

Fisherman Turns To Flowers In Famous Elizabethan Garden



Louis Midgett And Prize Flowers

Nineteen years ago Louis Midgett retired from the Coast Guard with visions of doing some fishing.

He has been fishing maybe three or four times since 1958. Since that time he has been father, mother, protector and gardener for the world famous Elizabethan Garden here.

The Elizabethan Garden, created and maintained by the Garden Club of North Carolina, Inc., is on Roanoke Island near Manteo and adjacent to the Lost Colony Waterside Theatre and historic Fort Raleigh.

The gardens were begun in 1951 on 10 acres of indigenous growth and are the imaginative concept of an Elizabethan Pleasure Garden.

"The Garden contributes so much to the State, and it compares with the gardens of Europe," explains Midgett.

Midgett admits to being in the Garden seven days a week and he says you never really catch up.

"It's a labor of love. You can just feel history when you walk among these majestic trees and flowers," he said.

The Garden is some 100 yards away from the birthplace of Virginia Dare, first child born of English parentage in the New World.

A new attraction is the Queen Elizabeth rose sent by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, from the Royal Garden at Windsor Castle in the Bicentennial year.

All the bricks in the Garden are made by hand, and many of them came from an old church in Bath.

How many flowers are in the garden?

Midgett just laughs and says, "I have no idea. We have 15,000 summer annuals and 10,000 pansy plants in winter." Mountain rhododendron also grows in the Garden.

Midgett says he may be a little prejudiced, but he thinks it's the prettiest place in North Carolina.

It is a special place. One can sit and listen to the wind, waves, birds, and inhale the fragrance of the garden. One oak is estimated to be 500 years old and is thought to have been alive when the first English colonists landed on North Carolina soil.

The rare Venus' Fly Trap and jack-in-the-pulpit grow among the wild areas.

Eleven feet high yaupon hedges surround the formal sunken garden. The fountain and other valuable antique garden ornaments were given by the Honorable John Hay Whitney, a former Ambassador to Great Britain and Mrs. Whitney.

The fountain is estimated to be between 900 and 1000 years old, and deep pit marks show the results of centuries of rain.

The Knot Garden has 32 knots. Each year some \$100 in pennies is removed from the Garden and goes into the Garden fund.

After day-in and day-out work does Midgett have a favorite spot? "No, not really, but I do like pansy time.

"We like to think we have the type of garden the colonists would have built had they the chance. The great lawn is, of course, a part of a formal English garden," he said.

Sitting under the huge oak

tree, Midgett said, "You know they say it takes an oak 300 years to grow, it lives 300 years and then takes three hundred years to die."

Oldest plants in the garden are 16th century varieties, and many come from Europe.

One plant, the epaulet, was named by George Washington. History has it

that Washington asked his gardener the name of the plant. When the gardener didn't know, Washington said name it "epaulet."

The camellias present a beautiful background, and during azalea time 15,000 plants bloom. A special wildlife area is set aside. Visitors can walk down to the waterfront and see Wright Brothers monument in the distance.

Bluefish, kind mackerel—

Louis Midgett has long forgotten them. He now thinks in terms of roses, azaleas and a multitude of flowering plants and shrubs.

He has his rewards too. They come from thousands of visitors who tour the Garden each year. Their oohs and ahs are his rewards. Now and then he has a chance to sit down in a quiet moment and reflect on one of the true beauty spots in America.

The World Of Books

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—Washington Irving

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NEW BOOKS: "Raise the Titanic," Cussler; "Bennett," a mystery by Cory; "The Path Between the Seas," McCullough—illustrated history of the creation of the Panama Canal; "North Carolina Furniture—1700-1900," N. C. Museum of History; "Snow-Bound Six," Stern—six people trapped in a cave high in the New Mexico Mountains—a blizzard that will not stop! "The Animal's Merry Christmas," Scarry.

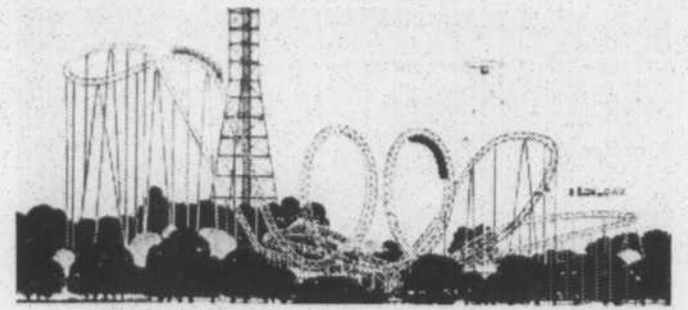
MEMORIALS—For Pettway B. Boyd—"Dylan Thomas," Ferris, from Mr. and Mrs. Bob Traylor; "The Golden Treasury of Early American Houses," Pratt, from Mr. and Mrs. Bignall Jones; "The Path Between the Seas," McCullough, from Mr. and Mrs. Whitmel S. Peoples; "Daniel Martin," Fowles, from Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Dowell Taylor. For Panthea Massenburg Twitty, "The Colonial Records of N. C., Vol. V," Warren County Chapter No. 939 UDC; "Georgia O'Keeffe," from James E. Poindexter.

We appreciate all of the beautiful and interesting books chosen for memorials. These books are what help to make our library unique, by having participation from the community.

IN HONOR OF BIRTH—"Friends," Ichikawa, for Elizabeth Warren Hayes from Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hunter.

Our Christmas and other records have been circulating well; these are checked out on same basis as books. We appreciate the gift of a record player from Miss Robin Soper; we use the player during "Storytime," as well as play records before checking them out.

From all of the book characters, authors, my assistant, Mrs. Carl Pinnell, and myself, Mary Louise Limer, Librarian—Merry Christmas—make the Library number one on your list of New Year's Resolutions.



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