

In Memoriam by Joyce Brobst
Caroline W. Amidon, Past President 1996 -1998
February 15, 1932 – October 17, 2023



Memories, memories, memories – there are so many. In the case of Caroline, it is difficult to decide how to begin. Let me commence with this past president’s membership and service to The Herb Society of America. Caroline became a member of The Philadelphia Unit in 1974, and over a period of years served terms as secretary and treasurer on the national board of directors before becoming president in 1996. This timing was particularly significant because she was the transitional president after the restructuring of the board in the mid-1990s. It was

with determination that during her term she tried to visit as many units of The Society as possible as well as the seven district meetings. She wanted to personally meet with the membership to discuss the changes, review member benefits, and reassure everyone that we were on strong footing for a long and healthy future. Obviously, this involved a great deal of time and travel. Caroline had such admiration for our organization and its educational mission that she willingly went beyond the call of duty – a trait which could be applied to all aspects of her life! She chaired many committees on the national level, organized and supported various unique fundraising activities from garden tours in England with Caroline Holmes, art contests (*Salvia* and *Rosmarinus* prints), silk scarves, Ann Ophelia Dowden stationary, and seed exchange sales to live auctions held at annual meetings! No task was ever too large if it fit into her definition of what The Society needed.

In 1998, Caroline was a driving force for the Philadelphia Unit and The Central Ohio Unit along with Flora Design Gallery of Malvern to build a featured exhibit for the Philadelphia Flower Show. The model garden won “best of show” in the nonprofit display category, and a ‘bronze medal’ for horticultural excellence for the featured rosemary topiaries grown by the Ohio Unit. The cake with live edible flowers was designed by HSA world known decorator Jan Kisch. One member stated “Awards are great but the best part is the ‘doing together,’ as we share the joy of gardening.” This special project promoted the flower show, The Herb Society, and herbal learning along with Caroline’s can-do spirit that goes with horticulture!

It is important to realize that the love of plants and gardening was inspired early in Caroline’s life by her mother and grandmother, and she actively pursued horticultural knowledge her entire lifetime. Near her home in Glenmoore, PA, she was highly revered for her knowledge and was the go-to person whenever a plant question arose. She was an excellent source of information on nomenclature as well as plant identification and propagation. To illustrate her constant pursuit of knowledge, she was also actively involved in the PA Horticultural Society (including judging herbs for over 20 years at the Philadelphia Flower Show), The Hardy Plant Society, two local garden clubs (Twin Valleys Garden Club and Conestoga Garden Club), and the International Geranium Society until it dissolved several years ago. She was also a member and served on the board of directors of the Green Valley Water Conservancy (Welkinweir) promoting good environmental stewardship, and served on the East Nantmeal Township Planning Board for

many years. Caroline's multiple talents and experiences through teaching, parenting, traveling, researching, writing, and serving her community made her an excellent mentor and role model – truly an inspiring person!

It is one thing to mention membership in an organization, but it is another to mention taking leadership positions and serving on committees when a member. Caroline always was fully involved: Growing challenge plants for flower shows, serving as a passer for flower shows, holding offices and serving on committees in the Philadelphia Unit of HSA, growing plants, providing greenhouse space, and preparing plant labels for the Philadelphia Unit Annual Plant Sale, providing leadership and involvement with her unit botany and horticulture study group, participating in the HSA registered plant collections program (*Pelargonium* species), and if that wasn't enough, co-authoring or writing:

Book

Crocker, Pat with Caroline Amidon and Joyce Brobst. *Scented Geranium, Pelargonium 2006 Herb of the Year™*. 2006. Riversong Studios, Ontario, Canada.

Articles

Amidon, Caroline, and Joyce Brobst. "Fun With Pelargoniums", *The Herbarist*, A Publication of The Herb Society of America. Issue 67, 2001.

Amidon, Caroline, and Joyce Brobst. "Heaven Scent, A World of Fun with Pelargoniums", *Green Scene*. A Publication of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. August, 2005.

Amidon, Caroline, and Joyce Brobst. "To Grow Pelargoniums is to Know Them", *The Herbarist*, A Publication of The Herb Society of America. Issue 71, 2005

Articles on "Invasive Plants" for the *Green Valley Water Conservancy Newsletter* (Oriental Bittersweet, Kudzu, Buddleia, to name a few of her titles)



Caroline and Joyce Brobst

Caroline advocated growing and knowing plants. She encouraged programs to get children involved in gardening, opened her garden for tours, tested plants as part of the HSA "Promising Plants" program, gave lectures about pelargoniums and other plant topics (always with informational handouts) to any groups wanting to learn about plants, and worked on the PHS "plant hotline" answering questions called in to the McClean Library. One of her garden clubs referred to her as "one of the best authorities on all things horticultural"! Caroline was one of the most caring, welcoming persons you could ever know. She worked at getting to know people and their special talents and supported them in their pursuit of herbal information. In turn HSA members knew her as a friend and leader.

In recognition of Caroline Amidon's service to the world of horticulture, she was awarded the Helen de Conway Little Medal of Honor from The Herb Society of America (2002), as well as

The Nancy Putnam Howard Award for Horticultural Excellence (2005). Caroline was an honorary member of both The Philadelphia Unit and the PA Heartland Unit.



It was through The Herb Society that I was privileged to meet Caroline. I served as her Vice President, and we collaborated on many society issues. On the herbal side of things most of you know that we researched, grew, wrote about, and lectured about pelargoniums for a lot of years. Our long-time friendship grew because of our interest in herbs and fulfilling the mission of The Society.

There are many additional stories that could be shared illustrating Caroline's knowledge and love of horticulture, generous sharing of plant material, and devotion to the world of gardening. I hope my sharing this glimpse into this special lady's lifelong passion for plants will trigger your own memories of special times you spent with her in her home, garden, greenhouse, or at one meeting or another. She missed few meetings and continued to participate in on-line meetings until about two weeks before her passing. Her presence, her brainstorming, and her passionate sharing of creative ideas will be missed.

We will miss her and her faithful corgis, touring her garden, talking about herbs and nature with her, and just being her friend! The Herb Society of America and the world of horticulture has lost a true friend!



2014 Mid Atlantic District event

Tributes

Joyce Brobst called last night with the news that Caroline Amidon passed away. I am so very saddened at this news, but also know that dear Caroline is now at peace. Daughter Beth reported she was holding Caroline's hand speaking of future gardens to be planted and tended as her mother breathed her last. For those of you who did not have the opportunity to get to know Caroline, she was a force of nature. She was respected nationwide as an herbal expert and educator.

As for me, I plan to wander into my herb garden and remember my dear friend and mentor.

Amanda Swope Joos

No words at this time...a very dear friend!

Marty Devenney

RIP Caroline - so glad I had the pleasure of your company all the years that I had known you and for sharing your love and knowledge of Pellies with me. I enjoyed my visit with you in late August and will always remember your cheerful personality.

My prayers and best wishes for your family.

Mary Maran

Caroline was a force of nature, even in her last days. I've deeply appreciated her advice in The Herb Society's Past Presidents Council and will miss seeing her in next month's meeting. I'm grateful that technology allowed me to get to know her and enabled her participation in our discussions when travel became too difficult.

Linda "Lin" Lange

It is so hard for me to put into words what she meant to me...friend, mentor, confidante, inspiration, cheerleader... I will miss her immensely! My love and thoughts go out to her, her family and her friends.

Rena Barnett

Oh my goodness, thank you Mandy for letting us all know of our sad loss of dear Caroline. Yes, I too am relieved that she is at last at peace and with her beloved husband, but a sincere loss for all of us. Her knowledge and her willingness to share was vast. She gave of herself in every way....she was a gift. Her talents and achievements are way too many to list but I had the joy of judging with her at the Philadelphia Flower Show and attending national meetings. Everyone loved Caroline. I could go on and on.

Rest in peace at last good friend.

Susan Armstrong

I'm going outside now to trim back my rangy salvias, as she had advised me to do the last time I saw her. I think some of the disintegrated tags still have her handwriting on them.....

Hope Riley

It's so hard to know what to say when you lose a personal friend. And Caroline was a friend to us all, sharing generously of her time and expertise with anyone who expressed an interest in

herbs, especially Pellies. She was an inspiration, a force of nature indeed. She loved The Herb Society and The Society loved her back. We will all miss our dear friend.

Elizabeth Kennel

Oh my goodness; I'm so sorry to hear that Caroline is at Peace! I cannot begin to express my sadness to her. She brought me in to The Herb Society. She was a friend to my mother and was teacher to my older sister. She may be gone in body, but will be with me as I look to good advice! She was inspiring and wonderful. Rest in Peace Caroline! Best Wishes to Beth and everyone!

Martha Edwards

Little did I know, when I met "Mrs. Amidon" in 1958 (as my sister's home room teacher at Irwin's) that I would get to know her much better as Caroline. And for all her vast knowledge of herbs, I always found Caroline interested in talking about so many other things, right to the end. This is a great loss for the Unit, but we should be grateful for all she shared with us.

Alice Sharp

May she rest in peace + create an Herb Garden in Heaven... Thoughts + prayers for her family as we all remember what a wonderful inspiration she was for all of us.

Anne Gayl

The very first HSA meeting I went to all those years ago was to Caroline's. She and Joyce Brobst were giving a talk on pelargoniums. My mother was visiting so she came with me. I loved it, my mother not so much!

Caroline set high standards and I learned a lot from her over the years especially about proper potting and watering! She was always welcoming and happy to see whoever came to visit She will be remembered and missed by her legion friends and acquaintances for a long time to come.

Evie Baird

It saddens me greatly to learn of Caroline's passing. She was always such a central figure in The Philadelphia Unit. She was so generous with her time and knowledge. The happy hours spent watering plants for the annual sale in her greenhouse, the many wonderful meetings in her home, at the sale specialty table, with Joyce Brobst sharing her knowledge and selling those beautiful pelargoniums. My deepest sympathy to her family, friends, and to fellow members of The HSA Philadelphia Unit. She will be missed.

Judy Bloomgarden

