their lives, their scenery, their culture.

"Glad to see you back out here," Pratt says people will often say to her if she has not been out in a while. "Where have you been? We've been missing you."

But although the flowers are the same, the ladies insist that the times are not. Instead of 10 cents, flowers sell for \$5 to \$10 dollars a bunch these days. The students, their main source of business, do not seem as interested as they once were.

"Business is not as good as it used to be because people have their own flowers now," Pratt says.

She complains of the many florists



Lillie Pratt, Flower Lady

DTH/Kathy Michel

and other stores that sell flowers and undercut their business.

"There are so many places where they can go to buy flowers, but they are always going to buy flowers," Pratt says.

On this subject, Barrington agrees. "People don't buy that much," she says. "It's mostly the students, and when they're gone, you can forget it."

Both ladies say they often do not make enough to pay them for bringing their flowers to Franklin Street or for the hard work to grow them.

"Sometimes I spend 15 to 20 hours a week just working on my flowers," Pratt says, adding that she must also buy the seeds and glancing momentarily at her calloused and scratched up hands. "And oh, the bugs are terrible!"

Her customers often do not realize

how hard she works.

"Sometimes people come up to me and say, 'Where do you pick your flowers?'"

She slaps her head to her forehead and roars a hearty laugh.

"I try so hard to be nice."

Yet, the ladies always return—out of habit or simple love for their flowers, maybe. They are not even sure of the reason. But will Chapel Hill be forever blessed with the site of beautiful flowers lining their street, a bright spot in a world that so often seems to be losing its shine?

"These young people, I don't think they're smart enough to do what we've done. When we're gone, there isn't going to be any more Flower Ladies."

Chapel Hill hopes that day never comes.

Davis library display features wide range of learning resources

By Karen Crutchfield
Staff Writer

With the "Student Body" statues creating a ruckus outside Davis Library's doors, there is a display case inside those doors receiving less attention.

Academic departments, campus organizations and library staff provide exciting monthly subjects for the display case in the foyer of Davis.

A variety of organizations' exhibits fill the cabinet, but all of them must somehow showcase the library's services, said Karen Seibert, the associate University librarian for public services.

Although there are basic guidelines, the group requesting use of the cabinet fills it completely on its own. The library does not put a display together for anyone else, nor does it pay for any material needed.

"It is a big commitment both time-wise and effort-wise," Seibert said. The cabinet needs a lot of material to fill it and to make a good impression. The group in charge should not take the opportunity lightly, Seibert said.

The case has had a variety of exhibits, from photograph collections to displays of UNC alumni and professors' publications.

The first case of the academic year is usually attributed to the problem of vandalism and mutilation of library materials. This program shows students that UNC libraries have a serious problem with students harming library materials, such as high-lighting, underlining and ripping out pages of material.

"It's your library, not anyone else's," Seibert said. "That's why students should take care of its contents. It doesn't

hurt to remind people."

By having various people design the displays, many topics are explored. This way students are encouraged to check out books for their own interest, not because of a paper or assignment. "That is what we are really trying to do," Seibert said.

The English department designed a number of displays this past year with themes such as Emily Dickinson and T.S. Eliot. One library staff member put together a collection of North Carolina photographs.

Also, a display of child-care books was put together to encourage looking at the new collection of books for parents now available in the undergraduate library.

Apparently, many students notice and enjoy the displays. Cathy Arnette, a senior from Charlotte, said she always reads over the new displays when she goes to the library to study.

"They are usually interesting and make you think about something that you normally don't think about," she said. "I remember (the North Carolina photographic display) particularly because it showed several parts of North Carolina that I wasn't familiar with," she said.

Kelly Hoover, a senior from Clemmons, also said she enjoyed the exhibits. "It's something interesting to look at before a boring time of studying," she said.

The Undergraduate Library has a display in its own foyer, but it is much smaller. David Taylor, a librarian for the undergraduate library, said there are no restrictions for the content of the display. It also changes monthly.

Budget

from page 1

Johnstone, chancellor of the SUNY system, in an open letter to the students.

New York state faces a budget shortfall of about \$6.5 billion, representing 20 percent of the state budget.

Colleges and universities are being forced to bear their share of the budget shortfall. This lack of funding could force the layoff of more than 10 percent of state personnel, according to Daren Dopp, Gov. Cuomo's spokesman.

The CCNY student government has met with key legislators on campus and in Albany, taken part in protest marches, organized massive letter-writing drives and sent 14,000 legislative writing kits out to the entire City College student body, said Rafael Alvarez, day school student body president at CCNY.

"I think that students have to make their voice be heard," said State Assembly Member Ed Sullivan, chairman of the higher education committee.

Sullivan said he hopes students attempt to keep their protests peaceful.

However, police and hired security guards were used to take back buildings at Lehman, BMCC and BCC, with isolated reports of some police violence

and rough treatment of several students.

Protesters are calling for the resignation of CUNY Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds, who had previously stated that no students involved in this year's takeovers will be granted amnesty.

But not all students are protesting. "Students in general support the tuition increase," said Hunt. "They don't want to see a further reduction in services and opportunities."

By protesting and closing down academic buildings, a few students are locking others out of classes, Rodin said. In addition, students who are prevented from finishing the semester could lose eligibility for financial aid, she said.

The protesting students recognize the opportunities they are denying their peers and hope the conflict ends soon.

Many students see an increase in the state income tax as a solution to the financial woes of higher education.

Raising taxes by three percentage points for those taxpayers with incomes over \$200,000 would raise over one billion dollars, which is more than the entire SUNY 64-campus system for an entire year, Slepian said.

Junior high school students take environmental action

By Priti Chitnis
Staff Writer

Love your Mother.

Students at Grey Culbreth Junior High School in Chapel Hill are taking the well-known Earth Day slogan to heart.

Public Interest in Global Studies (PIGS), a student group formed at Culbreth to address environmental issues, is currently working with the Rainforest Action Group of the Student Environmental Action Coalition to spread awareness about deforestation.

PIGS was organized about a year ago to combine the school's environmental club and recycling program, said Randeel Haven O'Donnell, the group's faculty co-adviser.

PIGS has been involved in fund raising and coordinating a school recycling program. Recently, a smaller group from PIGS, the Environmentally Aware Teens (EAT), performed a "recycling rap" at the N.C. Coastal Federation/WRAL annual "Save our Sounds" public awareness project in Raleigh, O'Donnell said.

On Saturday, the local community celebrated the opening of a Compost Demonstration Site, which PIGS participated in building, at Culbreth. The site includes three different types

of bins that show composting by recycling soil, yard waste, grass clippings, leaves and vegetable food scraps, O'Donnell said.

Members of the Rainforest Action Group have been attending PIGS meetings this semester to share information and assist PIGS in organizing awareness-raising activities, said Cari Sotolongo, co-chairwoman of the Rainforest Action Group.

As the junior chapter of SEAC's Rainforest Action Group, PIGS held a rainforest dance to raise money to buy rainforest land at \$37 per acre in Belize, a country in Central America.

The land will be protected from roads and deforestation through the Nature Conservancy, said Lindsay Lowry, co-chairwoman of the Rainforest Action Group.

PIGS wants to raise enough to buy 10 acres of land, O'Donnell said.

The Rainforest Action Group assisted PIGS in using rainforest products as decorations and food at the dance. Periodically during the dance, PIGS members took time out to quiz dancers on rainforest issues.

SEAC helped PIGS develop the questions, Sotolongo said. Students who correctly answered questions received SEAC T-shirts.

"The dance had an academic slant to

it," O'Donnell said. "The theme was relaxed, but it made the point that you can share knowledge in a fun way."

Currently, the two groups are coordinating efforts to build an information kiosk with pictures, maps and facts about the rainforest. The kiosk will be set up at Culbreth to inform students about the situation the world's rainforests are facing, Sotolongo said.

"Usually, we go into schools to teach

about the rainforest, but now we're helping them teach their peers," Lowry said.

"It's wonderful that people that young are so interested. It motivates me just to see them," Sotolongo said.

"I feel that we have made an impression on these students, because they're connected, not only with their school community, but with their town and University communities as well," O'Donnell said.

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