

# *Petal Power*

Golby-Reasoner Chapter  
American Hibiscus Society

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Eric Golby  
December 11, 1908 - April 21, 2004



*Eric at last year's Golby-Reasoner Show*

It is appropriate that we devote much of this issue of *Petal Power* to telling something of the life of Eric Golby as it relates to the Golby-Reasoner Chapter of the AHS.

Eric was a fifth generation plantsman with roots in England. Four generations of Golbys were plantsmen on the large estates of titled Englishmen. Eric's great-grandfather, Percival Golby, was a grower for Lord Heddonfield in the mid 1800's, his grandfather, William, was a grower in Buckland, Surrey, and his father, Walter Golby, apprenticed at age twelve in green houses and later worked for the world famous Rochefords before emigrating to the United States.

Eric was born on the Isle of Guernsey in the British Channel on December 11, 1908. The Golby family moved to the U.S. when Eric was three years old and he grew up on private estates in Jamaica Plain and Chestnut Hill near Boston. Among his endeavors, Eric's father managed the grounds and greenhouse for Edward Clark, a Boston Brahmin, who later achieved infamy as a key figure in the Teapot Dome scandal. In order to obtain the unusual, Eric's father ordered plant materials from nurseries around the country. Among them was the Reasoner Brothers Nursery in Oneco, Florida. From Reasoners he obtained shrimp plants, pentas and hibiscus. Eric said, "Dad was the first one to grow pentas and shrimp in quantity for the Boston pot plant trade!" He

recalled his father showing exquisite and unusual plants in Massachusetts Horticulture Society shows and all were in great demand by the wealthy elite of Boston's Beacon Hill. One of his famed customers was General George Patton. He handled the floral arrangements for both of Patton's daughters' weddings.

As so many have, both before and after, Eric's father retired to Florida in 1946 and purchased ten acres in Parrish. He had sold his nursery business in the Boston area and Eric remained for a short time with the new owner to help him get started, and then came to Manatee County.

The first place Eric headed was the Reasoners nursery, since he wanted to see the source of the many plants that had been shipped north to his father. However, for the first nine months after moving to Parrish, Eric worked for a house mover. But in 1947, he became affiliated with Reasoners where he remained for 40 years.

Eric found more than a job at Reasoners. An old *Seed Pod* article painted a good picture of events of this period in Eric's life: "Eric met his wife at the Reasoners nursery – she was already working there. Isn't that a beautiful thought – romance blooming among the hibiscus! The romance bloomed beautifully, in fact, into a Reasoners wedding – the Nursery decorated the Ellenton Methodist church and Mrs. Norman Reasoner arranged the bridal bouquet. Bud (Reasoner) served Eric as his best man, and the company employees chipped in to send the couple on a two week honeymoon in a Cuban botanical garden belonging to Harvard University". (That was the first of a number of trips Eric and Sally made to collect plants and visit botanical gardens in Costa Rica, Jamaica, Puerto Rico and Mexico.)

*(Pliny Ward Reasoner and Egbert Reasoner were the brothers that began the nursery in the 1880's. Norman was Egbert's son – "Bud" Reasoner was Norman's son.)*

Eric and Sally were married in 1956. After Norman Reasoner's death in the following year, Eric and Sally became the resident hibiscus experts and grew thousands of hybrids for sale in what was known as the Eric and Sally Golby Garden Center of the Reasoner Nursery. It should be mentioned that Sally and Eric not only raised plants, but also raised two loving children, Walter Reasoner and Janet Orlando.

Norman Reasoner was a founder of the American Hibiscus Society (1950) and the first president. Eric was a founding member and was active in the Society from its inception serving two terms as president in the early 1970's. In 1963, Eric, Sally and others organized a Bradenton-Sarasota chapter of the AHS. The first meeting was held on Sunday, November 3, 1963 and was chronicled in the *Bradenton Herald* the following day in an article with the headline, "Hibiscus Growers Organize With 38 Charter Members At Meeting Sunday". According to the article, "Over 100 hibiscus growers met yesterday at the Garden Center as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Eric Golby to form a local chapter of the American Hibiscus Society".

The Chapter was named after Eric's mentor and was known for 32 years as the Norman Reasoner Chapter. In 1995, in recognition of the monumental contributions by Eric and Sally Golby to the world of hibiscus, and also in some small way to symbolize the love and affection in which the entire membership of AHS held them, the local chapter was re-named the Golby-Reasoner Chapter of the AHS.

While he was revered as "Mr. Hibiscus" among hibiscus people, his knowledge of other plant materials was amazing. As an illustration of his wide knowledge, we will quote a portion of an article from the April 1998 issue of *Rare Fruit News* published by the Manatee Rare Fruit Council. The article was titled, "Tropical Fruit Pioneers – Eric Golby" and was written by Ray Jones.

"His knowledge of tropical fruit was unequalled and his advice was sought throughout Florida. Eric introduced the Blackberry Jam Fruit to the U.S. He also introduced the El Capitola Hibiscus from Cuba, and others from India. He was a close friend to the flowering tree man, Edwin Menninger.

“Eric had a TV show on Channel 8 Tampa for 10 years in the 50’s and 60’s with Bert Livingston, Garden Editor of the *Tampa Tribune* and he produced over 70 shows. This show holds the distinction of being the first color garden show in the U.S. He is a walking encyclopedia of fruit trees and flowering trees in Central and Gulf Coast Florida, especially in Manatee and Sarasota Counties. He is a founding member of the Manatee Chapter of RFCI and a lifetime honorary member. He holds an Honorary Fellowship in the Royal Horticultural Society of England.

“Eric is the co-author of the book, *Florida Fruit*. This small book is a handbook including everything from cold tolerance, pests, soils, and fertilizers to fruit size and taste. Eric is a valuable resource to growers of tropical fruit trees.”

The members of the Manatee County Agriculture Hall of Fame are honored by having their pictures on the wall of the Kendrick Auditorium at the Manatee County Fairgrounds. It isn’t surprising to see Eric Golby’s smiling face among the members of this elite group. Each Hall of Fame member’s picture included a list of their accomplishments. Here is what is listed under Eric’s picture:

Horticulturist ~ Nurseryman ~ Author  
Teacher ~ Consultant ~ Lecturer  
FNGA Outstanding  
Horticulturist 1979  
American Hibiscus Society  
Rare Fruit Council  
Palm Society International  
Cycad Society  
Hibiscus Grower, Shower, Judge  
Inducted – 1993

Eric Golby was modest, witty, erudite, knowledgeable, and generous. A gentle man. A gentleman. He is and will be missed.

## **Dues still accepted!!**

Yes, surprise, surprise. Dues payments will be accepted at the June Chapter meeting! Bring your checks made out to the “Golby-Reasoner Chapter, AHS”. Family memberships are \$25.00 and single memberships are \$22.50. If you are unable to attend the meeting, send your checks to Mike Bossert, 609 Dundee Lane, Holmes Beach, FL 34217.

## **June program - bonsai!**

Don’t forget our June 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter meeting that will feature Ruth and George Osganian who are bonsai fanciers. Depending on the weather, they will either bring examples of their craft to the meeting or we will be invited to their garden which is only a couple blocks from Trinity Methodist. Sounds like a meeting that’s sure to expand our gardening vision.

## **AHS ballots due**

AHS ballots were received in late April; however the ballots have until June 1 to be received by the AHS. Therefore, if you have not cast your ballot, do it right now (assuming you can find it). Of course we hope you will vote for Dave Flanders as a member of the Board of Directors.

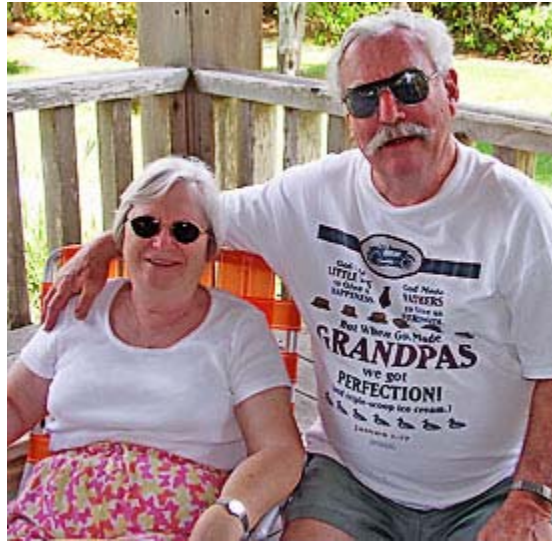
## **Show stuff...**

**September 18!** Yes, September 18 is the date for this year’s Show. And yes, it is a **Saturday!** Put it on your calendar. Everyone’s help will be needed since we will be decorating on Saturday, the day of the Show! Why?

The building will be in use until 8:30 p.m. on the Friday prior to our Show. But more about that in future issues of *Petal Power*. POWER.

**New location.** The Show will be held in the Family Life Center of the First Baptist Church. That's just off Manatee Avenue on 13<sup>th</sup> Street West. It is a great facility!

**Gift table contributions.** It is not too early to begin thinking about what you will be contributing to the gift table. You can be certain that this subject will be mentioned in each of the next three issues of *Petal Power* since it is always an important part of the financial success of our Show.



*The Loves at our recent picnic*

## Show Chairpersons and Committees

Show Co-Chairpersons, Janet and Mark Love, have done a great job in obtaining the chairpersons for the various committees necessary to stage our annual Show. In addition, they have identified many committee members of various committees. Realizing that some additions, corrections and deletions may occur before September 18<sup>th</sup>, we are publishing the listing of chairpersons and committee members the Loves provided the staff of *Petal Power* in late April. This listing may serve to inform and/or remind our loyal readers about what committee they are expected to head up or serve on. (Committee chairs are shown after the committee name and committee members are listed on the following line.)

PROMOTION – Dave Flanders  
Rae Flanders

SHOW SET-UP & DECORATING – Gayler Boettcher  
Everyone!

STAGING & AWARDS – Bob Hunter  
Pat Grant, Leo Delbert

WELCOMING – Dee Pastorious  
LaRae Regis, Petey Birchall

REGISTRATION – Beege Hunter  
Trudy Topoloski

REFRESHMENTS – Karin Delbert

Dottie Taffe, Trudy Topolosky, Pat Houppert, Bree Pressimone, Don Wallace

PROPERTIES & TRANSPORTATION – Leo Delbert

Tom Tourt, Dale Young, Roy Bradley

PLANT SALES – Donny Waldroup

Eva Waldroup, Mike & Meg Bossert, Tom & Sandy Brown, Ruben Santiago, Alvin & Teddy Morgan

PUBLICITY – David & Rae Flanders

MEMBERSHIP – Bill Regis

Jack Taffe

PHOTOGRAPHY – Gene Haugh

PUBLICATIONS & EDUCATION – Gene Haugh & Frank Vejrostek

Cash Register

JUDGING – David Flanders

TALLY CLERKS – Rae Flanders

Teddy Morgan, Jean Nathan, Pat Kramer, Holly Rider, Betty Seipel, Roberta Ladd, Mary Hanle, Pat Brady, Mike Topolosky

BLOOM CARRIERS – Carl Kramer

Maynard Pastorius, Bill Grant, Ed Johansen, Alvin Morgan, Daniel Seipel, Bob Seipel, Joe Hanley

BLOOM TABLE PLACEMENTS, DECORATIONS, XMAS TREE – Shirley Adams

GIFT TABLE – Jean Tourt

Sue Haugh, Kathy Schmidt, Beege Hunter, Betty Seipel

FLORAL ARRANGEMENTS & DISPLAY WREATH – Marilyn Young

EXIT POLL – Preston True

## **AHS Convention**

Since this year's AHS convention is at Punta Gorda we should have lots of our members attending, even if it is just for some of the business sessions. See page 13 of the second quarter *Seed Pod* for a general overview of what is going on when. We would assume that committee meetings and probably general sessions could be attended without registering. Of course the way to really get the "feel" of the event is to register and attend everything possible.

It appears that all AHS members received a mailing from the "Friends for the Extension Foundation, Inc." (a most descriptive name) in Punta Gorda outlining the activities being planned for the weekend of the convention. It appears the town is taking the opportunity of the AHS convention, to have a community festival since Punta Gorda is the "Hibiscus City". (We have found that as of April 16<sup>th</sup> or so, Vero Beach also is "Hibiscus City") Therefore, conventioners will have more to attend than the convention – another reason our members may find attending a fun thing to do.

That's June 17-20, at the Best Western Waterfront in Punta Gorda.

### Some "housekeeping" .....

If you incur an expense which is to be reimbursed to you by the Chapter, please submit the receipt (or whatever) promptly to Mike Bossert, our acting Treasurer. While most such expenditures are relatively small, it is always nice to know how much money we have in our Chapter "pocket".

### Coming Shows...

Page six of the recent *Seed Pod* lists the coming hibiscus shows. Included are the Ft. Myers show on June 6<sup>th</sup> and the Sunset Chapter show in St. Petersburg on June 13<sup>th</sup>. Then the weekend following the convention, the Central Florida Chapter show in Orlando is on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

Several shows this year have had blooms in quantities that haven't been seen for many years. The latest show that we heard about that had a large number of entries was the Harry Goulding Chapter show in Venice, with 1023 blooms! (Let's see, where can we put more tables for blooms on our show floor plan? What a wonderful problem!)

### June Hibiscus Gardening

Summer officially begins June 21<sup>st</sup>, but Florida's summer is already well on its way by June. However, we have had an absolutely wonderful spring this year, about two months long. I guess the best thing about it was that we really had a spring – compared to some years when we go directly from winter to summer.

June is the first month of our rainy season, but that doesn't mean that it will really rain. Eric recalled that "in 1931 we only had 0.1 inch and 25 inches in 1930! ... There is no consistency from year to year. So, there have been wet Junes and dry Junes." So don't believe the calendar and don't wait for yellow leaves to appear on your hibiscus before watering. Yellow leaves mean you are a day or two late in providing water and the cost of that error will be in blooms in the following weeks.

Blooms should be abundant although the hot weather will affect some blooming – and affect some varieties more than others. Of course you try to pick your blooms, but if you miss some, pick off the spent blooms too. The plant will, to a degree, continue to spend energy on them and we want that energy placed in producing new blooms.

Continue with a fertilization program and be diligent with spraying for critter control as necessary. *Orthene* is no longer available, but the active ingredient, Acephate, continues to appear in Ortho products. Some folks continue to have success with Bayer *Tree and Shrub Insect Control*, using two tablespoons per gallon of water. Imidacloprid, the active ingredient in *Tree and Shrub*, according to some seems to invite spider mites for dinner so watch for them.

Watch for young grasshoppers. By June, they will have hatched and will be active. When they are young, *Sevin*, sprayed weekly will provide a measure of control. Mature grasshoppers are another matter. Two bricks work well for them.

### "Would you believe?" department ...

The following item appeared in the internet version of the May 13<sup>th</sup> Daily Express, published in East Malasia:

#### HIBISCUS FEAT FOR THE RECORDS BOOK

The Chief Minister said Sandakan will strive to secure a berth in the Malaysia Book of Records through an effort in which some 20,000 hibiscus plants would be planted within one minute on May 18.

The event, involving some 13,000 people, is being organized to commemorate the declaration of Sandakan as a Nature City that day.

He commended the organizing committee for having lined up attractive activities to mark the occasion, which also coincides with the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Sandakan Festival based on “zero expenditure”.

Meanwhile, the hibiscus feat is aimed at introducing the flower as the Sandakan Nature City’s emblem.

It is jointly-organized by the Sandakan Municipal Council and district Environmental Action Committee. EAC chairperson Eleanor Wong said the programme involving government departments, NGOs and school children would be at 7:30 a.m.

About 5,000 Hibiscus plants would be planted along Labuk Road up to the airport here alone. The feat is expected to enter Malaysia’s Book of Records.

The plants are being contributed by the Council, EAC and Sibuga Jungle Resort Manager Datuk John Lim.

## **CLASSIFIEDS**

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Cold Porcelain Creations! Lifelike Hibiscus and other flowers, singles/bouquets. Yvonne Santiago: (941) 727-7293, [Yvonne@coldporcelaincreations.com](mailto:Yvonne@coldporcelaincreations.com), or [www.coldporcelaincreations.com](http://www.coldporcelaincreations.com)

## **Coming Events**

June 4            9:30 a.m. Board Meeting  
Manatee County Library  
South Branch

June 13          2:00 p.m. Chapter Meeting  
Ruth and George Osganian:  
Bonsai!

September 18 Annual Show!