

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



Past Members of the Board of Director Robert Dasset Jr.

Robert Dasset Jr. joined the Friends Board of Directors in 1970 and remained on the board until 1982. He was Vice President in 1970 and Friends President 1971 through 1974.

During his tenure on the board the Friends raised money for the existing Garden restroom building, purchased the first small garden tractor, funding the Witt water fountain, installed display lighting and fireplace doors in the new Martha Crone Shelter and purchased several small items.

Mr. Dasset visited the Wildflower Garden often as a young man as he was an avid birdwatcher. While president of the Friends he wrote in the *Fringed Gentian*TM about his Garden memories:

“Miss Butler standing near the old shelter; my first Cardinal, April 1932; a walk down the east path with Dr. Crone [Martha Crone’s husband William] to see my first Barred Owl; drowsy August days talking with Martha Crone in the coolness of the old shelter; Mr. Whitney Eastman on a Memorial Day getting in an hour of birding between a morning and afternoon double-header at Nicollet Park; fighting a grass fire with Mr. Clinton Odell in the upper garden when it was still very new; and finally the rather feverish, hectic, but rewarding activity of the past several years when, under the leadership of the human dynamo, Cay Faragher, the new Martha Crone Shelter was planned, built and opened.”(1)

Martha Crone mentions several visits with Mr. Dasset in her diary over a number of years. In 1939 she notes his visits with his bride-to-be, Betty, and they were married in late 1939. In 1940 she noted:

“Beautiful weather, ideal May Day. Dasset [Robert] in first time this year. He again working for his grandfather and continuing on at N. [High school] to prepare for teaching. Baby girl was born last July, expect another in Sept.”

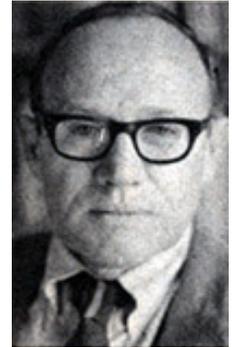
In 1942 he was in on May 16th and back the next day with Whitney Eastman to join in the great birding that year. In 1943 she noted he was in on April 23rd and was now teaching high school in Springfield.
(2)

After the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden was founded, Martha Crone received a note from Dasset on May 18th, 1960 that read:

"Enclosed is a check for \$5 to enroll me as a Friend. A thousand dollars couldn't even begin to repay for the wonderful hours spent in the Garden. I'll cherish forever those moments spent on the paths in the Garden and also in your little cabin chatting about all sorts of wonderful things, but mostly about birds and flowers."

When the Friends published in 2004 their 50th Anniversary booklet titled "50 Years of Friends", Bob and Betty Dasset added a few additional notes. Expanding on his 1971 comment, they wrote:

“He liked to remember his friend Whitney Eastman, “a real bird man” and a great baseball fan during the Millers’ era. Whitney had his own version of a double-header, Robert recalled; he’d



watch the first game, bike to the Garden to eat his sandwich and talk to Martha, and then bike back to see most of the second game.”

Another tidbit was when Robert and Betty were at the Garden when Martha’s husband Bill discovered a barred owl perched rather close on a tree branch. All four went to gaze at it, and the owl just sat and stared back at them, seemingly curious and unafraid.

Mr. Dasset’s career centered on teaching, ending with 33 years as professor of Spanish at Macalester College. He once wrote that:

“I spend a lot of time working in the garden, birdwatching and canoeing. I’ve driven thousands of miles looking for birds. I play the lute and love life.”(3)

A student who graduated in 1974 and became a Professor of Hispanic Studies at Macalester, credited Dasset with a) her parents meeting each other and b) her attending Macalester. She wrote of Dasset:

“He was a wonderful, kind of a Renaissance man kind of person. And he was lovely, and he always visited my family. In fact, it was because of Bob Dasset that my parents met. So I figured, I’m really a child of Macalester in very strange ways that most alums and instructors can’t claim.” (4)

Mr. Dasset passed away on April 13, 2002.

Reference:

(1) *Fringed Gentian* Vol. 19. No.4 Oct. 1971

(2) From Martha Crones diaries.

(3) 1972/1973 Macalester Faculty and Student Guide.

(4) Garciagodoy, Juanita, "Interview with Juanita Garciagodoy, Class of 1974 and Professor of Hispanic Studies" (2007). Hispanic Studies Department Oral Histories. Paper 1.

(5) Minutes of The Board of Directors and other documents of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.

Text by Gary Bebeau