

The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Quarterly News Journal

Summer 2011

25.3

REMINISCENCES ON THE “ROOTS” OF EDWARD L. BLAKE, JR., CROSBY ARBORETUM’S DESIGNER AND FIRST DIRECTOR

*“If Young Ed’s speech was slow,
Big Ed’s was glacial.”*

By Will Sullivan

I almost laughed at the memorial for Ed Blake, Jr. when one of the speakers talked about how slowly Ed spoke, theorizing that the slow speech came from Ed’s Southern roots.

I didn’t laugh, not out loud anyway. This event at Crosby Arboretum was a memorial for my friend and a generally solemn occasion, which Ed really wasn’t, solemn, that is.

When the speaker spoke of Ed’s slow speech, I couldn’t help but think of Ed’s father, whom I came to think of as Big Ed after I met the man I came to think of as Young Ed. Neither man could have been thought of as “Little Ed” after growing out of infancy.

If the speaker thought Young Ed’s speech was slow, he would have considered Big Ed’s speech pattern absolutely glacial. It took me a while, but I have developed my own theory about the slow speech pattern of the two men, and it has nothing to do with their being Southern. More on that later.

I came to know Big Ed when he was public information officer for Farm Bureau in Jackson and I was a lowly Farm Editor at *The Clarion-Ledger*. I don’t remember what the formal topic was when I first met Big Ed, probably truck farming, but I clearly remember the pride with which Big Ed spoke of his son and his having graduated in Landscape Architecture from Mississippi State University. Crosby Arboretum was years in the future when I met Big Ed, probably around 1972 or 1973. Young Ed obviously was a source of very great pride for Big Ed.

Every time we met after that, I believe Big Ed managed to bring Young Ed into the conversation. At least that’s how I remember it. I don’t now remember when I first learned Big Ed had a Christmas tree farm up the road in Pocahontas, but I do know it was shortly after our daughter Katie was born in 1976. It may even have been that year, because for every year from 1976 until we moved to Picayune in 1989, we went to Pocahontas to cut a Christmas tree.

The two most memorable trees we ever had came from Big Ed’s farm. Big Ed’s farm probably wouldn’t be a surprise to anyone who knew Young Ed, for the farm made obvious that the apple – or Christmas tree pine cone – didn’t fall far from the tree. In fact, Big Ed’s farm spoiled us so that we have never enjoyed going to other Christmas tree farms the way we enjoyed going to Big Ed’s. Big Ed’s farm wasn’t simply laid out in rows of Christ-



Ed Blake touring botanical artist Margaret Stones during her April 1987 visit to the Crosby Arboretum.

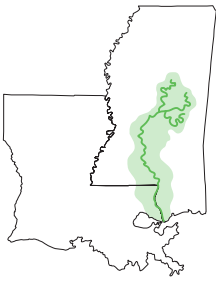
mas trees. Big Ed’s farm had a couple of ponds and trails and what I believe was an Indian mound.

Not only was Big Ed’s Christmas tree farm a farm, it also was a place Boy Scout troops came to camp out. Big Ed was a big supporter of Boy Scouts. He laid out the trails for the Scouts to emphasize geologic facts, natural features and had signs to identify those features and much of the plant life. Does that sound familiar? No, Crosby Arboretum is not a replication of Big Ed’s farm, but the love of nature that went into designing the Arboretum was also obvious in what Big Ed had done with the farm.

Once when I was talking with Young Ed and the Christmas tree farm came into our conversation for some reason, he told me wistfully that he lived so far from Big Ed’s Christmas tree farm that he had never been able to cut one from there for his own family.

Those most memorable Christmas trees? One was probably the second one we bought at the farm. It was a white pine that when I saw it highlighted against the horizon, had an ethereal quality about it. It was delicate and ghostly and stunning. I had to have it. But first we wanted to walk Big Ed’s trails. That became a tradition for us from the first year we went to the farm. I tagged it and Big Ed, who could see it from his post by a camp fire at the trail head, watched it for us to be sure someone else didn’t try to take it. We did take it and still remember it fondly.

(Continued on Page 2)



The Crosby Arboretum
Mississippi State University

A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Curator's Notebook: Tough Summer Natives for the Garden

Although we were treated to some deliciously cool weather during the extended spring, summer will soon be upon us. Consider low-care native perennials to “beat the heat” and provide summer blooms in your home garden. Perhaps you have admired the striking purple blooms of Stokes’ aster (*Stokesia laevis*) in our Savanna Exhibit. If so, you will be pleased to know that many other colors of this perennial are available in the trade. While it occurs naturally in sunny wet savannas, bogs, and roadside ditches, Stokes’ aster also tolerates drier conditions. Tough purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) is also available in a wide range of colors. This perennial has found a home in our Butterfly Garden, along with butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). Another perennial that loves hot weather is Texas star hibiscus (*Hibiscus coccineus*). Both the white (‘Alba’) and red form will be available at the Aquatic Plant Sale in July, as Terry Johnson has been busy propagating these and other plants for the sale.

Profiles of the plants having seasonal interest are one of the topics featured each Wednesday in the Picayune Item’s “Arboretum Paths” column. See www.picayuneitem.com, or visit our new Facebook page for the weekly link. If you have not already discovered our new site, please pay us a visit to see photos of our programs and events, and learn more about our upcoming activities.

– *Patricia R. Drackett*
Senior Curator, The Crosby Arboretum



A skipper butterfly poses on the spring bloom of a Louisiana Iris in the Arboretum’s Aquatic Exhibit.



Will Sullivan volunteered again as a willing “pond ornament” and provided a fly fishing demonstration, to the delight of schoolchildren on Wildlife Day in March.

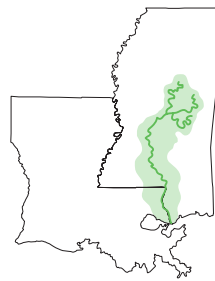
REMINISCENCES

(Continued from Page 1)

That was Big Ed’s last white pine, which are called white pines because of the thin white stripe down the needle that helped give it that ethereal quality that I noticed when I spotted that one. White pines are difficult to grow in Mississippi. So the next year my wife Genie fell in love with an overly large pine of another type that I can’t recall the name of at the moment, but I knew it was too large, but Genie had to have it for Katie. So I cut it down, then cut it some more when we got it home just to get it inside the house. I had to wire that tree to the ceiling and walls to hold it up, and it took up most of the living room, but Katie loved crawling under it to get her presents so all turned out well.

That speech pattern of the two Eds? I believe it was slow because the two men took care in selecting their words because they wanted to make clear what it was they were saying. They didn’t want any of their words to reveal all of the extraneous paths their extremely quick minds were following as they discussed any particular subject. They wanted their central thought to be clearly understood, and I believe they did that very well. I have known a great many other people, mostly with country backgrounds from all parts of the country, who have similar speech patterns and I have come to believe that they simply are carefully selecting their words in order to be clear in their expression of their thoughts. The rest of us would do well to learn from them.

– *Will Sullivan*
Managing Editor, The Picayune Item



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Picayune, Mississippi, USA



PLANT PROFILE: Red Milkweed

Red milkweed (*Asclepias lanceolata*) is one of the most striking flowering plants currently flowering in our Pitcher Plant Bog. The bloom color is a flaming, eye-catching reddish-orange. Also called fewflower milkweed, this plant has a very different appearance from its relative, butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), a common perennial used in butterfly gardens. Although red milkweed has a much smaller flower cluster, the blooms are held high above the surrounding savanna grasses and perennials on tall unbranched purplish stems. The flowers are so bright in color that they can be spotted from a great distance. Like butterfly weed, red milkweed is a larval host plant for monarch butterflies. It is found in wet pinelands, moist savannas, roadsides, and bogs throughout the East Gulf Coastal Plain.



Robert Poore examines the Small Stream Swamp Forest Exhibit master plan presented in April by MSU graduate students from the Department of Landscape Architecture.

PLANTS AT THE ARBORETUM WITH SUMMER INTEREST

- COLIC ROOT** (*Aletris lutea*)
- BUTTONBUSH** (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)
- TITI** (*Cyrilla racemiflora*)
- WHITE-TOPPED SEDGE** (*Dichromena colorata*)
- SUNDEW** (*Drosera brevifolia*)
- PINELAND HIBISCUS** (*Hibiscus aculeatus*)
- SWEETBAY MAGNOLIA** (*Magnolia virginiana*)
- YELLOW COW-LILY** (*Nuphar luteum*)
- WHITE WATER-LILY** (*Nymphaea odorata*)
- ORANGE CANDY ROOT** (*Polygala lutea*)
- MEADOW BEAUTY** (*Rhexia spp.*)
- LIZARD'S TAIL** (*Saururus cernuus*)
- STOKES ASTER** (*Stokesia laevis*)

For detailed information, and photographs for the above plants and other native plants found in our Exhibits, visit www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu to search the Crosby Arboretum Native Plant Database, hosted by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (www.wildflower.org). A printable comprehensive plant species list for the Arboretum is also available.

THE CROSBY ARBORETUM SMALL STREAM SWAMP FOREST EXHIBIT

Professor Bob Brzuszek's graduate students in the MSU Department of Landscape Architecture's spring Land Management Seminar have completed their Master Plan for the Crosby Arboretum's newest exhibit, the Small Stream Swamp Forest. The four acre exhibit will consist of a series of excavated pools and stream channels connecting the recently constructed Gumpond Exhibit with the site's Slough Exhibit. A series of pathways will follow the braided stream, passing through various ecotypes such as ephemeral pools, pond cypress flats, atlantic white cedar forest, bayheads, and beech-magnolia forest. More than three dozen persons have contributed to the planning for this exhibit, including Robert Poore of Native Habitats, Flora, MS, and Karen D. Smith and Duane Dietz from Jones and Jones, Ltd, Seattle, WA, who participated in a design charette at the Arboretum in February. Grant funding for this project is currently being pursued.

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

June - July 2011

June 2011

KIDS' SUMMER NATURE CAMP

Tue. - Fri., June 7, 8, 9, & 10
9:00 a.m. to Noon

Children ages 6 through 12 will enjoy this four-day camp, learning about the outdoors with fun hands-on lessons, games, and activities, and will leave camp with an increased appreciation and excitement for nature. Facilitated by Master Naturalist **Mary Cordray**. A \$10 non-refundable deposit is required to reserve your child's space. Cost is \$35 for members' children; \$45 non-members' children. Limited to 15 registrants.

TEACHERS' WORKSHOP: GET WILD ABOUT CREEPY CRAWLIES!

Friday, June 24
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Join us for a Project Wild workshop emphasizing native Mississippi "Creepy Crawlies," conducted by **Crystie Baker**, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Educational Outreach Biologist. Open to teachers and homeschool educators. Free for Hancock and Pearl River County teachers. Others, \$15 or registration and book, and \$10 for CEU's. Prepare for a "working lunch," and bring a brown bag lunch. Please call the Arboretum office to pre-register for this workshop.



Trey White, Jordan Bourgault and Kaitlyn Bourgault (left to right) decorate terra cotta pots for Mothers' Day giving. The children also created cards using recycled materials in May's program led by Master Naturalist Mary Cordray.



During their May field trip, fifth grade students from Lamar Christian School in Purvis give a big hug to the loblolly pine on the Pond Journey that survived Hurricane Camille.

SUMMER AQUATIC PLANT SALE

Saturday, July 2
9:00 a.m. to Noon

Shop a great selection of non-invasive aquatic plants, including hardy water lilies, Texas star hibiscus, Louisiana iris, spider lilies, lizard's tail, and golden club, including divisions from our exhibits. **Free admission!** Sale will be held adjacent to the Visitor's Center.

TEACHERS' WORKSHOP: WILD ABOUT BLACK BEARS & ENDANGERED SPECIES!

Friday, July 8
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

This Project Wild workshop will focus on endangered wildlife species. Conducted by **Crystie Baker**, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Educational Outreach Biologist. Open to teachers and homeschool educators. Free to Hancock and Pearl River County teachers. Others, \$15 or registration and book, CEU's \$10. Bring a brown bag lunch. Please call the Arboretum office to pre-register for this workshop.

A HOT TIME AT THE ARBORETUM! (Kids!)

Saturday, July 9
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

How "sun wise" are you? Learn safe ways to have fun in the sun! Play a speedy sun relay race, go on a shade hunt, and make sun prints. This workshop will be held outdoors and led by Master Naturalist **Mary Cordray**. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. All materials provided. Members' children \$2; non-members' children \$4. Register by July 8.

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

July - August 2011

July - August 2011 (con't)

GARDENING WORKSHOP: CONSTRUCT A RAIN BARREL

Saturday, July 16 (Adults)
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Capture nature's gift of rain with a rain barrel – a simple solution to cut down on your water bill and on storm water runoff in this workshop led by **Stephanie Pendleton**, MSU Extension Director in Jackson County. Cost for the class is \$45.00, which includes all materials needed to make a 55 gallon rain barrel. If you would prefer to attend the program and not construct a rain barrel, the cost is \$5 for non-members, and free to Arboretum members. Register by July 15.

FIELD WALK & CLAY CLASS (Kids)

Saturday, August 6
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Children will journey down the Arboretum pathways with Senior Curator **Pat Drackett** to collect natural materials to use make impressions in clay for lasting memories. They will create items from a self-hardening clay so their work may be taken home on the same day. All children or groups of children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Admission is \$5 per child for members' children, and \$7 for non-members' children. Please register by August 5.

VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

Arboretum volunteer meetings will resume at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, September 3. If you would like to volunteer over the summer, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Robin Veerkamp, at (601) 799-2311 Ext. 104.

Reservations: Call the Arboretum office at (601) 799-2311, to confirm all events and to make program reservations, as seating is limited. Programs are subject to change.

Physical Address: 370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS 39466

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1639, Picayune, MS 39466

E-mail Contact: drackett@ext.msstate.edu

Hours of Operation: Wednesday-Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

2011 Admission Fees: Adults, \$5; Seniors (over 55), \$4; Children under 12, \$2; Members, free admission to grounds and programs.

Webpage: www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu. Lists programs and events, volunteer opportunities, Arboretum and Natural Area information, and news updates.



In May, Trish Blossman gave a delightful and delicious cooking demonstration using "Nature's Bounty" in her well-attended program. She has promised to return!

MUSHROOM WALK (Family)

Saturday, August 20
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Bring your collecting basket, and join **Dr. Juan Mata**, Assistant Professor in Biology from the University of South Alabama, for a guided mushroom walk of the Arboretum grounds. His students have called him "the best biology teacher in the south." Learn about fungi's fascinating ecology, taxonomy, and relationship to mankind. Members free, \$5 for non-members. Register by August 19.

SUMMER ARBORETUM FIELD WALK

Saturday, August 27 (Family)
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Join Senior Curator **Pat Drackett** on a field walk. Trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plant material native to the region will be discussed, including uses in the home landscape. Desired site conditions, ornamental features, and identification tips of numerous native plant species will be covered. Free for members, \$5 for non-members. Register by August 26.

ARBORETUM FALL EVENTS: MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

BugFest (Fun with insects!) Sept. 23 & 24
Crosby Arboretum Fall Plant Sale, Oct. 8 & 9
Piney Woods Heritage Festival, Nov. 18 & 19