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A Louisiana plantswoman: Margie Yates Jenkins

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A LOUISIANA PLANTSWOMAN:
MARGIE YATES JENKINS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Landscape Architecture

in

The School of Landscape Architecture

By
Gayna B. Veltman
B.B.A., University of Oklahoma, 1962
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ABSTRACT

This biographical study of the development of Marge Yates Jenkins into Louisiana's pre-eminent plantswoman examines the issues of culture and regional history, particularly the history of the horticultural industry in Louisiana. It traces how a self-taught botanist overcame the obstacles of gender and post-war depression to become an innovator in the nursery business, experimenting with native plants of the Southeast, as well as exotics imported from as far away as New Zealand. Her experiments and the plants that she introduced to the trade would eventually change the selection of plants used in the landscape industry in the Gulf Coast region.

The thesis relies primarily on the method of oral history to document Jenkins' life story and her impact on the professions of ornamental horticulture and landscape architecture. Her family history with its agricultural roots serves as a backdrop for her eventual entry into the field of horticulture. The thesis covers the development of horticulture in Louisiana from 1962 to 2004, and explains how Jenkins' work gradually changed the way plants were viewed and used in the landscape industries. Particular emphasis is placed on Jenkins' success as a plant propagator and on her introduction of new varieties of azaleas into commerce.

Finally, Jenkins' generous and open spirit is described as an important factor in her being able to bridge the gap between the nursery and horticulture industry, and landscape architecture theory and practice. The thesis calls upon these two aspects of landscape practice to embrace the model that Jenkins espouses in order to create landscape design that possesses the best of both the worlds of plants and design theory.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Extraordinary women can appear in any occupation. I have always been interested in such women, and the how and way of their success. In any profession, women of stature stand out. As I have traced the progress of women in landscape architecture, I now realize that the women who stand out would have been outstanding in any venue. It is easy to conclude that Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932), the English plantswoman whose herbaceous borders were copied worldwide, almost certainly was a genius when one considers all of the outlets for her creative talents. She was a writer, painter, photographer, crafts woman. Beatrix Farrand (1872-1959) was one of the founders of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1899, the only woman in a group of ten men. Before the turn of this century, she had her first major commission and went on to design Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D. C., large parts of Yale University, and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Garden in Maine. Both of these women had outstanding careers in the landscape world.

Over the past few months, I have been fortunate to meet another such extraordinary woman. Margie Jenkins is the matriarch of a nursery family in the Folsom area, a part of Louisiana, which is heavily populated with wholesale nurseries. Over the past thirty years, she has played an enormous role in expanding the plant palette used in Louisiana gardens. In a large part thanks to her, the state's landscape professionals are moving beyond the same old standard plants to embrace such varied choices as natives, new cultivars, and flora imported from other countries.

Jenkins' involvement in the plant world began in 1962, when she and her husband Bryant started growing field stock to augment the income from their dairy. In the beginning, their nursery was full of those ordinary plants such as ligustrums (*Ligustrum japonica*), yaupons (*Ilex vomitoria*), and other hollies (*Ilex*) that are used by ninety-five percent of the landscape contractors as well as by those who should be more sophisticated in their plant selections but rarely take the time: landscape architects. Over time, Jenkins' hard work, combined with her great inquisitiveness, has led to some wonderful plant results. The *Leucothoe axillaris* 'Margie Jenkins' is a prime example. The cold hardy Robin Hill azaleas (*Rhododendron*, Robin Hill Hybrid Azalea), which Jenkins introduced to the south despite opposition, are now best sellers. In addition to that practical aspect, they also bloom twice a year.

Physically, Jenkins is a small woman, but as far as her family, her employees, and the plant world are concerned she casts a large shadow. Even now at the age of eighty-three, she personally works with and supervises a staff of seventeen full- and part-time men and women from daylight to sundown. Although she works long, hard hours, her positive attitude and boundless knowledge never stops her from sharing information with a visitor, whether he or she is an eminent horticulturist or a back-yard hobbyist.

Jenkins is a self-taught woman who has a self-proclaimed "passion for plants." She propagates plants and then, with a boundless curiosity, she watches them. She wants to know what they are going to do not only in the months ahead, but also in the years to come. I have heard from many firsthand observers that she will give away plants with the admonition "See what this will do."

Many authors discuss native plants and many nursery owners cultivate native plants, but they all acknowledge that "Miss Margie" is the most learned among their ranks. Her greenhouses contain her experimental cultures, but she has so many irons in the fire that she much too often gets sidetracked from doing what she loves best -- propagating.

My interviewees all attest to her natural skill as a propagator and horticulturist, but they also mention another characteristic: her patience. Even at this stage in her life, she plants seedlings, sows seeds, and roots her cuttings as if she fully expects to be in her nursery to see the outcome, no matter how long it takes.

Jenkins' warm, winsome personality gives her the ability to bridge the gap between the two worlds of growers and designers. Aspiring landscape architects often have too little knowledge of the plant world and not enough time or willingness to gain that knowledge. But we here in southern Louisiana have a distinct advantage; we only need to listen to Margie Jenkins. She conducts all the horticulture experimentation and hard work for us. She may or may not perform the actual hybridization of plants, but she is one of the first to introduce a new plant into her nursery and subsequently into the industry. She has watched many plants for thirty to forty years, and she loves to share the knowledge she has developed.

Thanks to Margie Jenkins, we can use new and different plants not just the tried, the true, and the boring. She has discovered plants that have different qualities in different seasons and are still able to stand up to the harsh growing conditions of southern Louisiana. She is not afraid to try new materials.

The plant with which she has most broadened the palette in Louisiana is the azalea. She introduced the Robin Hill and many other rhododendrons into the trade. Her work with native plants started with her sowing seeds from a native or wild azalea found on the farm where she lived.

Her endless curiosity leads her to wonder about the results of her rootings or seed sowing and whether the products of these horticultural experiments will remain the same over the years. She still has the azalea plants she first seeded because as she will say, "Oh, I just can't part with those."

Her passion for plants is the driving force for her seeking new knowledge to obtain a better plant - whether it is for size, disease resistance, lush foliage, flowering abundance, or other qualities in a variety that might need improvement. She has educated herself by attending meetings of all the various organizations of which she is a member, reading a wide-range of material, and communicating with others in her field. To visit Jenkins Nursery is like starting out on an adventure. You never know who will show up, what they will want, or how long they will stay. But you will certainly leave with more knowledge than you came with, and you will have a lot of good fellowship along the way.

In this thesis I will explore Miss Margie's life and career, her skills with propagation, identification, cultivation, and her influence as a "plant ambassador."

CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

To collect information about Margie Jenkins and her place in Louisiana plant culture, personal interviews were conducted with Jenkins, landscape architects in Louisiana and the southeast region of the United States who use plants from Jenkins Nursery, experienced professionals who are committed to maintaining diversity in their plant selection, and nurserymen who share her interests. Site visits included photography, still and video, and field study of the layout of the nursery and surrounding geography. Literature relevant to plants indigenous to the Southeast region of the United States, and the movement to provide ecological utilization responsive to the specific location of a plant's growth provided historical background. Woody plants, such as azaleas, leucothoe, silver-bells, and their propagation from seeds and cuttings were researched in other literature.

Oral Histories

The best way to understand Jenkins' place in the Louisiana landscape is to talk to her contemporaries who are the best sources of information about her and the best judges of her work. Information about Jenkins was gathered from tape-recorded personal interviews. A collection of oral histories was recorded, transcribed, and deposited at the LSU Williams Center for Oral History. In the interest of creating a complete, well-rounded picture the viewpoints of landscape architects, nursery owners, and plant specialists were needed. Often one interviewee was active in more than one of these occupations.

The original list of interviewees was suggested by Suzanne Turner, professor emerita in landscape architecture at Louisiana State University, who is the author's thesis-committee chair. This list was refined with Margie Jenkins' input and with information gained in each succeeding interview.

In the process of collecting background information, personal impressions, and history, many landscape architects were interviewed: Neil G. Odenwald, former director of the landscape architecture department at LSU and now in private practice in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Ed Blake, who is now in private practice in Hattiesburg, Mississippi and former director of Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, Mississippi; John Mayronne, landscape architect in private practice in Covington, Louisiana; Marion Drummond, landscape architect and director of the Mobile Botanical Garden in Mobile, Alabama; Christopher C. Friedrichs, former landscape architect for the City of New Orleans Parkway and Parks Commission and now in private practice in Folsom, Louisiana; and Wayne Womack, landscape architect, professor emeritus at LSU and now in private practice in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Nurseryman Robert Edward Lee, who introduced the Encore Azalea into the nursery trade; Mark Jenkins, Jenkins' son and the owner of the Mark Jenkins Nursery; Margie Ann Jenkins who helps her mother run Jenkins Nursery; Marshall Mugnier of Marshall's Home and Garden Showplace in Lafayette, Louisiana; and, of course, Margie Jenkins herself were interviewed. All of the interviews were done in person, except for the telephone interviews of Marion Drummond and Marshall Mugnier.

For first hand knowledge, no one was more important than Margie Jenkins, but Margie Ann Jenkins gathered much useful background information, such as lectures given by Jenkins and facts on family lineage.

In the course of my research, photographs and videos were done to create a visual record that helped me to later absorb the atmosphere of Jenkins Wholesale Nursery. Studying these visual references, the layout inside the greenhouses demonstrates her wide interest in different varieties of plants. The fields revealed plants in various stages of growth: some are filled with trees waiting to be dug when sold, mostly mature specimen of those seeds or cuttings started by Jenkins. Natives and new varieties from other regions or countries are visible in the container yard as well. Another great visual aid was a plat map of the Jenkins Nursery made with the help of Christopher Friedrichs and colleague Paul Russell.

Literature Review

Theory

People Studying People: The Human Element in Fieldwork, by Robert Georges (1980), provided information for interviewing and preparation for each step in the process of obtaining the oral histories.

History

Upon obtaining a guide for the preparation of the oral histories, background was needed to obtain an overall view of the history of the native plant movement. Historical information was gathered from Jen Jensen's (1860-1951) works along with contributions from *American Plants for American Gardens* (1996) by Edith Roberts and Elsa Rehmann; a revised compilation of twelve articles first published in *House Beautiful*

magazine between June 1927 and May 1928. Roberts and Rehmann promote the basic practical application of ecological principles to the selection of plants indigenous to a particular climate by considering cold or hot weather, soil, topography, and sunlight.

Jens Jensen, the designer for many Chicago parks in the early part of the twentieth century, is now considered the prime mover in the "prairie style" of landscape architecture which calls for the use of native plants. *Siftings* is an overall statement of his philosophy. The "prairie style" was not only a style of design or approach to planting but truly a conservation ethic that permeated all aspects of community life. In 1913, he inspired the organization of Friends of our Native Landscape. (Sniderman, 2001)

Historical background on female gardeners from *The Illustrated Book of Women Gardeners* (1997) edited by Deborah Kellaway provided a gendered view of the hard working conditions endured by women gardeners unless they were wealthy.

Preliminary Research

The literature used for the general study of plants indigenous to Louisiana includes: *Natives Preferred* (1965) by Carolyn Dormon, and *Native Gardening in the South* (1992) by Bill Fontenot.

Very few texts are available that are specific to Louisiana native plants. Therefore, preliminary reading was done to include information and techniques applicable to the southeast region rather than just to Louisiana: *The Natural Habitat Garden* (1994) by Ken Druse; *Easy Care for Native Plants* (1996) by Patricia A. Taylor; and *Gardening with Native Plants of the South* (1994) by Sally Wasowski and Andy Wasowski.

For specific plant documentation several volumes were used as reference: *Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines of Louisiana* (2002) by Charles Allen, Dawn Allen, and Harry Winters; *Native Shrubs and Woody Vines of the Southeast* (1989) by Leonard Foote and Samuel Jones; *Louisiana Gardner's Guide* (1997) by Dan Gill and Joe White; *Identification, Section and Use of Southern Plants for Landscape Design* (1996) by Neil Odenwald and James Turner; and *Gardening in the Humid South* (2002) by Edmund O'Rourke and Leon Standifer.

Information on plant propagation was found in: *Native Gardening in the South* (1992) by William Fontenot; *Growing and Propagating Showy Native Woody Plants* (1992) by Richard Bir; and *Native Trees, Shrubs, & Vines: A Guide to Using, Growing, and Propagating North American Woody Plants* (2002) by William Cullina; and *Plant Propagation principles and practices* (1975) by Hudson T. Hartmann and Dale E. Kester.

Biographical and Plant Information: Margie Jenkins

Cover and an article from *Louisiana Nursery & Landscape Magazine* (fall 2002) tells Robert Lee's story of the First Lady of Louisiana Nurseries.

All this information was used as background in order to give a vivid look at an extraordinary plantswoman and her place in the landscape history of Louisiana.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL CONTENT

In the early part of the twentieth century a movement developed that became known as the "prairie style" of landscape architecture. Its predominant features were the repetition of horizontal lines in the landforms and the branching habits of the plants. Practitioners of this style placed a high priority on conserving native flora and using it in designed settings.

The best known proponent of the "prairie style" was Jens Jensen (1860-1951) who worked in Chicago from around 1880 until 1935. He espoused the use of native plants in designed landscapes and the study of naturally evolving landscapes as sources of inspiration for design. As Jensen said:

To me it is stupid to transplant trees into an environment they dislike and in which their length of life will be shortened and their real beauty never revealed. Of course the reason for this stupidity is ignorance and commercialism. Before a plant is used in a composition, it must be tested, whether it likes to be alone or in a group, whether it enjoys lowlands or highlands, whether its character and color sing with its surroundings. (Jensen 1936)

In 1927 the Olmsted Brothers, John C. Olmsted and Frederick Olmsted, Jr., designed a "wild garden and native plant preserve" for the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park. This was so successful with the public that it encouraged the National Park Service to expand the concept. Subsequently, in the 1930's, nurseries for the propagation and growth of native plants were established in national parks from Maine to California. In the 1930's the National Park Service adopted a policy of "landscape

naturalization," banning exotics from new landscape development and encouraging their removal where they were already established. (Sniderman 2001)

In the 1920's Edith A. Roberts, who was a professor of botany at Vassar, and Elsa Rehmann, a landscape architect, collaborated on a series of articles for the magazine *House Beautiful*: the articles were later published in book form as *American Plants for American Gardens*. The popular book was one of the first to promote the use of native plants in landscaping and gardening. It also discussed the natural grouping or associations of native plants in the landscape. Roberts was a graduate of the University of Chicago, where her major professor had been Dr. Henry C. Cowles, who was closely associated with Jens Jensen. Roberts' and Rehmann's first article appeared in *House Beautiful* in 1927, the same year the Olmsted Brothers designed their "wild garden" in Yosemite. The women were years ahead of their time in their thoughts on ecology and native plants and were a link in the chain of those interested in the subjects during the twentieth century. (Roberts and Rehmann 1996)

In the south, Louisiana had a great naturalist, Caroline Dormon (1888-1971). She spent her entire life in northern Louisiana as a student of native plants. Her early inspiration and education about the outdoors came from her father, James Dormon, a small town lawyer in Arcadia, Louisiana. Outside of town the family owned a tract of land, which they called Briarwood. They spent a great deal of time there, and Caroline spent hours roaming the woods with her father learning to know and love trees, plants, and birds. This is where she first began to transplant native plants, and then later she started propagating and hybridizing native plants. By replanting Briarwood with her favorite Louisiana native plants over the years, she created a park and an educational

center for botanical research. Dormon also planned the landscaping of many houses, most notably Longue Vue Gardens in New Orleans and Hodges Gardens in Shreveport. She also wrote books and articles, painted and exhibited her work, and lectured. She believed:

Perfect landscaping is doing the work in such an artfully-natural manner that it appears as if no planting has been done. The finished product closely approximates Nature at her best. Nowhere is this so true as in the landscaping of roadsides. These are most beautiful when they simply become a part of the surrounding countryside. (Dormon 1965)

Dormon was the first woman employed by the United States in forestry. She initiated the movement for a national park for Louisiana and worked with state and federal leaders to establish Kisatchie National Forest. But no matter what else she did, she always returned to Briarwood to work in her garden. (Dormon 1965)

There does not seem to be any particular individual whose work with natives was documented between Dormon and the present time. The next source of work with indigenous plants might have occurred in the nursery business.

The first nurseries in the Folsom, Louisiana area were started in the 1930's by the Magee Brothers, Price and Dallas. They were originally from the Folsom area but had been working in Texas. After returning from Texas, they bought the land where Folsom Nursery is today. Mr. Price Magee was a tile setter and made more money than Mr. Dallas Magee. He returned to Texas and sent financial help to Mr. Dallas Magee who saw to the every day operations of the nursery. At a later date, they separated and Mr. Price Magee retained ownership of Folsom Nursery, and Mr. Dallas Magee moved north

of Folsom to open Midway Nursery. (Bice 2004) But neither of these nurseries or those that opened around them, did any propagating or growing of native plants. Lyn Lowery, in the 1960's and 1970's, was a great resource for Texas natives. He was a pioneer in native plant cultivation and his nursery produced many hard to find specimens.

(Jenkins Sept 2004)

Marshall Mugnier, of Marshall's Home and Garden Showcase in Lafayette, Louisiana, and John Mayronne, Covington, Louisiana landscape architect, have both stated that no other nursery did the pioneering work in the introduction of new species and natives that Margie Jenkins has done. Nurseryman, Robert E. Lee notes: "People were absolutely resisting new varieties, all together, in fact where I worked you couldn't even ask, they would not take a new variety. If it was not a Formosa or the top ten on the list they did not want it." (Lee 2004)

Tom Dodd, Sr. in Alabama was the only nursery in this area introducing new plants into the nursery trade. (Mayronne 2004)

There have always been those who favored the use of native plants in public and private landscapes both for ecological and conservation reasons and also because these plants are most beautiful in their native setting. Unfortunately some of these native plants do not transplant well, challenging the nurseryman to find substitutes that work better in a specific environment. Ed Blake gained a good working knowledge of native plants during his years (1980's) at the Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, Mississippi:

As you get into natives, you find that they (natives) can have tiny little parameters that they can survive in. They are much harder to work with than the general palette out there in the nursery centers. That is what is so invaluable about

Margie's experience in growing these plants. You cannot use a plant that continues to die, wilt, or disappear over time. To her credit, in the case of a plant she sold you or gave you; she will tell you that you have to do some specific things with this plant. She takes all that experience and shares it with you to make these plants work well. (Blake 2004)

Only by finding the plants that do well in a particular locality will designers be able to obtain the desired results -- plants that survive in the garden, in the park, and along the highway edge without requiring a great deal of care. These plants could be natives and then again they could be new cultivars. The final distinction should be their adaptability to the specific location where they are needed to grow well.

The historical development in landscaping and horticulture would not be complete without an investigation of the nursery business in the United States. The Jenkins Nursery with its roots in nineteenth century small scale Louisiana farming goes on to become a full scale nursery by mid twentieth century. It is necessary to look at Jenkins Nursery and the other nurseries in Folsom, Louisiana within the context of the nursery business in the United States.

CHAPTER FOUR

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE U.S. NURSERY BUSINESS AS CONTEXT FOR FOLSOM'S NURSERY BUSINESS

The nursery business in the 1950's and 1960's was expanding rapidly. There was a great deal of new technology, especially technology that resulted in growth in container yards. They were using metal pots that often rusted, but the plants were much healthier than those in burlap. Soon to come were plastic trays and flats, polyethylene packing materials and greenhouse film. The arrival of new chemicals to control pests granted more freedom to growers. New and better transportation cut costs. Soon mechanization was being adopted by even the smallest nurseries. Plant breeding was making the first steps toward specific niches in the landscape. In the postwar period, landscape architects like Garrett Eckbo and Thomas Church were influencing landscape design by integrating plants with pools and other hardscape leading to the rise of what came to be called the design/build business. Simultaneously, Margie Jenkins was becoming involved in the nursery business. (Higginbotham 1990)

Insecticides that were so popular in the 1950's and early 1960's soon were scorned with the advent of the environmental movement. Within this changing context from aggressive usage of insecticides to a more aware environmental strategy, which peaked with Earth Day in 1970, the Jenkins Nursery used an organic approach in their fields. The fields were allowed to grow with plants that would enrich the soil and tilled under. Fire ants are not only been the biggest problem to Jenkins Nursery, but could be said to be their only problem that has to be controlled with insecticides. The transfer of ants on plants to customers in and out of state is a great risk. In the past, they used Malathion,

but are now trying a broad base insecticide which is detrimental in a one-time application--Tri-Star. The passage of the Federal Highway Beautification Act in 1965 gave a fresh demand for nurseries to meet. Since nurseries and clients could not depend on the more invasive insecticides to control pests, there was an economic backlash that resulted in the increased use of indigenous plants, which were becoming staples of the Jenkins Nursery. The American Association of Nurserymen hoped to help the nurseries with the idea of "Green Survival." This was a promotional program advanced the use of plants to buffer noise pollution and cool the earth. (Higginbotham 1990, Jenkins Sept 2004)

The recession of the early 1980's particularly hurt the horticulture industry, and many large nurseries went out of business, putting so many plants on the market at such low prices that all nurseries were in dire straights. But the freezes in the South for two straight years at this same time wiped out the over supply. After Jenkins lost so many Indica azaleas, she began her search for cold hardy plants imported from the northern states. The supply caught up with the demand when the late 1980's droughts eliminated any threat of oversupply. These droughts again put the nation in a conservation mode. (Higginbotham 1990, Jenkins Sept 2004)

If there is a theme for the Jenkins nursery business, it might be said that it is a conservation mode. Bryant Jenkins had the forethought to develop a system of water conservation, using seven wells, two ponds, a system of terracing, trenches, and sprinklers that capture and recycle water. In the tree farm, he used his good farming skills of aerating the land combined with minimal tilling to overcome the hard clay. The trees are planted within the contour lines of the terracing. This terracing helps the land to

absorb more of the water by slowing down the run off. This could be an interesting study of a unique laboratory by future horticulturists and landscape architects with an environmental interest. (Jenkins Sept 2004)

The climate, soil, and faithful workers have provided the basis for the Jenkins nursery and the nursery economy of Folsom, Louisiana in general. Most of the nursery business can be traced back to the Magee brothers, Price and Dallas and Magee's Folsom Nursery, which was established in the 1930's. Later Jack and Doris Magee's Evergreen Nursery opened; Doris is Margie Jenkins's sister. These were all early nurseries, which have led to the existence of around thirty nurseries in the area today. (Jenkins Sept 2004)

Many of the innovations in the nursery business all over the country were being used in Folsom. Floyd Magee, son of Dallas, sent the first nursery products by mail order from Folsom. He had a contract with Montgomery Ward to fill all of their catalogue sales. Jack and Doris Yates Magee sold plants for resale to Sears and to Phillips Petroleum for landscaping around their gas stations. Jack Magee used the first metal containers which had two holes punched in the bottom and were then dipped in a tar solution that turned them black but kept them from rusting. Clarence Mizell bought the first computer to keep track of his inventory. The computer was six feet by six feet and cost \$30,000. He also had the first potting machine, which automatically filled pots with potting soil. (Bice 2004)

The Jenkins Nursery used as many of these new innovations as their budget allowed. A potting machine is used every day, and all sorts of machinery are in evidence. Both Margie and Bryant Jenkins used their life-long farming skills to advantage throughout the development of their nursery.

CHAPTER FIVE

BIOGRAPHY: MARGIE YATES JENKINS

Margie Jenkins was born Margie Louise Yates on September 5, 1921 on her parents' farm in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. Her paternal grandfather, John Mousley Yates, came to this country from England in 1867; he served as the parish surveyor in St. Tammany Parish for many years. In 1904, John Yates and his brother Will laid out the village of Folsom at the request of the property owner, George Fendlason. Jenkins' family has a long history in this part of the state. This is Yates country. Over the years evidence of the Yates' name has appeared on two roads and the rodeo arena opened by Jenkins' brother John. Margie Jenkins has deep roots in this part of the state.

(Jenkins Feb 2004)

Margie Jenkins' father was Frederick Whitehurst Yates, and her mother was Camille Gardner Yates. Her father was one of eleven children, and her mother one of four girls. Three of the Yates' sons married Gardner daughters resulting in many double first cousins. Jenkins was the oldest of six children. Her three sisters are still living; her two brothers are deceased. After Margie Jenkins' birth, her mother decided that the St. Tammany farm was not a good place to raise children. Her father bought a sizeable farm in Washington Parish; her five brothers and sisters were born there. Although the house is gone, the live oaks give an outline as to where it stood, so imagination leads to a visual reminder of Jenkins' childhood. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

Margie Jenkins recalls that there were many people living on the property during her childhood, including black, sharecropper families who grew sugar cane and cotton. Jenkins' father provided the housing for these families. The sale of wool from a large



John Mousley Yates

John Mousley Yates was born on January 11, 1844 in London, England. He was educated as a Civil Engineer at Oxford. At the age of 23, he sailed from Liverpool, September 13, 1867, and arrived in New Orleans on November 8.

Mr. Yates and Sarah Jane Blocker were married June 19, 1873, and they had eleven children, which are listed below:

- Martha Ann Yates, wife of Will Wood
- William Henry Yates, husband of Jenny Sharp
- Catherine Drusilla Yates, wife of Edgar Brown
- John Springs Yates, unmarried
- Sarah Ellen Yates, wife of Glaris Spring
- Alice Yates, wife of Herman Gayer
- James Mousley Yates, husband of Elizabeth Hafley
- Charles Murray Yates, husband of Willeta Gardner
- Daniel Edwards Yates, husband of Pauline Gardner
- Frederick Whitehurt Yates, husband of Camille Gardner
- Susan Dorothy Yates, wife of Alton Richardson

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Mr. Yates served as St. Tammany Parish Surveyor. In 1904, he laid out the Village of Folsom at the request of Mr. George Fendlason, owner of the property.

John Mousley Yates died on August 19, 1922 at his home, originally the Penn House, circa 1800, which was located near Folsom.

Figure 1. Yates ancestry

herd of sheep was one source of income, in addition he grew cotton. The sugar cane, which he made into syrup, was another source of revenue. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

She also recalls their house as being unusual; it was raised off the ground, and the car was parked under the house. On a lower level, adjacent to the main part of the house, was a dining room with a fireplace, a kitchen, and a side porch. Upstairs four big rooms flanked a large central hallway. Often early houses would have this hallway open to the elements, but theirs was enclosed. The house had no electricity. The family had an outhouse. The kitchen and dining room were on a slightly lower level than the house, but still raised off the ground. A cistern was located between the kitchen and the house for easy access to both parts of the house. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

There were many comings and goings because the field workers had to come up to the well to water their animals. One of Jenkins' jobs as a child was to draw the water in the afternoon, fill all the buckets, and bring them into the house at night. There was a bucket with a big dipper used only for drinking, that sat on the porch during the day, but her father brought it into the house in the evening for anyone who wanted a drink during the night. Buckets of water were also needed to fill the reservoir by the stove, which gave them warm water all the time. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

They did not get electricity until the early 1940's when the REA, Rural Electric Assistance, came through. When the family took baths, they would bring water in the big tubs in which they washed clothes and heat it. The same process of obtaining water was used to wash clothes. They had many different pots of water to soap the clothes, to soak the clothes, and to rinse the clothes. Most likely this water came from the cistern, which contained rainwater and was the ideal type of water for washing. (Jenkins Apr 2004)



Figure 2. Margie Yates with cousin by the farmhouse in Washington Parish

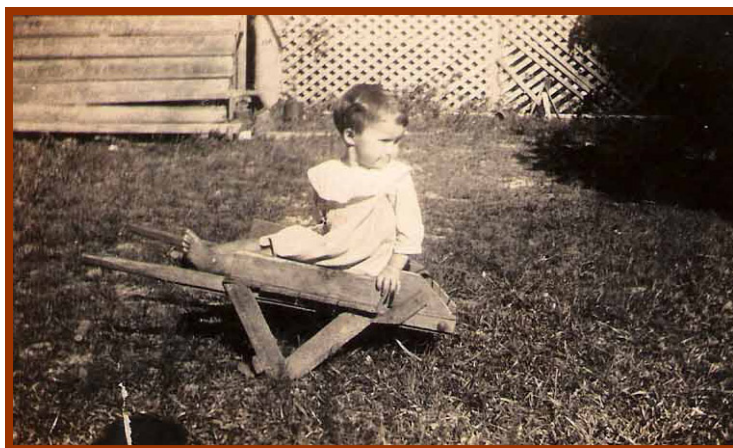


Figure 3. Margie Yates in a wheelbarrow 1924

Her mother had a big flower garden, which was quite a luxury at that time. Her father fenced it in to keep out the chickens. Mrs. Yates grew mostly annuals, but Jenkins also remembers touch-me-nots (*Impatiens*), hollyhocks (*Alcea*), petunias, larkspur (*Delphinium*), zinnias, and marigolds (*Calendula*) among the mass of flowers. Outside the fence she can recall the iris; she remembers her dad hiding eggs in their leaves at Easter. She still has some of the same common iris today which are like a bearded iris (*Iris x germanica*.) Such old fashion plants as the flowering almond (*Prunus glandulosa*), hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) and weigela (*Weigela florida*) grew in the yard. Her mother's sense of esthetics and love of the beauty of flowers influenced Jenkins. When your childhood is surrounded by beauty, your yearning for this continues into adulthood. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

The family had a larger garden for vegetables further down the hill from the house. This garden contained peppers (*Capsicum*), cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*), lettuce (*Lacuca sativa*), mustard greens (*Brassica juneca*), tomatoes (*Lycopersicon lycopersicum*), peas (*Pisum sativum*), beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*), sweet corn (*Zea mays*), okra (*Hibiscus esculenta*), squash (*Cucurbita*), and butter beans (*Phaseolus lunatus*). An unusual vegetable at the time, broccoli (*Brassica botrytis*) was grown, another indicator that her mother had unusual tastes. Her mother did not work in the fields as many women of that era did. Her father seems to have been able to accomplish all his work and still give his wife some freedom from drudgery. (Jenkins Sept 2004)

Jenkins grew up during the Great Depression, which left a profound effect on her generation. She says her family never had any money but did not feel poor because there was always plenty to eat. They had a smoke house full of meat, sausage, and ham. Her

mother did not can meat, as some women did back in those days. Instead a man would come by with an animal, that he had slaughtered, wrapped in a sheet, and the family would buy meat. Her parents always had a big vegetable garden, and in winter they often ate pork and the dried beans that her dad had planted, which were kept in a big sack. These beans were light with a pink vein and were called Della beans after the woman who gave her mother the first beans. Her dad let them dry completely in the field and would gather them up and shake the stalks. When there was a good wind, he would take a stick and thrash them and the beans would fall out and the wind would carry the chaff away. Jenkins says that over the years she has not been able to find these beans, which may belong to an heirloom variety. (Jenkins Sept 2004)

The family also planted plenty of greens to eat during the winter. Her mother canned fruits and vegetables, and the family always had cows, so there was plenty of milk, sweet cream, and butter. When her mother worked in her garden, a black woman, called Aunt Liddy who lived on the farm, watched Jenkins and her siblings and sometimes fed them baked sweet potatoes. Her mother taught her children to be respectful by always requiring them to address the people who lived and worked on the farm as aunt or uncle. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

Jenkins attended a little three-room school through the sixth grade; after that, she had to catch the big school bus to Franklinton to attend Southwest School. She remembers her father helping her with a great deal of homework. She also remembers that he could get the answer quickly but could not always tell her how he got the answer. She attended high school at Franklinton High, and during her senior year the school burned. She finished the year at the Fair Grounds going to classes in different buildings.



Figure 4. Margie and Doris Yates

It was very muddy going from building to building even with gravel walks. Graduation was held in the First Baptist Church in 1938. Despite the difficult times, the family knew the value of a good education, and the parents made it possible. (Jenkins Sept 2004)

Within the family dynamics Jenkins and her father had a special relationship, and as she says "I would tag along behind him a lot." She often went on excursions with her dad; she can remember him taking her fishing at the "old place," which is what they called the family farm in St. Tammany Parish. This relationship provided her with a sense of self-worth that has lasted all through her lifetime. Her father never made distinctions between his sons or daughters. In fact the only bad thing Jenkins ever heard her father say about another person was "he's kind of a sorry ole pup." (Jenkins Sept 2004)

Mr. Yates and the children also collected the Mayhaw's (*Crataegus opaca*) fruit, which is a native southern hawthorn that flowers as it leafs out and produces crabapple like fruit. When the slews along the river were full of water, her father would help her gather the fruit into a flour sifter. Her mother used this highly prized fruit to make jelly. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

Since the Yates family had one of the few automobiles, a Model T, her dad often had to drive people from the neighborhood to the doctor. They also had the first radio in the community, a Philco that Mr. Yates swapped for syrup. In the 1930's before the advent of electricity, they had an Electrolux refrigerator which used kerosene for fuel. Jenkins' job was to fill the fuel bucket every evening. (Jenkins Feb, Sept 2004) Mrs. Yates made most of their clothes, and after Jenkins took sewing lessons in the eighth grade, she helped her mother sew for the family. Jenkins remembers fondly making her youngest sister, Dixie, a coat from the wool material of a dress given to her mother.



Figure 5. Frederick and Camille Yates wedding picture

This frugal upbringing has stayed with Jenkins and has given her a prudent attitude in her personal and business life, most certainly in her financial dealings in the nursery business. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

Jenkins' mother had an unusual background for the early part of the twentieth century; she came from a broken home. Jenkins' maternal grandparents, the Gardners, were separated. Her grandmother, Isabelle Sharp Gardner, was a hard worker. She bought 160 acres of land which she and her four daughters paid for by farming, which was extremely difficult to do in those years. Late in his life, her grandfather Gardner lived with Jenkins' parents. His family had owned a steamboat before the Civil War, and, as Jenkins said, "they had plenty, but after the war they had nothing." Jenkins' father thought that her grandpa Gardner was lazy, but Jenkins respected and admired her grandmother Gardner's determination and hard work. Her grandmother Gardner certainly was one of her role models. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

Jenkins' Aunt Pauline was another one of her models. She was her mother's sister and married her father's brother Daniel. Her husband had died during the flu epidemic right after World War I. Pauline's only daughter was eighteen months old when her husband died, and she never remarried. Margie recalls that Aunt Pauline could do anything. She was much different from Jenkins' mother, who voiced her inability to do certain projects. Aunt Pauline could plow, she could cook, she could sew and she had a car long before most women drove. She loved plants and learned how to graft. Jenkins has a camellia in her backyard today that her Aunt Pauline grafted. Jenkins' affinity for plants started at an early age as she remembers that all her family was plant people. (Jenkins Feb, Sept 2004)



Figure 6. Aunt Pauline Yates

In 1936, the family left Washington Parish and moved back to the family farm in St. Tammany Parish. Mr. Yates felt that he had to sell the Washington Parish farm because of the depression and because land taxes were so high. Today Jenkins says that if her father had known that the end of the depression was near, he would never have sold the farm. This was the biggest regret of his life. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

Their St. Tammany house was five or six miles from the school bus stop; her dad would drive the children to the bus stop over dirt trails. During rainy weather the mud was sometimes so bad her dad could not get through, and they would have to miss school. They soon moved to another piece of property he owned in Washington Parish, and Jenkins' mother lived there all her life. Now her sister Doris lives there. Doris was married to Jack Magee. During World War II they were both in the service. Doris served in the WAVES and was stationed in New York City and Jacksonville, Florida. Jack was a paratrooper in the Philippines and Japan. After the war they opened their own nursery business, Evergreen Nursery. (Jenkins Feb 2004, Bice 2004)

Jenkins graduated from high school in 1938 when times were still hard. She went back to her high school and took some extra courses the next year, one of which was typing. Jenkins' first job, during the Christmas season, was selling toys and wrapping gifts for a dollar a day at a variety store in Franklinton. The National Youth Administration, under the auspices of the Works Project Administration, opened an office in Franklinton. It offered a program paid for by the federal government that placed young people in places to work in order to gain work experience. Jenkins applied and was sent to work for the Farm Security Administration, which later became the Farmers Home Administration, a federal loan office. While she was working there, a permanent job

opening became available. After passing the civil-service test, she was hired in May, 1941 as a clerk typist at a salary of \$960 per year. She learned her bookkeeping skills well and used them to do the bookkeeping for the farm and nursery later on. She worked in Franklinton, except for three months in 1942 when she worked in the New Roads office. This was during World War II, and many of the clerks and office managers were leaving their jobs to be with their husbands, who were in the armed service. She was offered numerous other jobs, with promotions, but she would not leave home until a job opened up in Covington, which she accepted. The entire time she worked in Franklinton she was living at home with her parents. She had cousins who had a dairy farm right outside Franklinton where she would stay sometimes during the week. She would make the milk deliveries with them in the mornings before they took her to her job, picking up the empty glass bottles and leaving bottles of milk. (Jenkins Sept 2004)

In January 1943, Jenkins moved to Covington to live in her own apartment. She continued to work at the Farmers Home Administration after her marriage to Bryant Jenkins, until 1954 when the office was consolidated with the Washington Parish Office.

Her husband, Bryant grew up on a farm off Highway 25, north of Folsom, not too far from her parent's farm. His family worked in the logging business. They would buy the timber, cut it down, and then haul it to the mill. Jenkins first became acquainted with Bryant when he and his father cleared some land for Jenkins' father. Bryant Jenkins had first dated Margie's sister Doris, but they did not get along. When Jenkins was working in Covington, he would ask her to go to the movies with him, sometimes with his brothers tagging along. They would arrive to pick her up in a big timber truck, and what



Figure 7. Bryant and Margie Jenkins wedding October 1946



Figure 8. Margie Jenkins dressed for work

had begun as a friendship turned into a romance. Bryant and Margie Jenkins were married in October of 1946 at a little old Baptist church near her mother's home. At this time Bryant was in the Air Force at Kessler Field, in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he was an instructor. Jenkins stayed in Covington while her husband was in the service. When he was discharged, they continued to live and work in Covington until 1951.

(Jenkins Apr, Sept 2004)

They bought ninety acres in 1949, while they were still living in Covington, on LA 16 between Amite and Franklinton for \$4500.00. The couple had always wanted to have some land of their own to settle on. Not unlike most that are raised on farms, they missed the rural life. The old house on the farm property had no electricity and only a well for water. After doing work to the house and property for two years, in 1951, they moved to the land where Jenkins still lives today. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

When they closed the Covington office, Farmers offered to transfer her to the office in Natchitoches. She now had children and that was too far away from home. She left the office of Farmers on Friday and started work at the Central Louisiana Electric Company (CLECO), as secretary to the division manager, Charles Goodgame on the next Monday. Bryant Jenkins worked with heavy equipment for a company called Maxon Construction. Maxon had the contract to build the locks on the Pearl River, and Bryant worked for several years with that company. After they moved to the farm, Bryant Jenkins kept working for a company that built ponds and cleared land. Margie was by now commuting from the farm she and Bryant had bought north of Folsom, and after two years, in 1955, with two children and another on the way, she quit working outside the home. (Jenkins Feb 2004) It must have taken much budgeting and fortitude to achieve

their dream. Jenkins' commute to Covington over gravel roads which took about an hour and a half is beyond most of our understanding. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

Jenkins had plenty to do taking care of the children, growing a big vegetable garden, filling the freezer, and taking care of the farm bookkeeping. Her garden contained much the same vegetables as her mother's had, and she had a goal each year of freezing fifty bags each of butter beans and peas.

These were busy years - Margie and Bryant started a dairy farm and their first child was born in 1951, followed by four more children. They worked hard to make the dairy a going concern. Later when all the children were in school, they started a small nursery.

In the spring of 1951, they planted a small field of watermelons as their first cash crop. They continued growing the watermelons for years. They most often planted the watermelon (*Citrullus lanatus*) 'Charleston Grey' and 'Jubilee' variety. They would hire high-school students to help them haul the watermelons to the trucks when they were ripe. Jenkins would feed all these extra mouths during that time. When they started the dairy in 1952, Bryant Jenkins stopped working elsewhere because Margie Jenkins was still working for the electric company in Covington and commuting from the farm. After the dairy was somewhat established, he went back to work for T.L. James Construction Company. He worked for them for several years building roads in St. Tammany Parish. He was a hard worker. He rose early every morning, milked the cows, drove over thirty miles to run a bulldozer every day, returning to the farm, another thirty miles trip, to milk the cows again at night. Bryant Jenkins was awarded the Outstanding Young Farmer Award for Louisiana in 1959 by the Jaycees. After Margie Jenkins left her job in



Figure 9. Old farm house Bryant and Margie Jenkins bought in 1949



Figure 10. Jenkins family before the birth of Mark



Figure 11. Bryant Jenkins with his large watermelons

Covington, she rarely worked in the dairy except to feed the calves. They had fireplaces in the house, and she could not leave the children there alone. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

Many of Jenkins' relatives were already in the nursery business. Her brother Fred was married to Price Magee's daughter, Lozanne; and her sister; Doris was married to Dallas Magee's only son, Jack. Brothers, Price and Dallas Magee had opened the first nursery business in Folsom during the 1930's. Margie's brother and her brother-in-law each also started nursery businesses when they got married. Having these relatives in the nursery business gave Bryant and Margie Jenkins a basic understanding of how they could make a little extra money without risking much. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

They actually got into the nursery business by chance. In March of 1960, a neighbor sold some timber and had cut over the line onto the Jenkins' property. They were paid for the logs. They did not have any pressing debts, so with the money paid to them for the logs, they bought some wax ligustrum (*Ligustrum japonica*) liners. They took very good care of them, and sold them at a nice profit, in excess of \$2000. Proud of this success, they next bought azaleas (according to Jenkins something like a *Rhododendron indicum* 'Judge Solomon' or 'Formosa'), but when Bryant Jenkins fertilized them right down the row just as he did the corn, they all died. Azaleas should be fertilized sparingly with none of the fertilizer touching the leaves. In spite of killing the azaleas, they purchased other plants and found themselves in the nursery business. For approximately the next fifteen years, they ran a basic nursery growing field stock such as yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*) and ligustrum (*Ligustrum japonica*.) (Jenkins Feb 2004)

In the spring of 1960, they purchased a fifty-acre tract of land about three miles west of their home to plant watermelons (same varieties as previously noted.) That fall,

"Say it with Flowers"

Richard's Nursery

SPECIALIZING IN
LINING OUT STOCK

RICHARD POLAKOVICH

PHONE 748-3271

FOREST HILL, LA., JAN. - 6, 1966

SOLD TO JENKINS NURSERY

ADDRESS

SHIP WHEN

TERMS REQ. NO.

QUAN.	ITEMS	UNIT PRICE	TOTAL
250	YALPOIN		11.25
250	AMERICAN HOLLY		13.75
1000	SPRUE PINE		38.00
500	LEUCANT		30.00
500	BOTTLE BRUSH		35.00
500	COCC AUSTRALIS PALM		30.00
1000	ABELIA		30.00
500	GOLDEN RHIN		37.50
500	VIBURNUM - LUCIDUM		35.00
500	SOPHORA		15.00
300	MAENLIA - ACUMINATA		30.00
1500	CLEYERA JAPONICA		112.50
500	SASSANGUA - CLEOPATRA		25.00
			440.00
	LESS 12%		53.00
			387.00

Figure 12. Receipt for stock order by Jenkins Nursery - 1966

PHONE PI 8-3406

INVOICE

P.O. DRAWER 100

L. H. Butter's Nursery

FOREST HILL, LA.

Bryant Jenkins
Armiti La.

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
1100	Lim. Palm	27 50
1000	Water Palm	25 —
1000	Yellow	25 —
425	Linkage	38 00
1000	Whipped w/ w/ Dimp	53 20
1000	Magnolia	40 —
600	Stratagema	21 00
		231 50
	<i>L. H. Jenkins</i>	86 25
		145 25
		145 25
1000	Cherry Laurel	35 00
	Tax	
	TOTAL	180 25

WE APPRECIATE YOUR BUSINESS

Figure 13. Receipt for stock ordered by Jenkins Nursery 1965

PHONE MOBILE, ALA.
342-2611

INVOICE

16 MILES WEST OF MOBILE
MOFFAT ROAD



ORDER NO.

INVOICE NO.

SEMMES, ALABAMA

WHOLESALE ONLY

December 13, 1965

Shipped to Picked up at Nsy.

Sold to Jenkins Nursery
Rt. 2, Box 140A
Amite, La.

Terms: NET

Via

1000	Ilex Crenata Helleri	8-12"	.15 ea.	\$150.00 PAID
500	Osmanthus Fragrans	6-8"	.14 ea.	\$ 70.00
1100	Ilex Vomitoria Dwarf	6-8"	.225 ea.	247.50
500	Ilex C. Rotunda	6-8"	.225 ea.	112.50
500	Ilex C. Burfordi Dwarf	8-12"	.30 ea.	150.00
1000	Ilex C. Burfordi	6-8"	.18 ea.	180.00
500	Ilex Aquipernyi Brilliant	6-8"	.20 ea.	100.00
250	Pittosporum Varie	6-8"	.16 ea.	40.00
				<hr/> \$900.00

PAID

MANY THANKS!



Received of the American Association of Nurserymen
the sum of \$900.00 for the purchase of the following
plants: 1000 Ilex Crenata Helleri, 500 Osmanthus
Fragrans, 1100 Ilex Vomitoria Dwarf, 500 Ilex C.
Rotunda, 500 Ilex C. Burfordi Dwarf, 1000 Ilex C.
Burfordi, 500 Ilex Aquipernyi Brilliant, 250
Pittosporum Varie.

Figure 14. Receipt for stock order by Jenkins Nursery - 1965

they purchased another one hundred twenty-eight acres across the road from the fifty, which was an old tung oil tree (*Aleurites fordii*) plantation. Both tracts cost \$100 per acre. Bryant Jenkins cleaned up the tung oil trees, and they sold the nuts for several years until the trees were destroyed by a hurricane. The nursery operation was started on this old plantation land and is still there today.

The Jenkins' youngest child started school in the fall of 1966, and Jenkins had some free time. She had a woman who came in to help her with the household work, and when they were finished, they made cuttings the rest of the day. Bryant Jenkins built his wife a small plastic house for rooting cuttings in their back yard.

By the 1970's many other nurseries were established nearer to Folsom that sold the same plants as the Jenkins did. Because there was no need for buyers to drive all the way up to their property, their business grew stagnant. In 1975, Margie and Bryant Jenkins finally decided to turn off the water and close down the nursery. Most of their income came from the dairy, so it was not a financial hardship to close the nursery. In the fall of 1973, the family had started building a new house, cutting longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) timber from the tree farm for the lumber, and doing much of the work themselves. The new house is exactly where the old one was beside a large live oak tree. They finished and moved into the new house in January 1976. Ed Blake recollects:

Her daughter had a surprise birthday party for her, and we went to it. You really begin to see at (an occasion) like that the wide variety of people she has affected. She is such a modest person. Her home is elegant and grand in space. She has vision, but it is not ostentatious. (Blake 2004)



Figure 15. Margie Jenkins' home that she and Bryant built

In 1977 after the family had finished building the new house, a summer course at LSU, aimed at extension workers, county agents, and others who were interested in design and design theory was being taught by Dr. Neil Odenwald. Jenkins' daughter, Margie Ann, and Dr. Odenwald persuaded Jenkins to take the course, which completely changed Jenkins' thinking about plants. She learned about plants she had never heard of, such as the Taiwan Flowering Cherry (*Prunus campanulata*.) She now knew what she wanted to do. "When I came back that was my goal," she said. "I wanted to grow things that were unusual and of course a lot of the old plants, too, that I wanted to grow - and of course natives." (Jenkins Feb 2004)

Jenkins, now at the age of fifty-six, was ready to take on the challenge of reopening the nursery and growing different types of plants while paying off the mortgage on their house. She hired six black women to work in the nursery; the dairy was paying their salaries, so she did not have to borrow any money to restart the nursery. Jenkins says, "I had two goals in mind, one to grow new and unusual plants not found in most nurseries and to grow native plants for the landscape trade." She salvaged many plants from the old nursery, such as the yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*) and rotunda (*Ilex cornuta* 'Rotunda') hollies that were still alive. "We picked those things up, trimmed their roots and tops, repotted and fertilized them, and by fall they were pretty." (Jenkins Apr 2004)

After talking with many of the big wholesalers around Folsom, Jenkins found that none of them were catering to customers in New Orleans or to the small contractor who was supplying them. She decided that this was her niche: "the guys in the pickup trucks." This prediction has come true, and every day at Jenkins Nursery every size and color of pickup truck can be seen.



Figure 16. Land where nursery is located at the present time – 2004



Figure 17. Camille Yates with her all of her children

Ed Blake made a visit to the Jenkins Nursery about this time, the first of many subsequent trips. "The most amazing thing about the trip was to see this small, fragile woman," he said. "Her husband was like a bear of a man and her sons were like that too. They'd throw around those plants, and they were just hefty guys. But the minute this little petite woman came out, you knew that she was the person the nursery revolved around." (Blake 2004)

The work ethic is strong in all of the Jenkins family; Bryant Jenkins and his sons all worked in the nursery at one time or another. They did the loading and were famous for being able to load a truck to the maximum. Ed Blake recalls his amazement when unloading a truck at the Crosby Arboretum: "Especially when Bryant would load those trucks, and I would have to unload when we got back to the Arboretum, I could not believe how many plants he had gotten on that truck." (Blake 2004)

Bryant Jenkins liked mostly to deal with the machinery and finding bargains like the salvage roofing used under the pots instead of usual brown ground cover. He bought several antique tractors that are still in a barn at the Jenkins' farm. He enjoyed driving them in the Franklinton Fair Parade every October, as well as the Mardi Gras Parade and Fourth of July Parade in Bogalusa.

Over the years as local help became scarce, more Mexican workers were hired. Bryant Jenkins could be very contrary and would give the Mexican workers a great deal of grief. He and Margie had some disagreements about their children working or not working in the nursery. Bryant also thought that Margie spent too much time with the customers, quite often talking about plants. "He never really understood my passion for



Figure 18. Pickup trucks at Jenkins Nursery



Figure 19. Mark Jenkins loading pickup trucks



Figure 20. Machinery at the nursery

plants," explained Margie. "The best plant to him was the one on the truck going out the gate." He was very happy when he was able to draw his Social Security check; he called it his "mail box money." (Jenkins Feb 2004)

Both Margie and Bryant Jenkins were products of hard working families. Bryant Jenkins did not know how to do anything except work. Jenkins in her later years, and because of the success of her nursery business, has learned to enjoy traveling and meetings, centered on her nursery business.

In 1995, Miss Margie was stunned and grief-stricken when both Bryant and their son, Fred were diagnosed with cancer. "When I went back to their house after Bryant's funeral, she had the antique tractors, that he had collected, out, up on a hill," recalls Ed Blake. (Blake 2004)

In this same time period her ninety-seven year old mother also passed away. Within eighteen months, she had lost her eldest son, her husband, and her mother. This was a truly difficult time for her. Jenkins had her grief to deal with as well as settling three estates. She also had the nursery to run.

In 1993, Margie and Bryant Jenkins were named Nursery Persons of the Year by the Louisiana Nursery Association. Jenkins herself received the James A. Foret Award from the Louisiana Nursery Association in 2000 in recognition of service, dedication, and outstanding contribution to Louisiana's 'Green Industry.' In 2002, she was awarded the Karlene DeFatta Award by the Louisiana Native Plant Society. This award is for outstanding accomplishment in the conservation, preservation, and education of the public in the appreciation and use of native plants.



Figure 21. Jenkins Nursery



Figure 22. First Lady of Louisiana Nurseries 2000

Today, in her eighties, Margie Jenkins attends many meetings, workshops, and symposia where she still seeks and shares knowledge. She exhibits in the Mobile Tradeshow every January and The Texas Exposition every August. Each year, she attends the National Azalea Meeting and the International Plant Propagators' Society, Southern Region Meeting. She also attends the Southern Plant Conference which is held every other year. In 2001, she attended the Magnolia Society meeting held in Ireland. She is also a member of numerous other plant societies and organizations. She likes going to events such as the Native plant meeting, but she does not like to go alone and will usually catch a ride with friends who live nearby. Her daughter, Margie Ann, works with her and runs the office. Her son, Mark has his own nursery, but he shares office space with Miss Margie and Margie Ann. Her son Tim grows plants and is a plant broker. Son, Jeff, also has some plants, a bulldozer and works part-time in the nursery. All of her children live in the immediate area, as do her sisters. She has eight granddaughters and one step-granddaughter. This is Yates country, and they are very much in evidence when you drive down the country roads. There are signs for Yates Road and Yates Arena.

Visitors to the nursery find "Miss Margie" such a happy and fulfilled person today that they seldom give a thought to her age. She welcomes them all, whether they are students from Louisiana State University or her biggest customer. As she says,

There is nothing like the nursery business, and I love it. My normal day starts at seven a.m. and ends about seven p.m. The older a person gets, the more they need something to do in order to keep an active mind and active body. There is certainly no shortage of 'something to do' around here.

Margie Jenkins continues:

Over the years I have come in contact with so many wonderful people whom I respect and love, I cannot imagine life without 'my nursery family.' I also pray that I will never have to retire. I really need to live a long time to see how my plant crosses will turn out.

CHAPTER SIX

PASSION FOR PLANTS

Master Propagator

Botany.com defines propagation as the various methods by which plants are increased. Some of the different techniques of propagation include seeds, division or separation, softwood cuttings or slips, grafting or budding, and layering.

Jenkins' first love is involving herself in the search for new or lost varieties of plants. She will tell you: "Keep your eyes open going down the road for that one plant that is a little better because we can always get cuttings or seeds. That's why I like seeds so well. We get all these variations from seeds. Plant seeds on sphagnum moss. Plant them under lights, and they will be up in about a week. And keep them under lights, and when they get about three inches you can plant them out." (Jenkins Feb 2004)

David Drylie, from Green Images Nursery, spotted a leucothoe in the wild. Jenkins saw his *Leucothoe axillaris* in a gallon pot at a plant show and tried to buy it from him. He would not sell because he wanted to use it to take cuttings. But he did give her a couple of cuttings. She started growing the plant, and it was beautiful. She and Drylie conferred on what to call this particular *Leucothoe axillaris*. He wanted to call it Florida as that was where he had found it. Mr. Tommy Dodd, who is a large grower, would not call it by that name because there is already a Florida in existence - *Leucothoe populifolia*. He included it in his catalogue as 'Margie Jenkins.' So now if you are in a nursery and see a *Leucothoe axillaris* 'Margie Jenkins,' you will know exactly where it came from and why it has that name. In May 2004, Jenkins visited a nursery in Atlanta,



Figure 23. *Leucothoe axillaris*

Georgia, where a friend, who has a large, beautiful garden, asked her to come by and tell him which of his two *Leucothoe axillaris* 'Margie Jenkins' was correct. She found that they were both the same plant, *Leucothoe axillaris* 'Margie Jenkins,' just from two different nursery sources.

When Jenkins took the landscape design course from Dr. Odenwald in the summer of 1977, one of their field trips was to Rosedown, a plantation in St. Francisville. At the plantation, little Rosedown gardenias that make hips were being sold. The hip is more closely associated with the fruit of a rose, which is a round bulb at the base of the flower and stays on the plant after the flower has died. Miss Margie bought two Rosedown gardenias and started growing them. Their leaves were narrower than other gardenia leaves. When she planted some of the seeds, one of the resulting plants bloomed more profusely and had leaves that were broader. She started propagating this new plant and called it the Rosedown hip gardenia. The name, Rosedown hip gardenia was not officially used until Rosedown, the plantation, was owned by the state.

It is a well-established principle among plant people that a plant should never be transplanted from the wild unless it is going to be destroyed in the wild. Homeowners, businesses, and road construction crews destroy more native habitats than plant collectors ever have. Gardeners and nurseries are urged to propagate native plants, let them reach a landscape size, and plant them. This concept is called "conservation through propagation." Jenkins has never had to be urged toward conservation because that is the way she has always operated. The vast majority of the plants sold by Jenkins Nursery are ones that she has propagated and grown to the right size to be planted in a landscape



Figure 24. Potting shed, potting machine, and empty pots



Figure 25. Native azaleas (*Rhododendron canescens*)

site. She has never been taught any of the steps for propagation. All of her knowledge comes from experience and her natural talent for propagation. This is one of the attributes that is repeated by those who provided oral histories - her natural ability as a propagator and horticulturist. Bill Fontenot talks about propagation in his book:

As with my treatment on landscape design, I'll preface this section [on propagation] with the statement that I do not, by any stretch of the imagination, consider myself an expert in this area. Folks falling in this category have achieved legendary status in the South – folks like the Dodds in Alabama, Margie Jenkins in Louisiana, and Ted Doreumus in Texas – all outstanding and dedicated propagators of southern natives. (Fontenot 1992)

Fontenot goes on, as other writers have, to point out:

. . . it is impossible to provide blanket statements regarding propagation . . . Individual species respond to various propagation techniques in bewilderingly diverse fashion. Those people who have dedicated their very lives to solving these puzzles are fairly tight-lipped when it comes to discussing their results with just anybody. (Fontenot 1992)

Jenkins' generosity with her knowledge is therefore unusual. Also, the fact that she has very little formal education has no effect on her propagation abilities. She tells of one of her first forays into propagation:

I joined the American Horticulture Society way back in the 1950's, and they would send out these little publications every quarter. I still have them. In one of those publications, there was an article on native azaleas. It showed this little seedpod and what it looked like. So I never will forget, it had to be about 1966 or

1967, because I remember I had been down in our woods and the mosquitoes were horrible. I had all these bites, and my dad came by and asked me where I had been. He died in 1968 so I know that was about the first time I gathered azalea seeds. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

We can see further evidence of either the farsightedness of Jenkins, or the lack of dissemination of knowledge about propagation, when in the last month a young man questioned her about the availability of a certain azalea. She informed him that it was unavailable, but he could grow it from seed. His reply was that azaleas did not have seeds! She, in her always-patient voice, told him if he would come by she would show him what the seeds looked like and how to propagate them. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

There are many mysteries in propagating. All sorts of fine-tuning are used for each type of propagation. All of which are more details than the average person can understand. Jenkins does not seem to fear the complexity of propagation, and she will share her knowledge with anyone who is interested. Sharing her experiences of propagation, she enjoys working with another during this process. Dr. Odenwald explains what makes Jenkins so successful:

Why something will root on June fifteenth but not on July first? I think of things like the native azaleas. I think there has always been that mystery about how to propagate certain plants and one of them is the native *canescens* (wild azalea), and Margie can tell you exactly that the time is between a very soft new growth and before that new growth hardens off. So that it is in that intermediate stage that most of us would say it would be impossible to propagate something that is as



Figure 26. Margie Jenkins with native azaleas (*Rhododendron canescens*) she raised from seed in bloom

soft and flaccid as the new growth on a *canescens* (wild azalea). But not Margie; she found that window, and it is like a week to ten day period. (Odenwald 2004)

All of Jenkins' discoveries have taken time and patience--one quality that makes her such a skillful propagator. Being able to grow plants from tiny little specks of seeds or from inch long bits of stalk can only be accomplished by those who are infinitely patient. Jenkins told me about trying to root cuttings from wild azaleas:

For years I knocked myself out trying to root those cuttings. I could grow them from seeds, but if I got one I particularly liked, I would have to take a cutting to grow more of the same. I would do all sorts of things; any thing that I had read or someone had told me. One time I took a trip up to the Gloster Arboretum, and a friend, Jim Lynch, was there. I told him about my problem, and he asked if I had ever tried it when the wood is so tender that you don't think it will root? He told me to take the cuttings, when they were "butter-soft" and using no hormones, drop them into a bucket of water. The time to do this is in the springtime, when the first new growth appears. When I have the bucket full, I put them into a plastic bag and put them in the ice chest I have with me. Then I put them in the refrigerator over night. They are so tender that you cannot stick them; you have to make a hole in the potting medium (bark) to put them in. I put them in my green house with a mister on them until they root. At that time they must be removed from the mist. They will root. I have told so many people, because I worked so hard for so many years to learn this simple process. I do not use any rooting hormone or fertilizer in my mix or hormone on my plant.

(Jenkins Sept 2004)



Figure 27. View across container yard - azaleas

Jenkins is still, at the age of 83, continuing to grow new plants just as she has for all these years. To the untrained eye, it seems impossible that these tiny plants will mature into something that will be big enough to be sold, but after her explanation, it does seem reasonable. With grow lights, the seeds mature more quickly and with the use of her potting medium (bark) for the rooting of cuttings, they can also mature quickly. It is still amazing to look over the grounds of her nursery and try to fathom the fact that ninety-five percent of all these plants began with Jenkins' propagation. Today, she is working on azaleas that she calls her "two-timers," those that bloom twice in one year. As Dr. Odenwald says:

She's always plowing new ground; she is always working with some of these others varieties. On the negative side maybe some of these things that she has tried have not been as successful (popular with nurseries, designers, and customers) as the 'Pride of Mobile' (*Rhododendron indicum* 'Elegans Superba') or the 'Formosa' (*Rhododendron indicum* 'Formosa'), but she is not afraid to try new plant material. (Odenwald 2004)

As Jenkins guides you around her nursery, she will make an off-hand remark that certain plants are not doing as she wanted, or another is not selling, and she needs to get rid of them. She will tell you at the present time she does not carry as many varieties as she did in the past. The reason is that she has found some plants did not live up to her expectations, or they could never sell in the nursery business. Still, she has a hard time writing off a variety because she loves all plants.

Just this year she has rooted cuttings from the silver-bell (*Halesia diptera*), a hard to find plant. She has planted the seeds, but they have not come up in two years even



Figure 28. White Watchet azalea named for Jenkins' son Fred 'Freddy'
(*Rhododendron*, Robin Hill Hybrid Azalea, 'Freddy')

though she has checked the seeds, which have a hard coating, to make sure they are still alive. She is hoping the seeds will come up soon. Jenkins is equally excited with her rooting of the flowering apricot (*Prunus mume*), a variegated cleyera (*Ternstroemia variegata*) and a *Pieris* from New Zealand. (Jenkins Sept 2004)

Her latest azalea project is a white Watchet (*Rhododendron*, Robin Hill Hybrid Azalea, 'Watchet'). When her son Fred passed away, he had some Watchets in his part of the nursery. She transplanted them into five-gallon containers. She decided not to trim them, to just let them grow into woodland plants. One fall, when they were blooming in a mass of pink, she saw one with white flowers. It had one limb with white flowers with little pink specks in the throat. The next spring she took cuttings from that one white limb and has gotten it to grow. Jenkins wants to have it registered and name it 'Freddy'. She had the plant in bloom, Saturday, October 9, 2004 at the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association meeting in Folsom.

It might seem that there could be very little difference in going from propagating to cultivation. For this study, a slight difference is used only to point out the diverse stages in Jenkins preparation of a plant ready for sale. Plants such as the azaleas and other small shrubs are always kept in the container yard. Larger plants such as crape myrtles, Japanese maples, or pines are started in the container yard and then progress to the field to grow until they will be dug up when large enough to sell. No matter where they are kept, what started as propagation has now gone into cultivation.

Success at Cultivation

After Jenkins has found a new plant, she rarely has trouble in the cultivation of



Figure 29. Margie Jenkins overseeing the nursery on her golf cart

that plant. The container yard and the fields of her nursery are full of plants that she started. When the nursery sells out of a certain plant, if there is no more of that plant growing in the field, the stock is depleted for that year. Unlike other nurseries, that purchase plants from larger wholesale nurseries, at Jenkins Nursery, "Miss Margie" has started and cultivated ninety-five percent of the plants. The big trucks are there only to take out plants and to bring in more potting bark for Jenkins, who with her crew, is potting plants all year.

She is always roaming the yard, observing what needs fertilizing, what needs pruning, and what needs to be repotted to a larger size pot. She continually supervises her crew, making sure that they are always busy. She does not do this in a remote manner either. She drives all over the nursery in her modified golf cart which has a rack on the back, so that she can pick up plants for customers or plants that need attention. If she does not have a customer, you can be sure she is either starting plants or seeing that all the stock is in the appropriate location. Wayne Womack observes:

She is a tenacious, dedicated person who would go to the end of the world to get something done properly and try to find new things that would grow in our climate. She is such a superb grower. She has such an intuitive sense of how to grow things. That is fascinating to watch. She is certainly the person doing exactly what she should be doing. Her energy is amazing and I think part of that is, she is doing what she loves and is superb at and as a result she stays very energized and very youthful. It is a treat to watch her. (Womack 2004)

The nursery always has so many diverse people coming and going that it is hard to tell who the customers are and who are just visitors. All are welcomed. But even while visiting Jenkins always keeps an eye on the work going on around her.

Jenkins never has a problem raising plants, but acquiring them has sometimes posed a problem. She recalls:

You could not find an *Illicium floridanum* in a pot. I remember the first ones I got. I dug up a couple in the woods, little babies, put those darn things in a pot and those things did just fine. Another time, we were doing some control burning in the tree farm. Bryant had this area that they had burned off, and these (*Illicium*) were just coming back. I had them dug up and put them in pots. I sold them all in bigger pots. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

Native plants are very much in evidence, especially the wild azaleas Jenkins planted from seed twenty-odd years ago; they are now six feet tall. From these azaleas have come many more. In the container yard all of the results of many years of rooting cuttings and raising seeds are evidenced by the rows and rows of big gawky plants which blaze with a rainbow of color in the spring. Native or wild azaleas are also called honeysuckle azaleas and are deciduous.

Jenkins admits that her husband, Bryant, never understood why she was interested in these strange plants; he thought they should grow exactly what the other nurseries were growing. But thanks to Margie's determination, the natives are there. "They sell a lot of different plants, but it was Margie who developed the growing of the native plants within the nursery," says Ed Blake. (Blake 2004)

Through the years, she has acquired many native plants; but she never sells all of them, she needs at least one plant to take cuttings from. Designers or landscape contractors who need native plants, always look first to Jenkins as a dependable source. In *Nursery Sources of Native Plants of the Southeastern United State*, Jan Midgley identifies Jenkins Nursery as a source of seven different native plants such as *Ilex opaca* 'Greenleaf' (American holly) and *Fraxinus pennsylvanica* (green ash.)

Today she has rows and rows of evergreen azaleas; they are not natives, but are the varieties she considers best for southern Louisiana. The Robin Hills are her favorites. Jenkins tells us the practical reasons for hunting a different variety of azalea:

Back in the late seventies we had some late cold spells that killed a lot of the azaleas we were growing in containers. At that time everyone grew mostly the Indica and Kurume azaleas. The Kurumes were hardy and the cold did not bother them, but the Indicas were a different story. You would get split bark and the plant would end up drying. I knew there were other varieties available besides the Kurumes that would be cold hardy. I had read about the Robin Hill Hybrids and found a catalog that had some listed for sale. I ordered my first ones in the fall of 1980 and received them the spring of 1981. Watchet was the first one I received. (Jenkins Apr 2004)

Jenkins' most influential cultivation has been the Watchet azalea (*Rhododendron* Robin Hill Hybrid Azalea 'Watchet'). She was the first to begin raising this azalea in the South. Through her resolve to see that this azalea would be used in plantings, she gave more away than she sold in the early days of her cultivation. The Nursery Association of



Figure 30. Robin Hill hybrid azaleas (*Rhododendron*, Robin Hill)

Louisiana named Watchet as one of the Louisiana select plants, and Margie Jenkins was the pioneer who made this introduction to the south.

Jenkins also has been able to discern which varieties of popular species will grow well in our southeastern region. Ed Blake uses her suggestions quite often:

She was the first person to give me, and she zeroxed it, the National Arboretum's main varieties, cultivars, of mildew resistant crape myrtles. Different heights and colors that I have it taped in the front of Neil Odenwald's book (*Southern Plants for Landscape Design*). And to this day I still use that list. (Blake 2004)

All over the container yard are plants from as far away as New Zealand, as well as plants, from which she has taken seeds or cuttings in her own woods. Whatever the source of the plant, they usually do well under her cultivation.

Plant Ambassador

One of the most admirable characteristics of Margie Jenkins is her willingness to share with anyone and everyone her vast knowledge of plants. I have observed her talk to university students; she never talks down to them, but conveys as much information as she would share with a plant person on her same level of expertise. She is extremely generous to those who share her enthusiasm. Many others have noted this quality, including Ed Blake:

When I first started at the Crosby Arboretum, I had to absorb so much information. Margie would visit with me and share with me her knowledge, and it really helped me to see plants. What other plants were growing alongside it, what kind of habitat it was growing in, quirks it had to get it into cultivation.

There are things that, if you don't do everything just right, the plant will not make it. (Blake 2004)

Ed Blake's recollection is similar to those of others who have met Jenkins over the years. She is always giving away plants because she is trying to get them out into the plant world, and she will tell you anything, plus or minus, about the plant as she gives it to you. Her experience with a plant is an important indicator of the success it will have in the nursery business and in customers' gardens. Ed Blake tells about her manner concerning her knowledge:

After awhile, if you are in the plant world in a botanical arboretum, you meet lots of folks, a lot of smart folks, and you meet a lot of folks with a great deal of experience who have traveled many places. But Margie is so unassuming and just as smart as anyone out there, but she doesn't come across in an academic way with rapid-fire knowledge coming out. She approaches very quietly, saying; look at this plant that is in bloom now. Then she starts telling a story about how she first found out about this plant. She might have started it from a seed or cutting, and where she found it, and who might have talked with her about it. Southerners are storytellers, and Margie has that sensibility about plants. She makes plants a part of life, instead of standing in the distance as a scientist looking at a plant and telling you about it. Yet at the same time, she could tell you anything that a taxonomist, who would write a book on taxonomy, would tell you, and she understood (all the classifications), but she never talked about (all of the intricacies). Perhaps this is the way to get people interested in plants. Not the



Figure 31. Traveling buddies, Jim Campbell, Buddy Lee, Dr. John Thornton



Figure 32. Good friend John Mayronne and daughter Margie Ann

hard core (scientists), but those who just love plants. Margie has a way of relating to people. (Blake 2004)

Within the plant world, everyone seems to know Margie Jenkins. She is always referred to as a “special person.” She has plant buddies all over the country. These plant people seem to have a special rapport with no regard for gender or age. They ride to plant meetings together and go out of their way to spend time together. They seem to bond immediately. John Mayronne says, "We are like addicts, when we meet someone who is interested in the same thing, we immediately bond. We travel. We go to meetings." (Mayronne 2004)

They share their knowledge with one another as well as their time. Another of Ed Blake's remembrances of Jenkins:

When I worked at the Crosby Arboretum, we would offer seminar days on native plants to make people more appreciative of the common ordinary things in the landscape -- what I call a sense of place. The *genus loci* of where you live. We had Margie as a speaker, as well as Tommy Dodd, of Dodd Nursery and Mr. Galle from Callaway Gardens. When Margie would come over, I realized that she knew so many of these people. She would call one of them and say she was having a problem, a plant wouldn't germinate, or where could she find someone who was propagating plants and get some starts. She must have one of the biggest networks in the plant world. (Blake 2004)

Jenkins' network of friends in the plant world is legendary. She has acquired so much knowledge that she is considered an expert herself in propagation, woody plants and trees indigenous to the south. She loves to travel



Figure 33. Margie Jenkins and Don Shadow



Figure 34. Margie Jenkins and Tommy Dodd Jr.

to meetings, symposia, and conferences, where she can exchange information with other experts.

Margie will go far and wide, says Neil Odenwald. She spends lots of time, and it is expensive to travel. Margie does not charge to be an evangelist for her love of plants. One on one, or in groups, she shares her knowledge and experience. Lots of people don't take the time to do that, or they can't afford to take the time, because they have to make a living. But Margie can go out and share her knowledge. (Odenwald 2004)

One of Jenkins's amusing stories concerns her talk to a horticulture group:

It was really funny. I was asked to go to Lafayette to that horticulture meeting to do their lunch program. When I got there, the guy came over to me and said he had to tell the people something about me. I said my family owns a wholesale nursery and told him a little about that, but as far as I am concerned I have had no formal horticulture training. Anyway, when he got up there to introduce me, he said she has had no formal education. And I thought, (laughing) I bet these people think they really got a dummy since he left the horticulture part out.

(Jenkins Feb 2004)

Jenkins gives talks to all sorts of groups, from a garden club in Franklinton to the Southern Plant Conference. She always takes a list of plants as a handout for the group. Using this list as her starting point she will just talk. She says that appearing before groups really made her nervous in the past, but now she has gotten use to it:

I read that if you know what you are talking about, that is the main thing. If I am going to do a talk, I try to do the best I can. I remember a teacher from grammar

Good afternoon everyone. I would like to express my thanks to Severn Doughty for asking me to take part in the Spring Garden Show and for giving me the opportunity to pass on to you some of the things I have learned about azaleas.

The introduction of evergreen azales to the South dates back to the mid 1800's when the Southern Indian Hybrid azaleas or Indicas, were planted by Rev. Drayton at Magnolia Gardens near Charleston, S. C. in 1848. From this early introduction, the azalea craze spread throughout the Coastal Areas of the Carolinas and the entire South.

The more cold hardy Kurume azaleas were first introduced to California in 1915 and, in 1917 to the East by E. H. Wilson, one of America's most enthusiastic plant hunters. They came from Japan and are named for the city of Kurume, Japan.

The first major introduction of the Satsuski was made in 1938 and 1939 and distributed to cooperating nurseries and arboreta.

The group known as the Glendales were developed by B. Y. Morrison while he was Horticulturist and Plant Breeder as well as the Chief of the Plant Introduction Section and Director of the National Arboretum. This group takes its name from the location of the Plant Introduction Station at Glen Dale, Maryland. A few of these were introduced in 1941, just before World War II, but most appeared from 1947 to 1949 and a few following in 1952. The 440 clones introduced were selections from over 70,000 seedlings arising out of the breeding work. Imagine how hard it must have been to come up with 440 names.

The unlimited charms of variety and beauty belong to the azalea. It has been said that no other flowering shrub has contributed more to the American Garden than the azalea. The flowers have a remarkable color range: white, many shades of pink, light salmon to deep orange, reds, light lavender to deep purple, some striped or flecked patterns as well as solid colored flower with or without conspicuous contrasting throats. So far we do not have a yellow evergreen azalea, but work is being done to

Figure 35. M. Jenkins' talk to New Orleans Garden Show 1992 written on her typewriter

(2)

try to accomplish this. The attractive five-petaled flowers may appear singly, as hose-in-hose forms or as semidouble and fully double flowers. The evergreen azaleas, while prized as individual specimens or in masses for their brilliant splash of color in the spring, contribute also excellent foliage texture and plant form the year round. They can be shaped as bushes, hedges, or trees. They can be used in hanging baskets and decorative pots. Some varieties are very popular for bonsai.

When we started growing azaleas in our nursery in the late 1960's we grew some of the Indica's including Formosa and Judge Solomon, the Kurume's including Coral Bells and Christmas Cheer. A few years later we started growing a few of the Glen Dale's including Fashion and the Gumpo's of the Satsuki hybrids. I became very interested in growing azaleas of different varieties and started searching out catalogs offering different varieties. I ordered my first varieties that were new to me in November 1980 from Holly Heath Nursery in Calverton, N. Y. They were delivered in May or June of 1981 and were a few inches tall in four inch pots. One of this group I received is Watchet of the Robin Hill Hybrids. I still have one of my original plants and it measures 36 x 36 and is still in a container. I think it would probably be larger had it been growing in the ground. To-day it has become a very popular azalea for our part of the country. When I first started growing it, I promoted it every way I could. I gave plants to my customer to try in their garden and offered cuttings to nurserymen. The very large Tom Dodd Nursery of ^{Semmes} Mobile, Alabama is now growing it. I feel that if Mr. Tom Dodd is growing it, it has to be good as he is one of the most highly respected plantsman in the industry. Watchet will start blooming in August and will bloom off and on until the weather gets cold. It also blooms in the Spring.

I attend many lectures on plants and am always happy when the speaker gives a handout. For that reason, I have prepared a list of the ones that I will be talking about. There are so many hybrid groups to choose from ^{to do} it is difficult to decide the ones to grow. I try some new ones each year

Figure 36. Second page of New Orleans Garden Show talk

13TH ANNUAL SPRING GARDEN SHOW, MARCH 28, 29, 1992, NEW ORLEANS, LA.
AZALEAS FOR ALL SEASONS - MARGIE Y. JENKINS

SOUTHERN INDIAN OR INDICAS HYBRIDS

Cavendish: single flowers, 2 3/4", purplish pink, variable, white edges, blotch darker and dark red stripes, spreading low dense growth, late
Early Lavender: light reddish lavender, 2 1/2", early, tall spreading
Gulf Pride: single lavender flowers, very fragrant, tall spreading
Jennifer: single orange flowers 2 1/2", growth habit a little taller than wide, blooms great in the fall and again in the spring
William Bull: very double orange flowers, 2", buds like rosebuds, spreading, medium to tall growth

KURUME HYBRIDS

Amoenum: flowers rich magenta, hose-in-hose, small dense, twiggy, upright, spreading growth
El Frida: light purple, white throat, hose-in-hose, spreading upright
Peach Blow: Small single flowers, peach pink, medium, upright

GLENN DALE HYBRIDS

Boldface: flowers single 1 to 3 in head, 3" across, frilled, white center, light purple margin, red blotch, bush habit rather broad spreading
Glamour: single flowers 2 to 3" across, usually 1 to 3 in head, very freely produced, a very brilliant deep rose, erect to broad spreading
Refrain: flowers 1 to 3 in head, often grouped, freely produced, 1 3/4" to 2" across, hose-in-hose, margins pure white, ground color white suffused pink, some rose color stripes, bush habit tall but eventually well filled out

BACK ACRES HYBRID

Red Slipper: strong purplish red, single 2 1/2" to 3", slow rate of growth, blooms heavily in fall and again in spring

SATSUKI HYBRIDS

Amagasa (Umbrella): vivid orange single flower, darker spots on upper lobe, wide overlapping lobes, 3-4"
Issho no Haru (Spring of one life): Pale to light purplish pink with purple stripes and flakes to solid reddish purple, large round lobes, 3", compact habit, latest blooming one we grow
Gyokushin (Nodding Jewel): flowers white with flush of pink, single, 3 1/2" low spreading, blooms later than some of the Satsuki
Polypetalum: reddish orange, narrow petals split to base, 2", narrow linear leaves, upright bushy growth habit

CARLA HYBRIDS

Adelaine Pope: deep purplish red, single flowers, 2-3", dense oval upright growth habit
Baton Rouge: deep reddish orange, white throat, hose-in-hose, 2 1/2" flower, dwarf rounded plant, small leaves bronzing in fall, blooms well in fall and again in spring
Carror: deep purplish pink, semi-double, 2-2 1/2", slow rate of growth, wider than tall
Emily: red, hose-in-hose, 1 1/2" to 2" flower, semi dwarf, compact, leaves reddish in winter
Sunglow: strong purplish red, 2-3", single flower, rounded upright growth, leaves reddish in winter

Figure 37. First page of assorted varieties of azaleas

GLENN DALE HYBRIDS - Hybridizing of this group begun in 1935 by B. Y. Morrison while working for the Department of Agriculture. They take their name from the location of the Plant Introduction Station at Glenn Dale, Maryland. Morrison had several objectives in developing the Glenn Dale Hybrids. The first was to develop plants with flowers as large and varied as those of the Southern Indian Hybrids, but secondly, to be cold hardy. Lastly, they were planned to provide flowers from mid-April to mid-June, filling the mid-May flowering gap then typical of evergreen azaleas. The group is hardy in zones 6b to 9a. The clonal introductions vary in flowering period - early, early midseason, late midseason, and late; in growth habit from dwarf 3 ft. to large 8 ft. in height. Most flowers are single, some hose-in-hose, and a few semidouble and double.

ABBOTT - deep purplish pink paler at base, dots vivid purplish red, 2½-3" across, 1 to 4 in head; early; vigorous, erect to wide spreading, a great double bloomer - will start in early August and bloom until cold weather

SATSUKI HYBRIDS - Satsuki azaleas are of Japanese origin, prized for their large, single flowers and bonsai qualities. Satsuki means Fifth Month, and the plants are late blooming, in May and early June. Many of the narrow-leaved evergreen plants are low growing or dwarf, while others will develop into medium to tall plants. The parentage of these hybrids is uncertain. The Satsuki azaleas share a great variability in color and form, and they sport freely. Thus a typical white flowered plant may appear flaked, margined, or colored, all on the same plant. The plants are slightly less hardy than the Kurumes, and are adaptable from Zone 7b to Zone 9a. They will grow in full sun, still, in the South, because of their late flowering, it is best to give protection from afternoon exposure.

AMAGASA: vivid orange 3-4" flower, darker spots on upper lobe, wide overlapping lobes - large leaves - medium growth habit

GYOKUSHIN: Flowers white with some light to strong purplish pink selfs, flakes of deep pink and dots in blotch, some light or colored margins, 5-6 round ruffled lobes, 2½-3" - low spreading growth

POLYPETALUM: reddish orange, narrow petals split to base, 2", narrow linear leaves, upright bushy growth habit

GETSUTOKU - white with deep salmon, many variations to salmon selfs, often 6, wavy overlapping lobes, 3-4" flower, late; spreading habit

SOUTHERN INDIAN HYBRIDS

JENNIFER - This is a seedling of Pride of Mobile introduced by Tom Dodd Nurseries. Flowers are single 2½", orange - good bushy growth but not as large as Formosa - blooms very well in the fall and in the spring

Figure 38. Second page of azalea list

BACK ACRES HYBRIDS - A group of hybrids developed by B. Y. Morrison at Pass Christian, Ms., following his retirement from the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. The breeding work is largely an extension of work with the Glenn Dale Hybrids based on a continuing interest in late blooming and double flowering clones. Foliage is of heavy texture and tolerant of high air temperatures. The flowers are of equally heavy texture and generally appear in mid to late midseason.

RED SLIPPER: strong purplish red, single 2½-3" flower, compact slow rate of growth, blooms heavily in fall and again in spring

CARLA HYBRIDS - A breeding program was started at North Carolina State University in 1940 by Dr. R. J. Stadtherr and H. M. Single-
tary using Kurume, Kaempferi, Belgian Indian, and Satsuki Hybrids. In 1968, Dr. Stadtherr moved to Louisiana State University but continued to cooperate on the project until his retirement in 1982 while the work was continued at NCSU. Azaleas released from this program are known as Carla (North Carolina-Louisiana) Hybrids. Basic objectives of the program are the development of hybrids with superior resistance to root rot diseases, cold hardiness, floriferousness, and drought tolerance.

BATON ROUGE: deep reddish orange, white throat, hose-in-hose, mid-season, 2½" flower, dwarf rounded plant, small leaves bronzing in fall, blooms well in fall and again in spring

CARRCR: deep purplish pink, semi-double, mid to late, 2-2½" flower, slow rate of growth to about 3½ ft.

SUNGLOW: strong purplish red, 2½-3" single flower, rounded upright growth to about 5 ft., leaves reddish in winter

GIRARD HYBRIDS - The breeding and selecting of azaleas by Peter E. Girard, Sr. of Geneva, Ohio, started in the late 1940's. The goal was to develop attractive hardy azaleas, with good compact growth suitable for landscaping and container growing. The plants are hardy for zones 6 to 9 and are medium shrubs 4 to 6 feet in

HOT SHOT: dark reddish orange, 2½" single flower, wavy lobes, medium green summer foliage changing to brilliant orange-red in fall, semi-dwarf slow growth

SANDRA ANN: reddish purple single flowers, 3", full upright growth, blooms some in fall and again in spring

UNSURPASSABLE: deep reddish pink, 2½" single flower, dense broad growth habit, blooms a lot in the fall and again in spring, foliage becomes reddish in fall when exposed to frost

Figure 39. Third page of azalea list

GIRARD HYBRIDS

Girard's Rose: brilliant rose, single, 2½-3" flowers, slightly waved of good substance, vigorous upright growth habit
Hot Shot: fiery deep orange flowers, 2½", single, heavy textured, medium green summer foliage changing to brilliant orange-red in fall, slow growth habit
Sandra Ann: reddish purple single flowers, 3", grows as wide as tall, very hardy, some fall bloom
Unsurpassable: deep reddish pink, 2½", broad, dense habit, very hardy, bloom very good in fall and again in spring, foliage changes in fall

LINWOOD HYBRIDS

Hardy Gardenia: white, hose-in-hose, double 2½", grows twice as wide as tall, blooms great in the fall and again in spring
Janet Rhea: strong purplish red, with white edge, hose-in-hose, semi-double, 2½", grows wider than tall

ROBIN HILL HYBRIDS

Conversation Piece: variable, white and moderate purplish pink, dots, blotches, sectors, etc. grows about as wide as tall, blooms fairly well in the fall and again in spring
Dorothy Rees: single white flower with light yellow green throat, lobes overlapping, wavy, 3½", vigorous, mounding
Gillie: strong reddish orange single flower, 3½", grows as wide as tall, a good vigorous grower
Lady Robin: single white, slightly tinted and variable sectored or striped dark pink, 3½"
Nancy of Robinhill: hose-in-hose light pink double flower with an occasional light red blotch, 3½", broad growth habit
Peter Pooker: single light purplish pink, very wavy 2½" flowers, semi-dwarf growth habit, foliage a very dark green
Robin Dale: white with greenish throat with pink splashing, 3½", blooms similar to Conversation Piece but with more white, blooms fairly well in fall and again in spring
Sir Robert: single very light salmon to dark salmon flower, some stripes and solids, 3½", dwarf growth habit, blooms great in fall
Watchet: moderate pink single flower with greenish white throat, ruffled, 3½", broad, dwarf growing, starts blooming in August and blooms until cold weather and again in spring
Roddy: single, white, wavy, 3" flower, good foliage, growth habit as wide as tall, blooms some in fall and again in spring

OTHER HYBRIDS

Arabesque (Vuyk): single vivid red flower, compact grower, grows wider than tall, blooms great in fall and again in spring
Corsage (Gable Hybrid): single, light lavender flower with darker specks, very fragrant, not a heavy foliaged plant, great woodland type
Karens: single deep reddish purple flower with dark spotting, 1 ¾", slow growth habit, foliage takes on a purplish burgundy color in cold weather
R. W. Pennington (Pennington): single beautiful white flower washed with pink and green, growth habit wider than tall
Southern Summer Rose (Dr. Larry Brown's Hybrid): introduced in 1991 by Dr. Brown, single deep rose flower, starts blooming in summer and will bloom until all the buds have bloomed if a mild winter

Figure 40. Fourth page of azalea list

school saying, if you are going to do something, do it whole heartedly or don't do it all. I get really peeved at people that take a spot on a program, and they get up with very little preparation. I would not have them unless they had a handout! The first talk I attended was given by J. C. Ralston. The Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina is named after him. He had a nice handout with the plant's names and a few little things about it. That meant so much for someone who didn't know a darn thing and wanted to learn. (Jenkins Feb 2004)

Jenkins' demeanor is the same, whether she is talking to a professional conference or to a person riding in her golf cart. Her informality and graciousness make her easy to connect with, even for those who are not knowledgeable about plants; they can understand what she is saying. She can also sit down with experts in her field of woody ornamentals and hold her own. Her direct way of speaking is no doubt what attracts people to her. She speaks, not in abstract generalities, but very particularly about her interest in specific plants, and how they grow in her nursery. That may be the way her plants gain acceptance in the trade.

Neil Odenwald comments that another important attribute of Jenkins is her ability to discuss horticulture:

She can talk just about anybody's language. She can talk to the person who has just a faint knowledge, or the babes in the industry, but she can also talk with people now who are quite learned in the trade because she has had enough experience in her own greenhouse to tell you very clearly what she has learned. (Odenwald 2004)

Margie Y. Jenkins - LESSONS FROM NATURE'S GARDENS
The Crosby Arboretum, Pacayune, Ms. 39466 - February 3, 1993

RHODODENDRON canescens Wild Azalea

SEED: Collect before pods dry and start to open. Plant on top of milled sphagnum moss. They need even moisture and light.

CUTTINGS: Take very tender, do not let wilt, use no hormone treatment, and do not use any fertilizer in rooting medium. After rooting do not transplant until the following spring.

CLETHRA alnifolia Sweet Pepperbush

SEED: Plant in same fashion as rhododendron

CUTTINGS: Take cuttings in early summer when new wood becomes firm. Good results can be obtained with no hormone treatment.

CORNUS florida Flowering Dogwood

SEED: Collect seed when pressure on the fruit causes the seed to pop through. Clean seed and plant outdoors immediately or provide stratification for three to four months.

CRATAEGUS marshallii Parsley Hawthorne

SEED: Collect seed as soon as they turn red, clean, and plant right away.

CHIONANTHUS virginicus White Fringetree

SEED: Fall planting will result in germination occurring the second spring.

EUONYMUS americanus Strawberry-bush

SEED: I have read they are apparently doubly dormant and 3 months warm and 3 months cold is recommended. They come up in the containers grown in our nursery.

GORDONIA lasianthus Loblolly-bay

SEED: Collect when brown, extract small seed and sow immediately.

CUTTINGS Very easy. Take firm wood and treat with a mild hormone.

HALESIA diptera Silverbell

SEED: Collect seed before they turn brown. Plant immediately. Good germination following spring. If seed are allowed to dry germination will take two years or longer.

HYDRANGEA quercifolia Oakleaf Hydrangea

SEED: Gather the dry flower heads, place in a bag, and shake. Seed are almost like dust. Plant in same manner as rhododendron. Germination in about 10 days under light.

CUTTINGS: Take cuttings very early in spring just as soon as wood is firm. I had good results with no hormone treatment.

ILLICIAM floridanum Florida Anise

SEED: Collect seed in fall when they start to turn slightly yellow. Place in a shallow pan and spread out to dry. Be sure to cover the pan or you will lose the seed.

CUTTINGS: Make cuttings in late spring or early fall when wood is firm. Good success in rooting with or without hormone treatment.

ITEA virginica Virginia Willow

SEED: Treat like rhododendron.

CUTTINGS: Cuttings can be made about any time wood is fairly firm.

Figure 41. Margie Jenkins' plant list

KALMIA latifolia Mountain-laurel
 SEED: Germinate without any special pretreatment. Treat like rhododendron.
 CUTTINGS: Take firm to slightly tender wood and do not treat. The firm wood may root better if a mild hormone is used.

LEUCOTHOE axillaris Coast Leucothoe
 SEED: Treat like rhododendron.
 CUTTINGS: Easy. Firm wood any time of year will root. We use 1 to 20 Dip and Grow hormone.

MAGNOLIA
 SEED: Collect when the fruits ripen from late summer to mid fall. Clean and give cold stratification at 32 to 41° F for 2 to 4 months.

PIERIS phillyreifolia
 CUTTINGS: Fairly tender wood rooted well with no treatment and rooted well with mild hormone.

STEWARTIA malacodendron Wild Camellia
 CUTTINGS: Tender wood roots readily. Oversintering can be a real problem. Must get growth after rooting. Should be kept as dry as possible during winter.

VACCINIUM arboreum Winter Huckleberry
 VACCINIUM corymbosum Highbush Blueberry
 SEEDS: Collect, macerate and float the pulp and unsound seed off. No pretreatment recommended. A 3 month cold stratification may be beneficial for arboreum.

ZENOBIA pulverulenta Dusty Zenobia
 SEED: Collect dried flowers and shake seed out in bag. Plant as you would rhododendron.
 CUTTINGS: Said to be difficult.

Figure 42. Second page of native plant list

Jenkins is extremely generous to those with new endeavors. When Ed Blake was starting out at the Crosby Arboretum, her help and her knowledge of plants were helpful to him in his success. But cooperating with him and the arboretum was also a way for her to get certain plants into public view. It was a mutually beneficial process that benefited both the Arboretum and Jenkins Nursery. "The arboretum was the only public garden where Margie and I knew," Ed Blake says, "that these plants would be showcased. Bless Margie's heart; she was so good to us -- just giving us plants so that other people could see them." (Blake 2004)

Every day at Jenkins' nursery, there are people coming and going. There always seems to be something cooking in the office kitchen; timber brokers and landscape contractors stay for lunch. Jenkins' daughter Margie Ann is always jumping up to direct an eighteen-wheeler or answers the phone. Jenkins calmly deals with any questions directed her way by a customer or employee while enjoying the company of those gathered at her table. Her rolodex is filled with the names of well known plant people, and she does not hesitate to call them if she needs help; in turn, she helps anyone that asks.

One person whom she has helped and in turn helped her is landscape architect Wayne Womack. "Margie knows everyone," he says. "All the old nurserymen are as thick as hops, and she has a great name among all the plant people in the South. It really comes down to this. She is a natural at what she does, and she does not dislike any plant. To Margie any plant has potential, and she will give it a whirl. She has not just been interested in natives." (Womack 2004)



Figure 43. Cyrilla in Jenkins Nursery

Jenkins is not interested in developing a plant and having it sit in her nursery. She wants all of her plants to go from her nursery and out into gardens big or small; private or public. Robert E. Lee explains how she has obtained acceptance for her plants:

When she speaks about native plants, she does so not in abstract generalities, but speaks of her own interests and how it (plant) grows in her nursery. I think that is why she gets them more accepted. She keeps track of her plants and where they go. Because of her experience with them and the way she presents them is why they have become accepted. (Lee 2004)

The cyrilla (*Cyrilla racemiflora*, Titi, Swamp cyrilla) is one that was never used before and is widely used now. All of the propagation and cultivation are just steps to the final objective--use by clients in a landscape design.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

In the 1970's the church where Margie Jenkins was a member built a new sanctuary, and her pastor asked her to landscape the sanctuary with the help of another church member. The other woman thought that palm trees would be appropriate because she had seen a church in Baton Rouge landscaped with them. Jenkins did not agree. She persuaded the woman to consider some of the plants that she had learned about in Dr. Odenwald's class. This was one of the first times Jenkins had used her new found knowledge. She donated the plants to the church. Margie Jenkins' generosity is an extension of her philosophy of life and her commitment to the community of which she is a part.

Jenkins has given so many plants to people and organizations that she really cannot remember all the places they are located. Some of the more notable are the Crosby Arboretum, where she helped so that they could have their first plant sales. They would not have been able to have enough plants except for her generosity. She still supports Hilltop Arboretum in Baton Rouge to this day. She was just there in October 2004 to participate in their plant sale. She has donated plants to WYES, the public television station in her area. Longue Vue Gardens in New Orleans has also been the recipient of plants for its restoration. There is always a gift for the schools in her area, most particularly a boys' school. Marion Drummond former site director of Hilltop and now director of Mobile Botanical Gardens remembers:

We had been doing plant sales at Hilltop; I had been helping with that just as a volunteer and I thought we are repeating ourselves. We were coming in with the

same old plants. I thought maybe we could contact some of the growers, and they might be gracious enough to make some donations . . . So we went up to

Forest Hills (nursery area by Alexandria, Louisiana) and then I got to thinking maybe I should contact this woman by the name of Jenkins . . . she had things, and her name keeps coming up, that nobody else seemed to have. I called her and gave her my name which didn't mean a thing to her . . . When I got up there she could not have been lovelier. On the telephone she had asked, what do you want? And I said whatever would fit in my station wagon. And she loaded the car so full of plants we couldn't see out the back. (Drummond 2004)

Jenkins not only gives plants. She gives talks and seminars whenever she is asked. She never charges for her talks, her time, travel expenses, or lodging. Her celebrated generosity to all is described by Marion Drummond: "I think that the one adjective that describes Margie is generosity because she gives of herself, she gives plants, she gives information, and she gives help to people." (Drummond 2004)

This generosity spreads throughout her life. All the different features of her work with plants contain spiritual overtones. Her plants are very personal to her. They are her babies when they first appear. There is always a sense of wonder when she talks about them. Ed Blake says it so nicely: "Margie's accomplishments stem from her attitude that is like a child's wonder, every day is like Christmas, and every day she loves life and the beauty and all the things on this earth." (Blake 2004)

Jenkins was raised in a traditionally male-dominated time. She married and had a traditional role as wife and mother, but in addition, she was much more of a help-mate in her marriage. Bryant and Margie Jenkins were both extremely hard workers and had the

same goals of acquiring land and being debt free. They seemed to have worked toward these accomplishments in a supportive manner. But when Jenkins was in her fifties, she was determined to have the kind of nursery that she desired despite objections from Bryant Jenkins. He was not always in accord with her idea to "grow things that were new, unusual, old-fashioned, and natives for the landscape trade." He believed they should stick to the plants they were familiar with. He certainly never understood her "passion for plants." But his legacy in shaping the land is beneficial still. Despite any differences they might have had, she successfully maneuvered her way to realize her personal dream. Today her nursery is the realization of her grit, hard work, and vision. When professionals and amateurs look for remarkable plants, Jenkins' name always comes to mind.

Every one of the individuals interviewed for this thesis was unanimous in their replies pertaining to the value of her plants and the breadth and depth of her knowledge regarding these and many other plants. The choice of interviewees was based on their distinction in the landscape world and in plant recognition. All of the interviewees obtain plants from Jenkins Nursery to carry out their professional work. Very often they will arrive with a particular plant in mind, only to have her steer them in a new direction. Less experienced landscape architects than those interviewed are wise if they listen. None of them hesitated in voicing their undivided opinion as to Jenkins' role in the changing plant use in Louisiana. Margie Jenkins changed the plant palette of Louisiana in the choices of azaleas, native and old-fashioned plants.

The azaleas are her special pride, both the native and the evergreen. Hundreds, or maybe thousands, of azaleas are growing in their containers under the pine trees that

shade parts of the nursery. All of these azaleas are the result of Jenkins' propagation. None of the names is particularly recognizable to the average azalea buyer. Most of the evergreens are Robin Hill hybrids. The native azaleas are tall and spindly, but when they bloom it is a mirage of colors. Dr. Neil Odenwald put it best:

Margie has done more to broaden the palette of azaleas than anyone. If you go to her operation in Amite (between Amite and Franklinton), you will see plants that you will not see any other place (in Louisiana). You will not see one or two but she will have a whole mass of several hundred of a particular brand.

(Odenwald 2004)

But Jenkins' influence is not just confined to plant propagation, but more importantly to a generosity in sharing her knowledge and the results of her propagation. This is her way of spreading the word about new plants. The real distinction that has made Margie Jenkins successful is probably the last that a school would teach. She has operated a successful nursery built around her ideals which often were not in step with the times. She has managed this by following her dream and finding a niche that was not being filled. She has provided the plants that "those guys in the pick-ups" wanted even when they did not know what they wanted. All of her conversations about plants with her customers have caused a shifting in their plant knowledge and appreciation for a better plant.

Odenwald again says it best:

At the end of the day, what makes Margie so successful? A lot of people would have the technical knowledge that Margie has, but I think that the quality that Margie has is her passion for plants. I don't care what you are doing; you have to

love it if you are going to make contributions to that industry or profession.
(Odenwald 2004)

We learn from Margie Jenkins that creativity, passion, and persistence are elements required for a successful business. By bridging the gap between horticulture and design, the Jenkins story promotes an understanding needed by both groups.

This thesis calls for research of botanicals and liaisons with horticultural experts in order to successfully implement landscape's design. When academia does not provide landscape architects with the understanding of the medium of landscape design, there is an impoverishment of the resources for design projects. The significance of this thesis is that it utilizes primary research to make discoveries and links between landscapes medium--horticulture--and landscape design, two disciplines that should be irrevocably linked.

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APPENDIX A

JENKINS FARM AND NURSERY WHOLESALE PRICE LIST

CONTAINER GROWN PLANTS				
#1	#2	#3	#5	#7
AZALEAS				
Abbott (Glen Dale)		6.50		
Arabeek (Vuyk)		6.50		
Amelia Rose (Arom)		6.50		
Bouffant (Back Acre)		6.50		
Brilliant (Indica)		6.50		
Cavendish (Indica)		6.50		
Chinzan (Satsuki)	2.50			
Conversation Piece (Robin Hill)	2.50			
Corry (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Corsage (Gable)		6.50		
Dorothy Hayden (Robin Hill)		6.50		8.50
Dorothy Rees (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Duc de Rohan (Indica)		6.50		
Duchess of Cypress		6.50		
El Frida (Kurume)		6.50		
Eliza Scott (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Fashion (Glen Dale)		6.50		
Fisher Pink (Indica)		6.50		
Formosa (Indica)		6.50		15.00
George L. Taber (Indica)		6.50		15.00
Greta (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Gulf Pride (Indica)		6.50		
Gwendolyn (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Gyokushin (Satsuki)		6.50		
Hilda Niblett (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Iveryana (Indica)		6.50		15.00
Jennifer (Indica)		6.50		
Joan Garrett (Harris)		6.50		
Judge Solomon (Indica)		6.50		15.00
Koromo Shikibu (Macrosepalum)		6.50		
Lady Robin (Robin Hill)	2.50	6.50		
Macantha Orange (Indicum)		6.50		
Midnight Flare (Harris)		6.50		
Momo na Hary (Satsuki)		6.50		
Mrs. G. G. Gerbing (Indica)		6.50		15.00
Nancy (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Nassau (Nelson)	4.50			
Northlake Beauty (Indica)		6.50		
Papineau (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Peg Hugger (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Pink Camellia (Carla)		6.50		
Pink Pearl (Kurume)		6.50		
Pink Ruffles (Rutherford)		6.50		
President Clay (Indica)		6.50		
Pride of Mobile (Indica)		6.50		
Primitive Beauty (Indica)		6.50		
Red Formosa (Indica)		6.50		
Red Ruffles (Rutherford)		6.50		
Red Slippers (Back Acre)		6.50		
Robin Dale (Robin Hill)		6.50		
Robin Hill Congo		6.50		
Robin Hill Elsa		6.50		

CONTAINER GROWN PLANTS (Continued)				
#1	#2	#3	#5	#7
Robin Hill Gillie		4.50	6.50	
Robin Hill Wendy			6.50	
Roddy (Robin Hill)			6.50	
R. W. Pennington (Pennington)			6.50	
Salmon Solomon (Indica)			6.50	
Sir Robert (Robin Hill)			6.50	
Sherbrook (Robin Hill)			6.50	
Sekidera (Mucronatum)			6.50	
Sunglow (Carla)	2.50		6.50	
T-60-9 (Robin Hill)	2.50		6.50	
Unsurpassable (Girard)			6.50	
Verawood (Lynch)	2.50		6.50	
Vuyk's Rosyred (Vuyk)			6.50	
Wakaebisu (Satsuki)			6.50	
Watchet (Robin Hill)			6.50	8.50
White Moon (Robin Hill)			6.50	
Wood's White Gumpo (Satsuki)			6.50	
SHRUBS				
#1	#3	#5	#7	
ABELIA chinensis Chinese Abelia			6.50	
ABELIA x Canyon Creek, Rose Creek			6.50	
*AMSONIA tabernaemontana Blue-star			6.50	
AUCUBA japonica Serratifolia			6.50	
*AGARISTA populifolia Florida Leucothoe			6.50	
BUDDLEIA davidii Butterfly Bush, Ellen's Blue, Honeycomb, Pink Delight, Potter's Purple			6.50	
*CALCANTHUS florida Sweetshrub			6.50	8.50
*CALLICARPA americana French Mulberry			6.50	
CALLICARPA dichotoma Issai			6.50	
CAMELLIA sasanqua Dawn			12.50	
CAMELLIA sasanqua Pink Snow	#10 27.50			
*CEPHALANTHUS occidentalis Buttonbush			6.50	
CHAENOMELES Flowering Quince				
Cameo, Nivalis, Spitfire, Toyo-Nishiki			6.50	
*CYRILLA arida Arid Cyrilla	2.50		6.50	
*CYRILLA racemiflora Titi			6.50	
DICHOEA lebrifluga Evergreen Hydrangea			6.50	
DURANTA repens Sky Flower			6.50	
*EUONYMUS americanus Wahoo			6.50	
FORSYTHIA x Spring Glory			6.50	
*FOTHERGILLA major Mt. Airy			6.50	
GARDENIA jasminoides Daisy			6.50	
Four Seasons, Mystery, Rosedown Hip			6.50	
HIBISCUS moscheutos Hardy Hibiscus			6.50	
HIBISCUS mutabilis Rubrum Single Confederate Rose			6.50	
HIBISCUS syriacus Shrub Althea			8.50	
Aphrodite, Diana, Minerva, Freedom				
HYDRANGEA macrophylla Charm, Dooly, Garden, Merritt's Supreme, Mme. Emile Mouillere			6.50	
Penny Mac, Nightingale			6.50	

SHRUBS (Continued)

	#1	#3	#5	#7
HYDRANGEA serrata Lacecap Hydrangea				
Blue Willow	6.50			
*HYDRANGEA paniculata Pink Diamond	6.50			
*HYDRANGEA quercifolia Oakleaf Hydrangea	6.50			
ILEX cornuta Dwarf Burford, Needlepoint	6.50			
ILEX crenata Sky Pencil, Soft Touch	2.50	6.50		
*ILEX decidua Fitch's Gold	6.50			
*ILEX glabra Inkberry Nigra	6.50			
ILEX hybrid Nellie R. Stevens, Mary Nell	6.50			
*ILEX verticillata Winterberry Winter Red	6.50			
*ILEX vomitoria nana Dwarf Yaupon	2.50	6.50		
ILICium anisatum Japanese Anise-tree	6.50			
ILICium henryi Henry Anise-tree	6.50			
ILICium mexicanum Mexican Anise-tree	6.50			
*ILICium floridanum Florida Anise	6.50			
*ILICium paniculatum Ocala Anise	6.50			
*ITEA virginica Virginia Willow, Henry's Garnet	15.00			
Merlot, Sarah Eve, Saturnalia	15.00			
LESPEDEZA thurbergii Bush Clover, Pink Cascade	6.50			
LIGUSTRUM japonicum Waxleaf	6.50			
*LINDERA benzoin Spicebush	6.50			
*LEUCOTHOE axillaris Florida	6.50			
LONGICERA fragrantissima	6.50			
Winter Honeysuckle	6.50			
LOROPETALUM chinense Chinese Witch Hazel	6.50			
Blush, Ruby, Zhuzhou	8.50			
MICHELIA figo Banana Shrub	6.50			
MICHELIA skimmeriana Banana Shrub	8.50			
NANDINA domestica Heavenly Bamboo	6.50			
Wood's Dwarf	2.50			
*NEVUSIA alabamensis Snow-wreath	6.50			
*OSMANTHUS americanus Devilwood	6.50			
OSMANTHUS fragrans Sweet Olive	6.50			
PHILADELPHUS x Natchez	6.50			
PITTOFORUM tobira Dwarf	10.00	15.00	25.00	
*RHODODENDRON Native Azalea	6.50			
ROSA chinensis Mutabilis	6.50			
ROSA Shrub Rose Caldwell Pink, Knock Out	6.50			
SARCANDRA glabra Sarcandra	2.50	6.50		
SPIRAEA japonica Shirobana	6.50			
SPIRAEA prunifolia Shoe Button Spirea	6.50			
SPIRAEA x Vanhouttei Bridal Wreath	2.50			
TERNSTROEMIA japonica Cleyera	6.50			
VACCINIUM ashei Titled	8.50			
VIBURNUM awabuki Chindo	6.50			
*VIBURNUM dentatum Arrow-wood	6.50			
VIBURNUM lonicum Luzon Viburnum	6.50			
VIBURNUM macrocephalum	6.50			
Chinese Snowball	6.50			
*VIBURNUM nudum Possumhaw Viburnum	6.50			

SHRUBS (Continued)

	#1	#3	#5	#7
VIBURNUM plicatum Popcorn	6.50			
VITEEX agnus castus Chaste-tree Shoals Creek	6.50			
WEIGELA florida Rumba, Wine and Roses	6.50			
*ZENOBIA pulverulenta Woodlanders Blue	6.50			
GROUND COVERS, FERNS, PERENNIALS				
	#1	#2	#3	
*ECHINACEA purpurea Coneflower Magnus	2.50			
*FERNS Christmas, Lady, Royal, Wood	2.50			
*COREOPSIS verticillata Moonbeam	2.50			
*HELIANTHUS angustifolia Swamp Sunflower	2.50			
HEMEROCALLIS Daylily Dallas Lass	6.50			
Little Business, Happy Returns, Stella D'Ore	2.50			
HOSTA Blue Cadet, Frances, Honey Bells,	3.00			
HOSTA Silver Crown	5.00			
IRIS ensata Japanese Iris	3.75			
Picotee Wonder, Royal Robes, Variegata	3.00			
IRIS sibirica Siberian Iris	2.50			
*LOBELIA cardinalis Cardinal Flower	2.50			
LILIUM formosanum Formosan Lily	2.50			
*MONARDA didyma Bee-Balm Jacob Cline	7.50			
*PHLOX carolina Miss Lingard	2.50			
PHLOX paniculata Laura, Miss Kelly, Robert Poore	2.50			
*STOKESIA laevis Stokes' Aster	2.50			
TREES				
	#5	#7	#10	#15
ACER palmatum	35.00			55.00
Green Japanese Seedlings	35.00			55.00
ACER palmatum Atropurpureum	35.00			55.00
Japanese Red Maple Seedlings	25.00			
*AESCULUS pavis Red Buckeye	17.50	35.00		
*AESCULUS parviflora Bottlebrush Buckeye	6.50			
*ASIMINI triloba Pawpaw	8.50			
*BETULA nigra River Birch	8.50			
*CARYA aquatica Water Hickory	8.50	17.50		
*CARYA laciniosa Shellbark Hickory	8.50			
*CARYA tomentosa Mockernut Hickory	8.50			
*CERCIS canadensis Eastern Redbud	8.50			
*CHAMAECYPARIS thyoides	17.50			
Atlantic White Cedar Emily	10.00			
CHIONANTHUS retusus Chinese Fringe	8.50			
*CHIONANTHUS virginicus Native Fringe	8.50			
*CORNUS amomum Silky Dogwood	8.50			
*CORNUS foemina Swamp Dogwood	8.50			
*CRATAEGUS flava Putnal Hawthorn	8.50			
*CRATAEGUS opaca Mayhaw	8.50			
*CRATAEGUS marshallii Parsley Hawthorn	8.50			

TREES (Continued)

	#5	#7	#10	#15
CRYPTOMERIA japonica Japanese Cedar Yoshino	17.50			
CUPRESSOCYPARIS leylandii Leyland Cypress	8.50			
*EUCAPHIS japonica Sweetheart Tree	17.50			
*ILEX vomitoria Native Yaupon	8.50	17.50		
*ILEX vomitoria Weeping Yaupon	17.50			
LAGERSTROEMIA hybrid Crape Myrtle,	15.00			
Tonto, Tuscarora, Sioux	15.00			
LAGERSTROEMIA indica Crape Myrtle Twilight	15.00			
*MAGNOLIA grandiflora Southern Magnolia	35.00			
Samuel Sommer	35.00			
*MAGNOLIA virginica var. australis	8.50			
Evergreen Sweetbay	8.50			
MAGNOLIA hybrid Betty, Jane, Ann	15.00	25.00	35.00	
Betty, Jane, Ricki, Jon Jon	8.50			
*MALUS agustifolia Southern Crabapple	8.50			
*NYSSA sylvatica Black Gum	8.50			
PARROTTIA persica Persian Parrotia	27.50			
*PERSEA palustris Swamp Redbay #3	6.50			
*PINUS palustris Longleaf Pine #3	6.50			
*PINUS taeda Loblolly Pine	8.50			
PISTACHIA chinensis Chinese Pistachio	8.50			
*PRUNUS caroliniana Cherry Laurel	8.50			
PRUNUS campanulata Taiwan Cherry	17.50	25.00		
PRUNUS hybrid Okame Cherry	17.50	25.00		
*PTELEA trifoliata - Hop Water Tree	8.50			
*RHAMNUS caroliniana Indian Cherry	35.00			
*STYRAX americanus Snowbell	6.50	17.50		
*TAXODIUM ascendens Pond Cypress	8.50			
*TAXODIUM disticum Bald Cypress	8.50	17.50		
*ULMUS alata Winged Elm	8.50			
*VIBURNUM rufidulum Rusty Blackhaw	20.00			
*ZANTHOXYLUM clava-hirculis Toothache Tree	17.50			

VINES

	#3	#5	#7
*GELSEMIUM sempervirens Carolina Jasmine	7.50		
ROSA Climbing Rose Red Cascade	7.50		
*WISTERIA frutescens Amethyst Falls (staked)	7.50		

* Native Some items not available until Spring 2005.

FIELD GROWN SHRUBS AND TREES

ACER barbatum Southern Sugar Maple	
12-14" 3" - 4" Cal	100.00
14" - 16" 4" Cal	125.00
ACER buergerianum Trident Maple	
14-16" 4" Cal	150.00
ACER rubrum Red Maple	
12-14" 3" - 4" Cal	100.00
14-16" - 4" Cal	125.00
16" +	150.00
BETULA nigra River Birch	
14-16" Multi	125.00
16" + Multi	150.00
12-14" Single	100.00
14-16" Single	125.00
CARPINUS caroliniana Hornbeam	
10-12"	100.00
12-14"	125.00
CELTIS laevigata Hackberry	
10-12"	100.00
12-14"	125.00
CHIONANTHUS virginicus Native Fringe	
8-10"	100.00
10-12"	125.00
12-14"	150.00
CRATAEGUS marshalli Parsley Hawthorn	
CRATAEGUS opaca May Haw	
10-12"	125.00
12-14"	150.00
14" +	175.00
CYRILLA parviflorum Little Leaf Cyrilla	
8x8"	100.00
10x10"	125.00
ILEX opaca Greenleaf	
14-16"	150.00
ILICUM parviflorum Ocala Anise	
7-8"	55.00
8-10"	70.00
10-12"	90.00
ILEX vomitoria Native Yaupon	
10-12" Multi	75.00
12-14" Multi	100.00
ILEX x Emily Bruner (Bush)	
7-8"	75.00
8-10"	100.00
ILEX x Mary Nell (Bush)	
5-6"	55.00
6-7"	65.00
7-8"	75.00
8-10"	100.00
10-12"	125.00

ILEX x Nellie R. Stevens	
5-6" (Bush)	55.00
6-7" (Bush)	65.00
7-8" (Bush)	75.00
10-12" (Tree Form)	100.00
12-14" (Tree Form)	125.00
14-16" (Tree Form)	150.00
KOELREUTERIA bipinnata, Golden Rain Tree	
14-16" (Multi)	150.00
16" + (Multi)	200.00
LAGERSTROEMIA hybrid Crape Myrtle	
Acoma	
7-8"	55.00
8-10"	65.00
10-12"	75.00
12-14"	85.00
Apalachee	
8-10"	55.00
10-12"	65.00
12-14"	75.00
Bloom and Miami	
12-14"	75.00
14-16"	100.00
16" +	125.00
Choctaw and Tuscaloosa	
7-8" (Choctaw only)	45.00
8-10"	55.00
10-12"	65.00
12-14"	75.00
14-16"	100.00
16" +	125.00
Muskogee, Natchez and Tuskegee	
8-10"	55.00
10-12"	65.00
12-14"	75.00
14-16"	100.00
16" +	125.00
Osage	
8-10"	75.00
10-12"	100.00
12-14"	125.00
14-16"	150.00
16" +	200.00
Stouffville	
7-8"	45.00
8-10"	55.00
Tombigbee	
5-6"	45.00
7-8"	55.00
LIGULSTRUM japonicum Waxleaf	
3-4" (Bush)	25.00
7-8" legged	65.00
8-10" (Bush)	70.00
8-10" legged	75.00
10-12" legged	125.00
MAGNOLIA hybrid Ann, Jane	
5-6"	40.00
7-8"	55.00
8-10" (Jane)	70.00

MAGNOLIA virginiana Sweetbay Magnolia	
Various sizes-call for information	
MALUS agustifolia Southern Crab Apple	
10"	100.00
12"	125.00
PISTACHIA Chirensis Chinese Pistache	
8-10"	75.00
10-12"	100.00
PLATANUS occidentalis American Sycamore	
12-14"	85.00
14-16"	100.00
PRUNUS californica Bradford, Cleaveland Select	
14-16"	125.00
16" +	150.00
QUERCUS acutissima Sawtooth Oak	
QUERCUS falcata Southern Red Oak	
QUERCUS falcata var. pagodaefolia Cherrybark Oak	
QUERCUS hemisphaerica Laurel Oak	
QUERCUS laevis Swamp Chestnut Oak	
QUERCUS muhlenbergii Nuttall Oak	
QUERCUS phellos Willow Oak	
QUERCUS shumardii Shumard Red Oak	
10-12" 2 1/2" - 3" Cal	100.00
12-14" 3" - 4" Cal	125.00
14-16" 4" - 5" Cal	150.00
QUERCUS virginiana Southern Live Oak	
8-10" 2 1/2" Cal	100.00
STYRAX japonica Snowbell	
8-10"	100.00
10" +	150.00
TAXODIUM acericum Pond Cypress	
7-8"	65.00
8-10"	75.00
TAXODIUM distichum Bald Cypress	
7-8"	55.00
8-10"	65.00
10-12"	100.00
12-14"	125.00
14-16"	150.00
16" +	200.00

PRICES: These prices are F.O.B. our nursery for the wholesale trade only. Prices in this list cancel all previous lists and are subject to change without notice. TERMS: Terms are cash upon pickup or delivery with the exception of those who have established credit in the past years. Past due accounts will be assessed a service charge of 1 1/2% per month, 18% annually on unpaid balance. TRANSPORTATION: We can arrange shipment by local reliable truckers, freight being collected by driver upon delivery. We will combine loads with any nursery in the area.

APPENDIX B

ORAL HISTORIES

Edward L. Blake Jr.

February 26, 2004

Blake's office, Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

When did you first meet Margie Jenkins?

I learned of Margie through Robert Poor who was a student of mine at Mississippi State. He is a landscape architect who is naturally inclined toward the natural world. He used the Crosby Arboretum and our plant aquatic exhibit as the basis for his thesis project. As he graduated and started practicing he practiced that way. He told me about this woman over in Amite who was a source for native plants. We started planting the Arboretum in 1981, and we finished in 1986 the development of the fresh water wetlands exhibit, and then we starting looking for plants. The first time I went over was in the spring of 1987. Robert had a big trailer, and we went to go Margie's and Tommy Dobbs in Simmes, Ala. The most amazing thing about the trip was to see this small, fragile lady and her husband, he was alive at that time, was like a bear of a man and her sons are like that too. They throw around these big plants, and they are just hefty guys. But the minute this little petite woman came out, you knew that she was the person the nursery revolved around. They sell a lot of different plants, but it was Margie who developed the growing of the native plants within the nursery. She gets in her golf cart, and you would disappear for hours just driving around looking at plants. My most vivid memory is that within ten or fifteen minutes of meeting her, you felt like you had known her for years. And the thing you had in common was plants. After a while if you are in the plant world in a botanical

arboretum you meet lots of folks, a lot of smart folks and you meet a lot of folks with lots of experience and have been a lot of places, but Margie is so unassuming and just as smart as anyone out there. But she doesn't come across in an academic way with rapid-fire knowledge coming out. She approaches very quietly, saying, look at this beautiful plant that is in bloom now, and then she starts telling a story about how she first found out about this plant. She might have started it from seed or cutting, and where she found it, and who might have talked with her about it. Southerners are story tellers and Margie has that sensibility about plants. She made plants a part of life instead of standing in the distance as a scientist looking at a plant and telling you about it. Yet at the same time she could tell you anything that a taxonomist, who would write a book on taxonomy, would tell you. She understood it, but she never talked about it in those terms. Perhaps this is the way to get people interested in plants. Not the hard core, but those who just love plants. Margie has a way of relating to people.

Their place is busy, they sell lots of plants with semi-trucks coming and going, and yet she will stop what she is doing, and you become the only person alive at that moment and take you around and spend two or three hours with you. As I got to know them, I found out that Bryant had timberland, longleaf pine, and was part of the history of this piney woods area. What were the original piney woods like, what kind of stock were the people who settled here, how the woods came to be cut? What happened after the woods were cut? Margie knows all the history; they had roots there. They had tracts of old longleaf timber on their place. They knew all the people around because they had grown up there. For instance the name of the road they are on is Dummyline, named for the old railroad lines that were built to haul the timber out of the longleaf forest. She could

answer any question you had on lumbering history in that area. She would tell me stories about people at the National Arboretum in Washington D. C., that I had gotten to know or heard about, people over in North Carolina, Mr. Dodd down at Simmes, Ala who was one of the first to propagate plants and send them into Washington and introduce them into their trials there. She would start dropping those names, and it was not be dropping names. She would say Mr. So and So dropped by, looking for a specific plant, and I would recognize that person, and she would say, we would get to talking and drive in the car over to so and so creek. The wealth that woman knows about geology, land use history, people who settled into this area, the south that has developed since the depression, into the south that we know today, all of the people that have developed the academic ties and the history of landscape architecture through LSU. She is just a Renaissance woman, her interests lie in so many different areas, so over the years we began to come over to buy for the plant sales at the Arboretum. And you know Margie; she would say have you seen this plant? And she would throw it into the truck, and at the end of the day I would drive a load home of Lagniappe that she has given me to take back. I got to know Mark the best of her children. He was growing a lot of things that we were using.

One time, when my father, who spent his life working with the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, he was a journalist major in college; and he was in charge of their information division. He would write and film all sorts of things to communicate what farm members were doing in Mississippi. In the mid1990's, he asked me if I would help him do a program on the plant industry in Mississippi and adjoining states, the type of business that it was.. Every month their film crew would come down from Jackson, and I

would set up an appointment with someone. We would go out and just talk to the people, and one of the places that we went to was Margie's Nursery. We talked a lot about the native azaleas, witch hazels, star anise, pond cypress, and the spruce pine; and all those plants to make whoever was listening more aware of the native plants and where you could get them.

Interviewer: Are there areas of the nursery that cannot be seen from the road?

Blake: Yes, I have ridden out where they are growing fields of trees. There is a huge area with Silver Bells, which is a hard tree to find; they had like a Bosque grove of them, and they have big plastic covered flats under irrigation. Through the Arboretum

Days, we would offer seminar days on native plants to make people more appreciative of the common ordinary things in the landscape, what I call a sense of place, what I call understanding your *genus loci* of where you live. We had Margie as a speaker, Tommy Dodd, Mr. Galle from Callaway Gardens. Margie would come over and she knows so many of these people. She will call one of them and say she was having a problem, it won't germinate, or where can I find someone who is propagating this plant and get some starts from. She must have one of the biggest networks in the plant world.

When I first started at the Arboretum, I had to absorb so much complex information, and she would visit with me and she would share with me and it really helped me to see plants. What I mean by that is: what it was growing with, what kind of habitat it was growing in, quirks it had to transplant it or get it into cultivation. Things that if you don't do everything right, the plant will not make it. We were at the stage of installing out first plants at the Arboretum, and I did a lot of that work. I was on the end

of a shovel, and being able to know somebody and who would share their knowledge was invaluable. She helped me in many ways.

Interviewer: What are some of the difference you see with working with native plants?

Blake: I think that after working with natives, I have come to appreciate the plants that are in the trade, the common ones that you almost turn your nose up at. They are the ones that are used over and over because those are truly the plants that withstand the widest types of habitation and conditions. You can put them in somebody's hands, who know nothing about plants, and they can plop them in the ground, and they will grow. As you get into natives, you find that those can have tiny little parameters that they can survive in. and they are much much harder to work with than the general palette out there in the nursery centers. That is what is so invaluable about Margie's experience in growing these plants. You cannot use a plant that continues to die, wilt, and disappear over time. To her credit, when a plant she sold you or gave you, she will tell you that you have to do some specific things with this plant. She takes all that experience and share it with you to make these native plants work well.

Interview: Can you think of any specific plants that you have obtained from her and have done well at the Arboretum?

Blake: We planted a lot of the native azaleas. The Robin Hill Azalea (and I do not like spring flowering plants) She asked me if I was familiar with this plant. She went up and down, and all over the place; and it must have lasted two hours. She made me aware that this one is bred to bloom in the fall of the year, and, further more, she began to show me that with all the breeding that has been going on, that each azalea has it own season. If you knew them by their season, you could do a planting design that would continue their

bloom time into June and then pick back up again in the fall. That specifically is what I can really remember she taught me. Fred Galle in his extensive knowledge has documented where these cultivars have come in from Japan. And I have used Odenwald's book to with Galle's to get the best azaleas for sandy locations.

She was the first person to give me a print out of the National Arboretum main varieties, cultivars of mildew resistant crape myrtles, different heights and colors, and I have it taped in the front of Neil Odenwald's book. And to this day, when I do a list of crape myrtles, I still use that list.

Interviewer: To what do you credit Margie's accomplishments?

Blake: Margie's accomplishments stem from her attitude that is like a child's wonder every day is like Christmas, and everyday she loves life and the beauty and all the things on this earth.

Interviewer: And they are hard workers.

Blake: The work ethic is strong in all her family. Especially when Bryant would load those trucks and would be amazed at how many plants they could get on a pick-up, especially when I would have to unload them when we got back to the Arboretum. I could not believe how many plants he had gotten on that truck. And then to think that they would also load those semis.

When I went back to their house after Bryant's funeral, she had all the tractors that he had collected out up on a hill. They loved the natural world, and how to work with it. They worked hard and had a passion for what they were doing. I remember the minister at his funeral pointing out all his hard work. They are the salt of the earth.

All of the people that I met through the Arboretum; she also knows. There is a big network that relies on one another. The growers, the school (LSU) the practitioners all came together to produce a robust industry. You don't find that in too many places, maybe Oregon or Delaware Valley. She is a keystone species in an eco system or this industry that is here.

Blake: Let me expand on plants most associated with Margie and not grown in other nurseries. The Arboretum was the only public garden in this region, where Margie and I knew, was show casing these plants, and bless her heart she was so good to us and just giving us plants to plant so that other people could see them. These plants that nobody knew about and could not find any where, and they could see them at the Arboretum. People would call us about a plant, and then we could send them back to her to buy it. We both knew we were working in a partnership to get these plants out there in the public. She gave us so many plants. For the longest time we could not have had out plant sale without the plants she was growing. Of course it is the same thing with Hilltop and Marion Drummond. We were just one of many places that she gave to. When I started my practice here, we set up a constructed an artificial wetland in a housing development, and we bought all the plants for that from her.

Her daughter had a surprise b-day party for her, and we went to it. You really begin to see at something like that the wide variety of people she has affected. She is such a modest person. Her home is elegant and grand in space. She has vision, but it is not ostentatious. When you get to know it what you see is what you get.

Lila Johnson from Hammond is one of her good friends. She probably is not that interested in plants so no matter whom you meet, all love her. She is so modest. If you

give Margie a compliment or thank her in all sincerity, she will be embarrassed and turn red.

When you look at America and what it has accomplished, you can look at this family and see what America has done. The success of America has been shown in the Jenkins family.

Marion Drummond

Sunday April 18, 2004

Telephone interview.

Interviewer: How did you first become acquainted with Margie Jenkins?

Drummond: Hasn't she told you that?

Interviewer: No

Drummond: I had seen something brand new to me in a retail nursery called a satsuki azalea. The person who was selling them south of Baton Rouge didn't know too much about them. I saw the catalogue from Margie's nursery and got the address off of it and wrote to her. I was very ignorant at the time and didn't realize that just walking into a wholesale nursery, even to just look around and ask for information, was a no, no. I did not hear, and I did not hear, and I did not hear, and I thought well that's a dead end. Pretty soon back came this hand written note telling me, in no uncertain terms, never did she ever deal with walk in trade. (laughing) Having met Margie you can appreciate that, and I thought, oh Marion, you blew that one. However, she told me there is somebody up the road, and she gave me Rocky Rochester's telephone number. I contacted Rocky and went up to talk to him and learned all about satsuki azaleas. I always remembered in the back of my mind that we don't deal with walk-in off the street.

Interviewer: What year was this?

Drummond: Probably in 1985. I went to Hilltop after I got my degree in 1992. I was very green. We had been doing plant sales at Hilltop and I had been helping with that, just as a volunteer, and I thought we are repeating ourselves. We are growing our own plants. They are coming in with the same old plants. I thought maybe we could contact

some of the growers, and they might be gracious enough to make some donations. We had in school Greg Brandl who lived in Opelousus and was already involved in landscape work and had a lot of contacts in Forest Hills. So we went up to Forest Hills and so then I got to thinking maybe I should contact this woman by the name of Jenkins because she had things, and her name keeps coming up, that nobody else seemed to have. I called her and gave her my name which didn't mean a thing to her because this was several years later. I did go up with a friend (hoping Margie had forgotten me) When I got up there she could not have been lovelier, on the telephone she had said, what do you want? And I said whatever will fit in my station wagon. We were very basic and primitive at the plant sale in those days, and she took us around on the golf cart and SHE STARTED TO TALK and it was just like listening to a poet, it was like listening to poetry. She would talk about this plant, and she would talk about that plant, and I thought maybe we would spend an hour or so there. We had gotten there about 9 o'clock and about 1 o'clock she took us in and fed us lunch and then we went back outside, and I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I learned more in that day than I did my whole time at LSU about plants. As we were winding down the day, I thought I had to be fair to this lady and I told her who I was, and she laughed and said oh I remember that. She said that was the first time anyone had ever written and asked to come up here not affiliated with a plant establishment. We had a big laugh after that, and she loaded the car so full of plants that on the way home I was stopped by a policeman who said you can't see out of the car. I had a big Chrysler station wagon at the time, and I said Oh Officer, my daughter was with the police force in Baton Rouge, you get behind me, and I will tell you right hand-left hand, and I will tell you which you are hold up. I could just barely make it out, and I

told the woman with me to look also. So she (Margie) was most generous and gave us all of that. For the first two years we asked for donations. And she did not just give just trash plants, like some nurseries did of those plants they could not sell. And that's the beginning of what I refer to as an absolutely wonderful educational friendship experience. She has done more for plant lovers in the southeast than most other professional nurseries. Of course the fact that she started this nursery thirty years ago when women did not do that sort of thing and she persisted after several failures.

She always wanted to go to the shows, she is a sponge, she always wants to keep learning and I admire that. What Margie does is what the extension service should do. She brings plants in. If someone who she thinks is knowledgeable about plants suggests something, she is willing to bring it in and out a display garden. And I think she regrets that. Now to a plant person a plant does not look the same in as pot as it does planted in the ground. If you can take a customer out and say this is what that plant will look like after it has been in the ground eight years or ten years, you are going to sell a lot more. But you know the extension service in south La is just dreadful. In East Baton Rouge Parish I think Alan Owenings focuses on coleus, itea, and lantana and I think that is about it. And Margie will bring in all the plants, she goes to all the trade shows and she shares, she is willing to give a plant to someone, she is so willing to give information to a competitor. Two growers in her area, who are waiting for Margie to die and step into her shoes and neither one of those gentlemen, can hold a candle to her. Neither one of them are truly interested in learning about the plants. They want to make money. And Margie is very tight with a nickel and she has probably five million in timber, I think somebody once told me that. I try it. Now the biggest disadvantage is that she has never planted

think that the one adjective that describes Margie is generosity because she gives of herself, she gives plants, she gives information, and she gives help to people. As long as you do her right, she is very open.

I always remember going up there, and she would put me on the golf cart and talk and talk and then she would tell me about who came up there yesterday and she couldn't get rid of them and he just stayed and stayed, and I think Margie we have been in this golf cart for 35 minutes and tomorrow you are going to be telling somebody else that I stayed and stayed and she couldn't get rid of me. But boy can she tell a story; she has remembered everything she has ever learned about a plant. And she can tell more wonderful stories about the plants and where they came from and how she acquired them and usually how they do. She has had plants there that so and so wanted her to grow, and she would grow them for him and then maybe he was finished with them or they would prove to not be so successful, and she would stop growing them. I know there have been times when I went up to pick up something, and she would say I am not growing that any more, so and so doesn't want it and I can't sell it. I hope you were up there while the native azaleas were blooming.

Interviewer: What happens on your trips?

She is always floored with the prices at other nurseries. When we travel together she is talking about a plant or person when we go to sleep, and we will wake up and she is talking about a plant or a person. She is great to travel with. There is a silhouette in the office of Georgia O'Keeffe, and I would swear it was Margie

Interviewer: Have you seen the new Margie Jenkins leucothoe? Can you think of any other plants that are associated with her?

Drummond: Her favorite plant is the one she just passed on the golf cart. She loves the *Quercus Glauca*, the Japanese Evergreen Oak, the hydrangea, and the last few years she seems to become more interested in perennials. She use to be only interested in woodies and trees and now she is going to over to look at perennials. The only problem is that most of her landscape people are use to getting the woodies and trees from her. You know garden centers want you to ship to them. She sells a lot to the north of Amite, she sells a lot to Memphis and quite a bit to Houston and to Dallas, she has regulars who come in with those big eighteen wheelers. I never go up to visit her in the beginning of the week because that is usually when the large buyers come in so they can install later in the week, and garden centers can have things in place for the weekend. Usually Fridays are a good day for me to go up to buy for Hilltop because it usually, not always, was quieter, but of course all her personal friends realized that, so there was always a wonderful meeting of people. I never went up there, that I didn't see someone I hadn't seen in a long time or some one whose name I had heard of, but had not ever met, and she could give you the whole genealogy.

Interviewer: I was thinking about a plant list of those that have come and gone.

Drummond: I always think of the *cornus angustata* that she has planted in the field. There is also the *cyrilla*. Her list of available plants, is like so many good nurseries, because they never put on the list the really good stuff, because if you do that people come to you for only the good material and they don't buy bread and butter material. Some one from Baton Rouge with his client came up, loaded some plants from her special place, and she told him to put them back, and he asked her what happened to signs saying do not touch and she said what ever happened to asking? He thought it was

like a retail place. Periodically she has lost plants when she was gone, special plants that she had out there. Sometimes she lets people come in on the weekend. And I understand she had a robbery not too long ago.

Interviewer: What about always giving plants away?

Drummond: Most wholesale operations will send you home with at least one plant.

When I go up there and take someone to help me, they always go home with a plant.

Margie has always given plants away.

Christopher C. Friedrichs

Thursday, March 11, 2004

Jenkins Nursery

Interviewer: Has Margie blazed a trail in the nursery business?

Friedrichs: This whole part of the country, the Folsom area, St Tammany was the horticultural center for the state for a long time. Most of the people who came into this part of the world are related to Margie's family - the Yates. Her in-laws all came here and intermarried with the local people up here, and they have pretty well been involved in the cultural development of St. Tammany and Washington Parish and even up into deep rural Mississippi. You can drive through Yates Country around here. They still have an arena down here where they have rodeos and things left over from one of her brothers who was a cattle dealer. Pretty interesting family, they have done many things through here. They dug lakes, and I can show you the house where Granny lived. There are big camellias, not much variety, but they are big now and well tended. I recollect that Margie told me that she has about 2200 acres under her jurisdiction; a lot of this was inherited from Mama. Bryant was a competent, hard working guy. They first worked at about the time of World War II. They worked for the government in Covington. Bryant and Margie came up here because Margie's family lived up here. She was very influential with Bryant about developing his dairy herds and all of that was a big going thing, and even when I first met them he was milking something like 119 cows twice a day. She has a nephew down the road who has gone into the nursery business, because the federal government has come in and collapsed or put out of business the dairy business, any way he has hands that are twice the size of mine and when he goes to shake

my hand I want to withdraw and say oh please don't shake my hand cause he has a grip, and he doesn't crush my bones, but it is a very firm handshake. Just like that man who ate with us today, he is one of the local sons through here and he is tough.

Interviewer: Tell me his name again:

Friedrichs: Gaston Lanaux,. French name. I think his father was kin to a Zemurray. Just before the 2nd WW the Zemurray came up here. It was their summer home or playground or something. Mrs. Zemurray was into azaleas and camellias and mountain laurels. There was a nursery next to Zemurray Park. She put that man into business. They supplied all the plants in the Park. While you are down here you should go into Park. Drained lakes and made others; did a great deal of engineering, pretty interesting and amazing that all this happened in 1920's and 30's. We just weren't that sophisticated over here, and this was when the Yates was doing things here. And you still see their name (Yates) when you go back through these little areas. It is remarkable to travel with Margie, she will tell you that Grandpa had this property; and this big grove of oak trees; they had a house in here; and all this is a big grass farm now; and then a little bit past that and down through the woods is a very early Louisiana cottage in there. It is something you would expect to see down in the bayou country more than up here. When you get down to Zemurray, and to the east, and just before the Tchefuncte River there is a very large tract of land. The government was protecting the wild animals. It is now a game preserve. One of her brothers was managing about 900 acres, and he had cattle in there. There are still traces of the barns in there but you go by now and it is full of giraffes and unbelievable African animals. Can't think of the name right now, its wildlife something, and they have wagon trains going in there and you can pay to go in and feed the animals.

But prior to this wildlife management thing, it was a hunting area, and was managed hunting, and they had big houses where they would raise quail. And when you came to hunt, they would let out a certain number of quail for you to hunt. Not my idea of what hunting is all about. But it was Margie's brother who did this, and, if you go by, his name is still on the gate. He even built like a motel in there where you could stay and a big dining room. They have been through this whole part of the parish. I never met Margie's mother, but I have met her sisters and brothers, and they are significant people in this part of the state. Her sister who lives in Bogalusa is married to an attorney, and he is sort like Gaston. He can talk about everybody and go on and on. The house they (the sister Dixie and her husband) live is very rural English building. It was one of the first homes built by one of the first managers of the paper works in Bogalusa. My parents lived in Slidell, and if the wind came from the north, the odors of Bogalusa would knock you out. The paper mill was very important. Fortunately most of that has been cleared up. I don't know if it was sulfur or what was so strong but it was tremendous. Bogalusa has its own qualities, and I don't know you very well, but it was a red-neck capital, very Baptist. It's exciting to know that all of this happened, and it is so recent. Because what is happening here now with the so lovely causeway coming across the lake and developments with the automobile, I wish the price of gasoline would go to ten dollar a gallon so we would deter any further growth, because the houses that they are putting in up the turnpike road 1077 from Madisonville. They are building all these houses on concrete slabs in the flats, and it all floods in there.

The early nursery people here all worked together. When I first came back to Louisiana in 1962, and in coming up here, all the people would know each other, but they

all grew the same damn plants. Wax ligustrum and Burford hollies, and that's all you really got. It was frustrating because I had been working in Atlanta and Georgia has always been a little more aggressive plant wise and of course they are closer to the Carolinas where there has been an abundance of horticulture development up there that is certainly superior to what we have here. Margie has been very aggressive in getting those people to come down here for things, and she still participates very strongly in the Azalea Society and all those organizations. They are all by-products of her organizing that she has done here. It is remarkable if you go to one of these meetings with her, and she has gotten to a point now where she will get Jim Campbell and Leon (Garrett Leon) to take her. She has been very instrumental in getting Leon into the nursery business. She (I remember the first time I came here when I wanted so many different kinds of plants. Margie's husband came along, and said, well yes we can do that. I said wait a minute I don't think I have the money to pay for all of this stuff, and he said don't worry I will get it from you. I was very sorry when he died. Her whole family has had a lot of cancer. Margie's husband died of lung cancer and smoked until the day they put him in that casket. He was a fine man. When I first came over here and bought about 4 acres. I started collecting a bunch of things. One of my first customers when I came over here was a Zemurray daughter. I have done some consulting work at Zemurray Gardens. I have met some interesting people through collecting mushrooms.

Interviewer: What about the plant materials grown in Louisiana:

Friedrichs: Limited plant material in the past, there was no variety. Ligustrums still is a big item and pittisporum, and then gradually they introduced illicium floridanum. (florida anise), and it was pretty limited. I have been influenced by Margie and have been able to

grow the plants she has. She has made contact with all of the growers in Georgia and Tennessee. Georgia has been very instrumental in the production of materials and different varieties. And the Carolinas, and when you travel with her, she knows all those people up there and when she goes to a meeting it is amazing how well she knows them all. And now she has gotten active in production of a big horticultural conference they had in Mobile, and they had some very interesting buildings. There is a good group of horticulture people in the Mobile area and in Semmes, Alabama. And just before the World War II, there was a group of people who came from the Orient, and they started the first introduction of camellias and sasanquas. A lot of the names that you see on those early plants came from those people. Right north of Mobile, one of the men most responsible for my collecting the deciduous magnolias was John Allen Smith, he came from Cincula, Alabama, and his family owned mass acreage through there. He began to produce on this property, (oil) and he produced all sorts of deciduous plants. And the oriental guys developed some others.

Interviewer: Have you been with Margie on those nursery trips?

Friedrichs: When Margie and I went to England, one of the places that she insisted on going to the brewery where her grandfather had worked. We had to go through everything. We went to the Chelsea Flower Show, and she just kept saying, "oh my goodness". Camellia Society had a trip to Ireland. Tony (his partner) and I took Miss Margie. It's wonderful to take a trip with Miss Margie.

Interviewer: What was your position in New Orleans?

Friedrichs: For eight years, I was the landscape architect for the parks commission. I did that while Andrew was the Mayor, and before that I was teaching at Tulane. I took the job with the city to make some money.

Margie Jenkins

February 20, 2004

Jenkins Nursery.

Interviewer: What are some of your earliest childhood memories?

Jenkins: Growing up on a farm in St. Tammany parish. My dad inherited and bought a great deal of land from his dad. His dad came from England; he was parish surveyor in St. Tammany for many years. I was born on the property in St. Tammany Parish, and I still own part of it, way off the road (highway 450) My mother decided that it was not the place to raise her children, and he bought a sizeable farm in Washington Parish about five or six miles from here. All the other children were born there. I had three sisters and two brothers, and I was the oldest. My dad had a big farm, we had a lot of tenant farmers that lived on the property, black families, we had sugar cane, cotton, and my dad also owned sheep. We sold wool. I lived probably a good mile and half from school. I went to a little school until the sixth grade and then I had to catch the big school bus to go into Franklinton and that was a big change. It was really tough. I still don't understand it today, we didn't have study hall, and those teachers would give us homework. I remember my poor Dad, he would help me with my homework, He could really do math and he could get the right answer real quick, but couldn't always tell me how he got the answer. In my family my dad and I were really close, and I guess it was because there were three girls before he had a son, and I would tag along behind him a lot. I would go with him in the woods. We always referred to the place in St. Tammany Parish as the old place and every springtime we would go down, and he would take us fishing. I would always pick the wild azaleas when we would go into the old swamps, and I can also

remember seeing the *Illicium floridanum*, and I can remember Mama saying for us not to touch those because they were poisonous and they are not. But since then I have read that in some publication it was thought that it was poisonous and I guess that is because of the aroma of the leaves. I can also remember the mayhaws. When they got ripe the water would be up in the slews and I can remember him taking a shifter like you would use with flour, and he would use that to pick up the mayhaws for my mama to make jelly, they would be lodged up against the trees.

Interviewer: Did you have electricity?

Jenkins: Oh no, child we had no electricity, and we drew our water from the well. I can remember that one of my jobs in the afternoons when I was old enough was to draw the water and fill all the buckets and bring them in at night. The house we lived in was an unusual house. We parked the car under the house; it was built up off the ground. On the second level we had a front porch, two big rooms on one side and two big rooms on the other side with a hallway in the middle. We came down the stairs. We had a big room that was our dining room which had a fireplace in it and behind that was the kitchen and also a side porch. There was a lot of coming and goings because all the field workers would have to come up to the well to water the horses. Of course we had chickens. Daddy fenced Mama's flower garden. I can well remember Mama's flower garden. It had a chicken fence so the chickens could not fly over. I remember that she mostly had annuals, but I do remember especially that she had touch-me-nots and holly hocks, and it was just a mass of flowers but that was her garden. The only thing I remember that was growing outside the fence was an old iris that is still hardy today. I still have some today, but it is like a bearded iris. I can remember the iris at Easter time always because Dad

would hide the eggs down in the Iris leaves. I was born in 1921 so I went through the depression.

Interviewer: Did the depression affect you much?

Jenkins: Well you know we never had money, but I never felt poor because we always had plenty to eat. We had a smoke house full of meat, sausage, and ham. My Mama never did can meat like some women in the county did. But back in those days, we would have this guy come by the house, and he would have an animal that he had slaughtered. It would be wrapped in a sheet, and he would sell meat. But then later on I would go to town with my dad on Saturdays, and he would let me do the shopping, and we would always come home with meat. But during the week what we ate was vegetables or pork or sausage. We always had a big garden, and we would have dried beans that he would plant. We would have them in a big sack, and that's what we ate in the winter time. I always tell my kids they would not have survived on what I had to eat.

Interviewer: Did your mother put up food?

Jenkins: My mother canned a lot, and we always had cows so we had milk and butter. We had an automobile which there were not very many in the neighborhood so my daddy would always end up having to take everybody to the doctor when they had to go. And we had the first radio in the community.

Interviewer: Where did you get your clothes?

Jenkins: My mama made all of our clothes. When I got into the eighth grade I learned to sew, and then I had to help my mama sew. In my family, I was the oldest, then I have my sister Doris, two years younger, and she doesn't live very far away; then my sister Ida who lives in Amite; and then I had my brother Fred, and of course we dearly loved him

because he was the first boy. I lost him in 1994 from a massive heart attack; and then John, he was always the toughie, he was the bad kid, and I had to help Mama take care of them. And then Dixie came along, and there is a thirteen year difference between us, and we spoiled her to death. I remember the first coat she had. Some woman had given Mama a wool dress, and it didn't fit anyone. Mama said I could have the dress. I ripped it all up, dyed it navy blue, and I made Dixie her first coat. And I would make her fancy dresses. My grandfather on my mom's side lived with us for awhile, and Grandpa's and my job in the afternoon was to mind the kids while Mama had to go milk the cows. I never learned how to milk. I tried, but I just couldn't get any milk. I remember we had a woman come in and stay with us for a couple of weeks, it was when one of the kids were born, don't remember which one, but that is what they did in those days. Anyway Doris would follow her out to the lot to milk the cow, and she learned how to milk and did a pretty good job. Anyway after the lady was gone, Doris still knew how and fell heir to the milking chore. (Laughter) And it would make her so mad, she would say "Mom, why can't you make Margie milk?" And I would say, "I just can't get any milk!"

Interviewer: Did your mother grow flowers or vegetables?

Jenkins: Mama had a big garden always, and I would go in with her. Anyway there was an area next to the fence that wasn't used, and she gave me some seeds, and said I could have that. There was a black lady who lived by herself, she had three sons who lived on the place, but as far as I can remember she lived by herself. We called her Aunt Liddy. Mama made us call all the older blacks by Aunt Jude, Liddy, and Uncle Jacob etc. Anyway Mama would leave us with Aunt Liddy while she worked in the garden, and Aunt Liddy would give us a baked potato. She wore this big white thing around her head.

I don't remember Aunt Liddy doing anything, and I always wondered how she ended up with that house. I remember we had a black wedding on the property. I remember Daddy holding me up to see. We lived there until 1936 probably, and if my dad had realized that we were coming out of the depression, he would have never sold that property because it was the sorrow of his life that he had sold that property. Then we went back to St Tammany Parish. He had a section of land, and then he bought this place up here, which was three hundred acres. In those days taxes were so high. Land taxes were unreal. He decided to sell and move back to St Tammany Parish, and that didn't work out at all, because there were no roads in that part of the woods and he had to bring us by car to catch the school bus, which was a good five or six miles every day. And then because there were no roads, and if the weather was bad, we just didn't get to school. He had some more property where my sister Doris lives today, and we moved to that property and that is where my mom lived the rest of her days.

Interviewer: Did you have relatives who liked plants?

Jenkins: My grandmother on my Mom's side; all my people were plant people; my Daddy was a plant person; and I wish I could remember my grandfather Yates but he died when I was only a year old. I asked my Aunt Pauline, one of my mother's sisters, my mother never did care for my grandfather that much as I could tell down through the years, but my Aunt Pauline she was also married to one of his sons, I had double first cousins, Aunt Pauline liked grandpa Yates and I asked her one time if he liked plants and she said (Margie changing accent) We be riding in the buggy and he would say to me Pauline (pronounced differently) did you see that? And I would say oh yes Mr. Yates I saw that. And he said how come Pauline you see things about the same time I do and that Susie

(his daughter) never sees nothing? (Laugh) Any way Pauline liked flowers. Mama had three sisters, and it was really unusual that she came from a broken home, that was highly unlikely to happen in those days; that's why Grandpa lived with us. Granny was a real worker, and she and those four girls bought one-hundred-sixty acres of land and they paid for it through farming which was tough. But Grandpa Gardner, Mama's maiden name was Gardner, his father was a steam boat captain, he owned a steam boat, and before the Civil War they had plenty, but after the Civil War they had nothing. And Grandpa had never learned to work; my daddy thought that Grandpa Gardner was very lazy. I remember going to Granny's a lot, and to Aunt Pauline's, Mama's sister and also married to one of my Dad's brothers. He died during the flu epidemic after World War I, and she never remarried, she had one daughter. I admired her a lot, she could do anything. She was a woman but she had a car long ago, she could plow, she could sew, she could cook. Aunt Pauline could do anything. She loved plants, and she learned how to graft. I have something in my back yard that she grafted. Now Momma's oldest sister, Aunt Willeta, I remember that when I was in high school days we had a course in home economics, something to do with landscaping, and I made a copy of everything in her yard, and the teacher helped me relocate some of the things for her. She had a yard full of flowers. There is still a Cowcumber magnolia, the Bigleaf Magnolia, in her yard.

I think all of my family was plant people, but when we moved here I did not have time for a flower garden. All my energy went into my vegetable garden. Because with five children, and then in the summer, we grew watermelons, we would hire these high school kids my kids' age to come out and haul the melons, and I would have to feed them. And those kids could eat. We always had plenty of meat in the freezer, because we had a

dairy farm we would have an animal slaughtered for us. We had plenty milk and vegetables.

Interviewer: How did you meet your husband?

Jenkins: He lived not too far from me. His family was in the logging business. He first dated Doris, but they didn't get along. And she was in Baton Rouge, and he was in Covington. I was living in Covington and any way he called me to go to the show. And I was five years older than him so we had a real friendly relationship and that grew into more. In fact my dad was a little concerned about the age difference. It never was a problem until I got to be sixty-five years old. Because I had worked for the federal government they held out federal retirement, not social security. When I got to be sixty-five they took me off their insurance, and I was not eligible for Medicare. Most women are eligible because they get it through their husband, but they are not five years older than their husband.

When they closed the office where I worked they offered me a transfer, but I couldn't leave my husband and kids, so I went to work at the electric company for two years. But that was not enough to make me eligible for Medicare. I went to the Social Security office and they would say "Miz Jenkins you never worked?" and "I said I worked all my life!" And the CPA could have been paying a minimum on me through the farm, but he didn't know I was older. What happened: I had to pay it until Bryan was sixty-two, and then I was eligible. I ended up paying \$258 per month.

Interviewer: Did you go to any school past high school?

Jenkins: No school past high school. I graduated in 1938, and it was tough times. I went back and took courses; they would let you do that in those days. I took typing. I did not

go to college. The NYA project came in (The National Youth Administration), and I don't remember the year. I signed up for that, and they paid you. (My first job was selling toys and wrapping gifts during the Christmas holidays, and my pay was one dollar a day at a store in Franklinton) NYA would place you in an office in town and, they would pay you. The people in the office paid nothing. They sent me to the Farm Security Administration; it was a federal loan office. The woman in the office was Sylvia Miller, and my boss Mr. Mouton Bateman. I got along fine doing all sorts of office work. I don't remember how long that went on. There was an opening for a permanent job came up in the office, and Sylvia wanted me to get the job. I was scared to death to ask the supervisor Percy Lemoine, but I did ask him. I had to take a federal civil service test and had to pass that and all this other stuff. I graduated in 1938, and I went to work in Franklinton 1941. In 1942, because of the war, all these women were leaving their jobs and following their husbands who were in the service. I was offered different jobs, but I wouldn't move. Mr. Lemoine said that I should have taken the job that was offered to me because it was a step-up. I was offered the job in Covington, and I took that. I worked there from 1943 until they closed the office. They closed the office for economic reasons. They combined it with another office. Then I went to work at the electric company.

Interviewer: When did you get married?

Jenkins: I married in 1946. I had been in Covington for about three years when I got married. Bryant was in the service, and then when he came out, we lived in Covington until 1951, and then we moved up here where I live now. That was before my first child was born. Freddy was born in 1951; we were married for 5 yrs before we had any

children. I was about to give up hope, but I sure didn't have any trouble after that. Mark is the youngest, and I was going on forty when Mark was born. When they were all in school and I had a little time, we started doing a little bit of the nursery work. But we had started it a little before that with field stock.

Interviewer: How did you get your first start in the nursery?

Jenkins: We had this guy who was cutting logs, and he got over the property line and had to pay us for them. It was about \$300 or \$400, and we didn't have a particular spot for that money to go into because we had not intended on selling them. So I told Bryant why don't we buy some liners? You know I had a lot of relatives in the nursery business. My brother Fred was married to Lozane Magee, and her Dad was Mr. Price Magee. He was the brother of Dallas McGee, and they started the nursery business in Folsom. They were originally from this area, but they were working in Texas and came back and bought the property where the Folsom Nursery is today. Mr. Price was a tile setter, he made more money than Mr. Dallas, so Mr. Dallas came back to start the nursery and Mr. Price funneled money back from Texas. My brother Fred was married to Mr. Price's daughter, and my sister Doris married Mr. Dallas Magee's only son, and they started a nursery after they got married.

Interviewer: What were your first plants?

Jenkins: We bought liners. We bought wax ligustrum and took care of them and sold them and made a nice little profit. and we thought this was pretty good. So then we bought the azalea liners and Bryant fertilized them just like he did the corn right down the row and killed them every one. So we figured we had to do a little better-that was not going to work. But that was the beginning of the nursery business. We had some things

in the field, and over here it was in the late 1960's, the container yards were just coming into being; before everything was grown in the ground and dug up and shipped out. They started using- we didn't have these good plastic containers like we have today- tin buckets, like lunch buckets, and that is what they were using at first. Some people would actually dip them into tar so they wouldn't rust. But we didn't have to do that because the plastic pots had come into being.

Interviewer: Have you taken any other courses than the one you took from Dr. Odenwald?

Jenkins: It was really funny. I was asked to go over to Lafayette to that horticulture meeting to do their program at lunch, and when I got there, the guy came over to me and said I have to tell these people something about you. I said my family owns a wholesale nursery and told him a little about that, but as far as I am concerned I have had no formal horticulture training. Anyway when he got up there to introduce me, he said she has had no formal education. And I thought I bet these people think they really got a dummy since he left the horticulture part out. Laughter! My three week course with Dr. Odenwald was my only formal education. He came here one time and wanted to pay for a plant, and I said, no way, if it wasn't for you this nursery would probably not be here today if it wasn't for you. It was a fun course.

Interviewer: Do you miss not having that formal education?

Jenkins: Well there is so much stuff out there I would like to know that I cannot find in books, like there are some seeds that I have never been able to get up. But I don't know what kind of course you would take. I belong to a bunch of plant societies, and you get a lot of good information. I have belonged to Propagator's Society, and we have meetings

once a year, and you have people talking on all the different subjects, and it is an intense couple of days. And there is an eastern division, a southern, one in England, one in New Zealand, and then along with belonging to it you get this big publication, that you see up there in the book shelves. That is the proceedings of just one year of all the societies in the world. So you have access to all these meetings all over the world. A lot of it is research and what people have learned on their own. I think it is one of the most informative societies that I belong to. I belong to the Azalea Chapter of America. People write articles for that. I belong to the Magnolia Society, the Holly Society, and then there is another meeting that is absolutely great, doesn't take place but once every two years, you would enjoy it, anybody can go to it you just have to pay. It starts at noon on Thursday, all day Friday and there are tours on Sat. It is the Southern Plant Conference. It is sponsored by the Southern Nursery Association out of the Atlanta Area. Some state will sponsor it. Last year it was in Charleston, South Carolina. It will be in South Carolina in 2005. Two years ago it was in Athens, Georgia, and Mike Dirr and Alan Armatage and all those people were there. I have learned a lot by reading a little every day. And the Universities give out a lot of good information.

Interviewer: If you were given the opportunity to teach a course, what would you teach?

Jenkins: I would teach propagation.

Interviewer: Do they offer that sort of course at any school or university?

Jenkins: I was invited to Shreveport and talked on native plants and did a workshop on propagation. I took my materials and gave a demonstration on propagation. I took my trays and sifter and other things with me. Oh the first time I gave a talk I was scared to death, and then, there was Wayne Womack in the audience. Anyway it doesn't bother me

much any more. I read that if you know what you are talking about that's the main thing. If I am going to do a talk I try to do the best I can because I remember this teacher from grammar school saying if you are going to do something, do it whole heartedly or don't do it at all, and that's the truth. I get really peeved at people that take a spot on a program, and they get up there and they have no handout to the people in the audience. And it really burns me up that a lot of them are being paid to bring themselves there and while they are staying there, and I do not think it is right. If I was in charge I would not have them unless they had a handout! The first talk that I attended who had a handout was J.C. Ralston. The Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina is named after him. You could listen to him for hours because he was so smart. He would always have a nice handout with the plants' name and a few little things about it. And that meant so much for someone who didn't know a darn thing and wanted to learn. There is so much to learn out there. I know a little but it is a little compared to what is out there. There is so little time and so much to learn. In an aside Miss Margie comments: My knee is hurting so I wonder if I will be ok.

Interviewer: You can always get those new knees.

Jenkins: Yes I could get all new parts.

Interviewer: What do you think about the current education for landscape and horticulture?

Jenkins: They need to know more about the plants they can use and what they are. Those people are not gardeners they are yardners. But landscapers could use different plants that are just as good as those they are using if they would know it themselves.

Interviewer: Did your work ever affect your personal life?

Jenkins: It is not easy working in a family business and with a husband. He thought I took too much time with the customers and I said Big Deal I don't think I am getting paid anything around here anyway. He never really understood my passion for plants. The best plant to him was the one on the truck going out the gate. You know I told him one time I thought he would sell me if he could get what he thought I was worth. WE survived it, and it is hard to work with your children. My oldest son Fred got sick in September of 1994 but was not diagnosed with pancreatic cancer until January, and he is coming home to my house because he was divorced and Margie Ann was coming home with two kids after her divorce. I picked him up from the hospital one Sunday, and then the next Sunday she arrives. We have five bedrooms and every room was full. We lived in our old house for twenty-five years. Margie Ann moved into a smaller house by me with her two girls.

Interviewer: Has being a woman made it more difficult to be in the nursery business?

Jenkins: I think it is harder for men to work for women than to do business with women. I don't think, with my customers, there was any difference but there were between me and my husband. Sometimes better with me than him.

Interviewer: What materials are being overused?

Jenkins: Today, it is Indian Hawthorne, but it is a good plant. It is everywhere. We use to sell many yaupons, but today we sell very few yaupons. There are a lot of Crape Myrtles, and they just keep getting more and more. Bradford Pears were over used. But they have to be replaced.

Interviewer: Are people today using different plants?

Jenkins: Yes, I do think people today are more willing to try something different. I use to have a hard time selling anything that was different. Natives have come a long way, but they still have a way to go. But a lot of selections that are being made are good, but most of them are being made up north. There are not a lot of people in the deep south that do much hybridizing or naming of different stock. Now over in Flowerwood, Jim Berry has selected this lyonia that he found down in Florida, and I think it is going to be a great native plant. It is going to be about three feet by three feet. It's beautiful. It is much smaller than the regular lyonia, but it is one he just happened to see beside the road. Every time I talk to people about native plants, I tell them to keep your eyes open going down the road for that one plant that is a little better because we can always get cuttings or seeds. That's why I like seeds so well. We get all these variations from seeds.

Interviewer: Miss Margie began to show me some small hydrangea seeds and began this discussion.

Jenkins: Plant seeds on sphagnum moss. Plant them under lights, and they will be up in about a week. You keep them under lights, and when they get about 3" you can plant them out. Some seedlings grow faster than you think. I joined the American Horticulture Society way back in the 1950's, and they would send out these little publications every quarter, I still have them. And in one of them there was an article on native azaleas, and it showed this little seed pod and what it looked like. I never will forget; it had to be about 1966 or 1967, because I remember I had been down in our woods, and the mosquitoes were horrible. I had all these bites and my dad came by and asked me where I had been. That was when I had been gathering those seeds. And he died in 1968.

Interviewer: Are those azaleas out there seedlings? (Five feet tall in the container yard)

Jenkins: Yes, and Bryant used to say to me when are you going to sell those seedlings?

And I would say, oh I can't part with those. I have been selling some of them.

Interviewer: I am surprised you do not have them planted up by your house.

Jenkins: No I have none of them by the house. We moved in that house in the spring of 1976. We were living in the old house, while we built the new. The new is exactly where the old was beside a big live oak tree. We sold some timber. Bryant gave me \$20,000 and I borrowed piece meal to finish it. I remember when we finished we owed \$35,000. So I came back over here and got back to work, and I have been here ever since. And my gardening, well by the time I leave here there is not much left in me. And it's funny my sister Doris always had a beautiful yard, but Doris never did work in the nursery. Her husband would bring anything out of the nursery, and the men would plant and Doris was a lady. She had help in the house. I never had help. Anyway they kind of came on hard times, very sad they lost what they had, by just being foolish and getting into something they did not understand. Mama said to me one time, I am really worried about Doris she is working too hard, and I asked her Mama you never worry about me working too hard, She said, well you are used to it. (laugh) Doris said to me one day I can't work in this yard after I get home I am too tired.

Interviewer: Was it hard for you as a woman in this business?

Jenkins: I think it is harder for men to work for women than to do business with women.

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Interviewer: What materials are being over used today?

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Interviewer: When did you first plant seeds?

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Margie Jenkins

April 15, 2004

Jenkins Nursery.

Interviewer: Did you ever cross paths with Carolyn Dormon?

Jenkins: No, I wish I had, my old Sunday school teacher went to school with her over at Judson in Alabama. My Sunday school teacher was a Johnson, and they owned property called the Laurels where the mountain laurel grows on the creek. Richard at Briar Wood (Carolyn Dormon's home) told me that all the mountain laurels at Briar Wood came from Washington Parish. I am sure that they came from the Johnson family property.

Interviewer: What do you remember about first starting plants?

Jenkins: I remember that I planted the first azalea seeds in 1967. We picked jug plants and gingers, and then of course we always planted wild honeysuckle.

Aunt Pauline lost her husband to the flu after the First World War and had an eighteen month old child that she raised. She was my double first cousin because she was my mom's sister and her husband was my dad's brother and she was an unusual woman. There was, no I can't do that, in her vocabulary. Now my mother was one of those who said, I can't do that – I can't do this. I hated that because I always felt like that with determination you could do anything you wanted to. She could do anything; she died at about 86 with cancer. She was something else. I can remember one of the last times I saw her. She told me that she use to ride in the buggy with Mr. Yates (Miss Margie's grandfather), and he would say to her Pauline did you see that plant beside the road, and she would say yes. He said to her, "Pauline, why is it that when I see something and I say

to you, did you see it, you do and when I ride with Susie she sees nothing?" That was his daughter.

Interviewer: How did you start the nursery back up again?

Jenkins: When I came back over here, there were a lot of plants that we had left here, like dwarf yaupon, and back in those days you used anything you could to cover the ground, and we had used some reject roofing and the roots went right back through it into the ground. When we came back over here, there was a lot of yaupon that were alive, even though we had turned the water off, yaupon is a tough old shrub, it's native and of course it rained a lot and so what we did: I hired me six black ladies, and the dairy was paying for my labor so I didn't have to borrow no money. We picked those things up, and I trimmed the roots, knocked them out of the pots, trimmed the tops, repotted and fertilized them and by fall they were pretty. And then I had a few other things that we could do that with. I remember old sticky rotunda holly, I hate that plant.

When we had the can yard before we turned the water off, we had exactly what they were growing in Folsom. There was no point in people coming up here. When I came back up here I wanted to cater to the landscape contractors. I had said to one of the Mizells, (Clarence) who had one of the biggest nurseries down there, you must sell a lot in New Orleans, and he said I don't sell anything in New Orleans. I asked where those people get their plant material. Oh, he said, those blacks haul it to them. When we started back up here it was the guys in the pickup trucks that I catered to. After having Dr. Odenwald talk about those things I didn't know, like I remember he talked about the Taiwan Cherry, and I had never seen one. They are beautiful and still there are not that many people that grow them. Tom brought me five hundred of those little babies, and they are doing just

fine. He also brought me some seeds. Anyway I was anxious to grow different materials that would be interesting for people. And I got interested in growing new azalea varieties, because what happened with the azaleas everybody grew indicas and everybody grew karumes those were the only ones you had. Then the Glenn Dales were on the market, and there were only a handful of them, maybe five that people grew when there were over four hundred named; like 'Fashion' was a Glendale. I am sure there are a lot of good ones out there that we never tried, but when you have four hundred and some varieties thrown at you, which were very dumb, they named too many. If they had the max of fifty, it would have been easier for people to try and weed them out. But what happened, we had those terrible cold spells in the 1980's, and you would haul those huge indicas out of here by trailer loads because that bark would split, and then they would live until they leafed out in the spring time, but then they would die on me. It didn't faze the little karume's. I knew that there had to be something different out there so I had a catalogue out of New York and I ordered twenty-five Watchits in 4" pots, and that was 1980 or 1981. I grew them all and couldn't sell them; nobody knew about them. And it bloomed in the fall of the year as well as the springtime. Everybody that would come up here, I would say take three of these and try them, and finally they started catching on. I had a customer in New Orleans, she was a lady, she had been using them, she called me one night, and said she was going to Mobile the next day and wanted to know at which nursery she could get some big Watchits. I said I am sorry but you won't find any of any size from anyone except me. Nobody grows them over there. But I would pass them out to all my friends that would take them cutting wise, and I had this friend over in Mobile who grew liners, that was his business. His nursery was right next to Mr. Tom Dodd's

big nursery, and one day we had the truck going to Mr. Dodd's for something, and I went out there and cut him a big sack of cuttings from the Watchits. I called him and said Jr. I am sending something good and you make them up. Well he rooted them out, and then he called me up and asks me about them. How hardy are they? They came out of New Jersey, and he was selling some up on the east coast. It is a wonderful group of azaleas and there are still a bunch of them out there that I have not tried. I have a friend, when I go to the Azalea meeting next month in Baltimore, I am going to ask him to bring me some cuttings, and he lives in the Washington D C area so it won't be too far. I am bringing an ice chest since we are going by car I can bring them home. It was his father-in-law, who developed them, and he saw them all in his garden, and he has told me that he will give me cuttings anytime I want them.

Interviewer: What was the next step?

Jenkins: Then I started growing different azaleas, and we still have a lot of varieties that other nurseries don't have. That helped. But then too I did want to focus on natives, because I had always liked natives but hardly anyone grew any natives. You could not find an *Illicium floridanum* in a pot. I remember the first ones I got. I dug up a couple in the woods, little babies, put those darn things in a pot and those things did just fine. We use to do some control burning in the tree farm. Bryant had this area that they had burned off, and the illicium were just coming back. I had them dig them up and put them in pots and sold everyone in bigger pots. And now I have some in seven gallon pots. I am going to let them grow to be like four or five feet tall, and see what happens is they don't get that tall, but they get a lot thicker and wider. It is a nice shade plant. Of course the old plants they were kind of hard to find. When I was growing up we had

flowering almond in our yard, a really old time shrub. Of course they all had hydrangeas, and they had weigelas. You know I have been fiddling with these native azaleas for years. I bet some of those native azaleas are twenty years old. But I did sell six to a man from Dallas because I want those to leave, I need the room. He wanted to know what they would be. I said seventy-five dollars.

Interviewer: So you used catalogues and took cuttings.

Jenkins: I have always tried to search out something that was different or new. Most of the new selections are made up north because we don't have the people down here in the south. Now over at PDSI (Plant Development Services Inc), they found that lyonia that is so pretty. They call it Round Lake because they found it near Round Lake, Florida. And so they have some introductions that they have found that are really good, like the Virginia Willis, there is a Merlot, there is Henry's Garnet they come from the east coast, and they don't do so good down here. There are viburnums, I know one called Kern's Pink that I have seen slides of at Don Shadow's nursery that are out of this world. They are pink and white all on the same bushes. What happened was a Mr. Kern had found a limb on a regular plicatum and of course it is the Japanese Snowball viburnum, and he could not get it to remain stable. It would be pink and then it would throw off a white flower every now and then. So he dropped it because he didn't like that. Then Don picked it up and started growing it. He lives by Winchester, Tennessee. He had some Japanese nurserymen come here, and they went wild because it had those different colors. I forget how many liners, he told me, he shipped to the Japanese last fall. Now that plant will bloom for me down here, but you will not have the pink that you will have in colder climates. It is the same with that hydrangea Panickolita- Pink Diamond. We never get

that shade of pink down here. It is something to do with our heat. We need more things selected for our area.

Interviewer: Don't you think it has something to do with the winter's not getting cold enough?

Jenkins: Yes, they don't have enough time to rest. A lot of nursery owners are not interested in growing something that might take a little longer. They want to get it out as fast as they can. That's why they will put two or three cuttings of an azalea in a pot to make it grow fast so they can sell it, but you (the customer) have a mess.

Interviewer: Has Mark always worked here?

Jenkins: Mark is the only one of my children who never went to college. Before Mark had a driver's license, I would take him down to my brother's nursery, that was before I had a nursery, and he would take cuttings until it got dark, and then I would go back and pick him up. He would make up his cutting at night. He bought his first car with the money he got from selling azaleas, mostly to his school teachers. He had this little area out back, but he ran out of space. I told Bryant that we were stupid not to bring him over here, and say here you can have some land. Then he got into farming. He got into peanuts. He got into debt. He got out of high school. That summer he farmed, and then he went off shore. He was a welder's helper. He was using the money he earned to pay off his debt. Then he got back into the nursery business, and he was happy doing that.

Interviewer: What year did you and Mark go to New Zealand?

Jenkins: We went to New Zealand in 1990.

Interviewer: Did you win that trip?

Jenkins: No we paid for it.

Interviewer: But you went with a nursery?

Jenkins: It was a nursery tour. It was put together by a New Zealand nursery by the name of Duncan and Davies and invited us to go on the tour. We went in February and were gone two weeks. It cost us about \$3200 including everything.

Interviewer: Do you still have contact with that nursery in New Zealand?

Jenkins: Yes, we still buy from them. There were people on the trip from England, and another from Belgium (they were all the nursery's customers) two couples from Washington State and another woman from Vancouver. It was really fun. There was a real mix of people. We went to both the north and south island. It was hot down there in February. We spent one whole day at the nursery. They would ship to England in pots, but we in the United States have to have the roots washed clean.

Interviewer: I have many descriptions of Bryant from other interviews.

Jenkins: One of the hardest things for me was to work with my husband. We often did not see eye to eye. He was very critical. It wasn't always easy. He thought I spent too much time with the customers. I have always taken a lot of time with customers. Any information that I can give to anyone I want to. I have always given my plants away to people. I don't know why except I like to share my stuff. He thought I gave too many plants away. Someone told me that was a trait of an Indian. I have a lot of Indian in me.

Interviewer: Bryant didn't spend a lot of time here did he? When did he give up the nursery?

Jenkins: Bryant did not spend a lot of time at the dairy; he had someone else over there. Bryant spent a lot of time here. He would come over here and raise hell. He would get the Mexicans so mixed up they didn't know what to do. The Mexicans called him

Diablo. He would get mad at me, and, say, I don't know why you grow all this off the wall stuff that nobody knows anything about. (She is laughing as she tells this) He wanted me to do just like everyone else. Some customers he liked others he did not want to deal with. He liked to work with the machinery. He loved that digging machine, he would go out in an afternoon and dig a whole row of trees, or he would load. One day the Mexicans went home for lunch, and when they came back, we had one who was younger with a truck and could speak good English, after lunch he said, Mr. Jenkins we have decided that we need more money. Bryant told him, well, I tell you what you can just get out of that house by 4:00 this afternoon, and they all left. (Laughing) He uses to say "I have to go to that damned old nursery", and I would tell him he did not have to go there, he could do what ever he wanted. Bryant had only worked all his life and he did not enjoy himself unless he was working. Now I do other things, but I enjoy working because it is what I like to do. It is work when I have to help someone pull fifty plants. That's what I don't like to do. Anyway, if you have a boss and you go home it's ok, but I had to go home with the boss. That part wasn't always the easiest. He was very stingy with compliments, but when he was very sick he told me I was a good woman. That was about the best compliment I ever got out of him. And that's the truth.

Interviewer: Do some of the Mexicans come back year after year? And are some of them good?

Jenkins: The Mexicans come and go during the year. We have had some for fifteen yrs. One guy named Alan, his dad use to work for us. When Reagan gave them amnesty that is when some of the ones we had got to be legal. The four that we have in the field are all legal, and they have been coming and going for a long time. They come in after

Christmas, and they will work until they get unearned credit. When it has peaked, where they have worked long enough, they leave. They will leave sometime in April, our busiest time, and I told Margie Ann to tell them not to come back until after Labor Day. Of course, they came back in August. But you almost have to take them because you are so glad to get them. And I am not through when they leave so I have been trying to get some permanent local help. They will come back in August and stay until just before Thanksgiving. They don't care what you need. A few of them are different and stay longer. Some of them you know are not legal, but you have to hire them if they have a card. I am trying to not be so dependent on them. I have Lily year round and Mr. Burland. We had a black who used to work here, but he had lost an eye. But he has come back, and we will probably have him year round. And then we have two other blacks who are year round.

Interviewer: What would you do if you did not have the nursery?

Jenkins: I have to work. I have to have something to do. I gave a garden club talk, but they really weren't interested and it is kind of a social thing. I am not going to give talks to garden clubs any more because I do not have time.

Interviewer: Do you get any feel from young contractors when they come to buy from you about what kinds of plants they are interested in. Or do they know what they are talking about or interested in?

Jenkins: I feel they need to know much more about plants. They are content to use the same things over and over. But that is because most of their customers don't have an interest in anything different. They are not gardeners - they are yardeners. There are a

lot of things they could use that are just as good and as easy to take care of, if they only knew it themselves. Many of the plants that the retail nurseries sell are not good for our climate.

Margie Jenkins

September 23, 2004

Jenkins Nursery

Interviewer: What are the stages of growing cuttings or liners?

Jenkins: We first put them in pots here in the container yard. Then after they have grown to a certain size, we transplant them out in the fields. Like for instance crape myrtles. I grow them in a pot and transplant them as a tree and chop them off at the root so they will branch out into multi-trunk. Many nurseries will put little plants all together in a pot and grow that as a single tree, but it is not as healthy. We don't take anything to the field that is bare rooted.

Interviewer: Tell me about *cornus angustata*.

Jenkins: I got *angustata* kind of by chance. Years ago I got to be friends with a man in Florida who owns part of Superior Nurseries, and he would have some odd-ball stuff. If he wouldn't sell it, he would call me and ask if I wanted it. One year he had something called *cornus angustata*, and I think I bought maybe five. We put them in the container yard in three gallon pots and didn't take that good of care of them. Then I put them out in the field. John Mayronne was doing a plant design for my sister Dixie, and I picked him out two that I thought were as alike as I could, and he put them beside her front door. The next year Buddy, John Thornton, and I had been over to see Cecil Pounder in Poplarville, and I said we should go by to see Dixie's dogwoods. We were all amazed; it was a picture; there was not a spot you could touch that did not have a bud on it. So I took Thomas back with me in early July and took cuttings. When they get a little more established, I am going to give you one. They are all seedlings so they are all going to do

a little differently. The catalogues that I have seen them advertised in are Camellia Forest out of North Carolina, and they sell a lot of real special stuff. They wrote that they were becoming more excited about it each year. It does well here, and the foliage stays good. I gave one to a guy a long time ago, and he tells me you can't believe how beautiful it is. This year I have grown on about five hundred seedling, and the seeds hang down on a stick. The seeds are great big, they look like a raspberries. Its fruit looks like kousa. When it first came out it was listed as cornus kousa angustata, but then they removed the kousa and said it is a straight species. It does come from China.

Interviewer: Do we have any figures that bridge the gap between Carolyn Dormon and now in the native plant department?

Jenkins: Mr. John Dodd. Lyn Lawry over in Texas was an expert, but he has died.

Interviewer: We have to presume that your work with natives started with the second opening of the nursery don't we? From 1977 on.

Jenkins: I started growing natives much earlier and gave many of them away. I started in 1967. When I got the kids in school in 1967, probably then I started gathering seeds.

We bought 90 acres with the old house.

There were four rooms in the house I grew up in. One was a living room, a bedroom for parents, one for boys and grandpa, and another for girls. The reservoir by the ole cooking stove was to keep warm water all the time. On the porch, there was a dairy that had screens and a roof where she kept the milk. It was built up on stilts. The wooden cistern was right off the porch. It was the biggest farm in the area. The streams were really cold because they are fed by spring water.

Interviewer: What plants do you think you were responsible for?

Jenkins: A man in Florida has always been interested in native plants. I have always been interested in native plants and he had this leucothoe auxiliaries in a gallon pot, and it was an excellent form. I asked David Drylie, and the name of his nursery is Green Images, if he would sell it to me. David said he didn't want to sell that he had found it in the wild, and he wanted to take it home for cuttings. So he gave me a couple of cuttings, and I started growing them. I was also growing one that I got from Mr. Dodd, but the one from David was so much better, it was beautiful. Robert Poor said he wanted that one so I discontinued growing the one from Mr. Dodd and now grow only the one from David. I gave some Tommy Dodd, Jr. and he loves it. I talked to David about it and asked him what shall we call it? He wanted to call it Florida since that is where he found it. Well, Mr. Tommy Dodd refuses to call it Florida. He says there is already a Florida out there; that is papulifolia that he is referring to. He is calling it Margie Jenkins in his catalogue. I was in a nursery in Atlanta and looked at this plant and it had a tag in it calling it Margie Jenkins. It has not gone over very good in Florida for David, but it is really popular here, and I sent sixty to Texas. Dr Reich wants some of them, and we took cuttings just last week. I talked to a nursery in Atlanta and they bought one thousand, one gallon. I visited a garden in Atlanta, back in June, and this guy use to work for Post Properties. He is retired now, and he has a fabulous garden. While we were there, he said I have two Margie Jenkins in my garden, and I want you to tell me which is the right one. They were the same plant because one was tagged with Tommy Dodd's tag and the other was a nursery that bought from Tommy. Mike Dirr is growing it at University of Georgia, and I gave it to him a long time ago. I took it to Texas for the Southern Plant

Conference as auction plant and Carolina Nurseries bought it. I have been kind of responsible for getting that one out into the trade.

Interviewer: What about the gardenias, viburnums, Japanese maples?

Jenkins: You know I have been doing the maples for years and it seem like people have just awakened to them, and you can hardly keep them.

Interviewer: Which variety of Japanese maple do you like?

Jenkins: The green seedlings. There are some cultivars I like but as a whole the green seedlings do so well in the south. They will grow in full sun, gorgeous red fall color, and all sorts of color in the spring. If you plant the red, their foliage will come out red, but in the summer their foliage gets a little ratty because they do not like the heat especially if you have them in the sun. And then in the fall, their foliage is not great, and you do not have that great fall color. But those green ones have great foliage, and I can go out and show you in the field.

Interviewer: Where did you get the first ones?

Jenkins: The first ones I got were seedling that I bought from a guy over in Alabama. He came here selling them and we put them in the field - those were red.

Interviewer: What kind were they?

Jenkins: They were nothing but seedling. When you plant the seeds, you are going to get an awful lot of green and some reds. The first green one I got, I probably planted those seeds myself. I can remember that when we were in that old office over a woman came by, and she said, "I see your marijuana plants over there". I said, "Lady are you out of your mind? What you are looking at are green maple seedlings." I had grown them from seeds. Now I can buy the seedlings very reasonably, and I cannot do everything. So if I

can buy something good, I like to devote my time to stuff that is not readily available. I grow red and green seedlings, but I do grow some cultivars. Cultivars are simply a selection that were superior, and they have to be rooted by cuttings or grafts. For instance 'Bloodgood' has to be a rooted cutting or a graft. In your seedlings, you have such a wide variation, because some turn will turn red soon. 'Bloodgood' was selected because it is supposed to stay red for so long.

Interviewer: What about viburnums?

Jenkins: I have probably grown the snow ball long before anyone else. I cannot think of any others, except maybe the Luzonicum from the Philippines. Lyn Lowery in Texas planted the Plutonium seeds around the Houston area. They bloom but have no berries. I got my start from Ted Doremus. Interviewer: What about propagating the azaleas?

Jenkins: For years I knocked myself out trying to root those cuttings. I could grow them from seeds, but if I got one I particularly like, I would have to take cuttings to grow more like that. I would do all sorts of things, any thing that I had read or someone told me. One time I took a trip up to the Glister Arboretum and a friend was there, Jim Lynch.

I told him about my problem, and he said, "Did you ever try that wood when it is so tender that you don't think it will root?" Gayna, you take that wood when it first comes out in the spring time and you cut it, I take me a bucket of water, and I drop it in the water. Then when I have the bucket full, I have an ice chest filled with ice; I put them in plastic bag and put them in the ice chest. Then I put them in the refrigerator over night.

They are so tender that you cannot stick it; you have to make a hole to put them in. And they will root. I have told so many people, because I tried so hard for so many years. Just this past session of the National Azalea meeting, we had a guy tell us how to root,

and I was telling Buddy that the guy went to so much trouble and that is so unnecessary. I do not use any rooting hormone or fertilizer in my mix and no hormone on my plant. I wish every one could see the flowers off the flowers that Buddy Lee did from cuttings off my plants. Another plant that is hard to find is silver-bells. You plant the seeds and you wait forever to have them come up. I have some out there that I have had planted nearly two years, and not the first one has come up. You can dig the seed up and cut him in two, and you will see that it is fine. The coating around the seed is so hard I guess that makes it so hard. Gaston took me down to the creek this spring, and there were a lot of sprouts coming out of the silver-bell trees, and I decided to take some cuttings. Well you know everyone of those have lived. I am going to do that every year, and maybe by then the seedlings will come up. You know the one from Florida that makes the bigger flowers that one is in more demand; they call it magna flora. I have a big bed of them planted out there, and I have a big sack full in my refrigerator. They get them from seeds down at Superior Trees, and I bought some of them in a three gallon pot last year.

Interviewer: Dr Odenwald talks about you giving him a flowering apricot: Prunes mume?

Jenkins: Yes, and I rooted some of that this year, and I am excited about that. They are hard to root. I didn't do that many but as a percentage they turned out real good. I am going to take cuttings from that variegated clevera. I also have been doing cuttings from pieris that I got from New Zealand.

Interviewer: What was the first nursery in Folsom, and who owned it?

Jenkins: The McGee brothers, Dallas and Price in the 1930's. Later they split their business. Mr. Price became Folsom Nursery and Mr. Dallas became Midway Nursery.

Interviewer: What are you doing at the present time?

Jenkins: I have taken the azalea that Buddy (Robert E. Lee) used to do all of the Encores, and I crossed them on to my own. I am going to take one section and fill it with them.

Interviewer: When you say "my" azaleas, which do you consider?

Jenkins: Just the varieties I have here-the double bloomers. The crosses I am working on. For instance, Fourth of July is an azalea called Oldhamii. It blooms right about the Fourth. I found the white Watchet when Freddy passed away. He use to grow one gallon azaleas that went mostly to K-Mart. He worked off-shore and had two weeks on and two weeks off. I told him that if he would grow something like the Watchets I could sell them for him while he was not here. I sold everyone. Then he started shipping them to colder climates because they did so well. He would say to me, what else do you have that is good? When he passed away he had some Watchets, and I took them and put them in five gallon pots. I did not trim them, I decided to just let them grow into woodland plants because some people don't want little short fat stuff. In the early fall when they were blooming (they are pink) I saw one with white flowers. It had one limb with white flowers with little specks in the throat. The next spring I took cuttings off that one limb and starting growing that off. It is kind of straggly, but I have been able to get it to grow. I am going to get it registered and call it Freddy. That is going to be a great plant. I got the first watchet in 1980.

Robert Edward Lee

March 11, 2004

Jenkins Nursery.

Interviewer: How did you meet Margie?

Lee: I have known her all my life. Our families go way back. Her father and my grandfather were sheep herders together. So I have known her all my life, but the early 80's were when we became plant buddies. She had started a nursery, and I was working at an azalea nursery, but she was collecting all sorts of interesting stuff; trying out new azaleas, trying to get a whole new grip on plants, new plants, ones that everybody else wasn't growing. And then with the Azalea Society of America, she was one of the charter members of the Louisiana chapter, and then I joined a little after that. That's how I got to know her more and her interest in plants. Over the years we have traveled, we have swapped plants back and forth, collected seed together. You know I love to travel with her because she knows everybody in the country when it comes to plants. She is very knowledgeable, even in a group when people are trying to remember a name, she doesn't just blurt out, but she knows the name. She just doesn't want to be intimidating. I have learned a lot from her. It is hard to say. I guess it is her overall evaluation of plants and different perspective on plants she provides.

Interviewer: Do you associate her with any particular plant?

Lee: I associate her with azaleas, maybe native azaleas. But that is kind of putting her in a category which is kind of hard to do because she is interested in all sorts of plants. She is interested in Magnolias-native plants. I guess over the southeast region she has become synonymous with native plants.

Interviewer: Which native plants do you think have gone into the nursery trade and become popular or have fulfilled what she wanted?

Lee: I think she does a good job when she gives talks at these native plant conferences and she adds, and she has worked with native plants like cyrilla, and cliftonia, and numerous others like spruce pine. When she speaks about them it is not in abstract generalities, but speaks on her own interests and how it grows in her nursery, and I think that is why she gets them more accepted. She keeps track of her plants and where they go. Because of her experience with them and the way she presents them is why they have become accepted. The cyrilla is one that was never used before and is widely used now

Interviewer: What about this new leucothoe?

Lee: You mean the leucothoe called Margie Jenkins? People at Tom Dodd were growing it, and they called it Margie Jenkins.

Interviewer: the one she got from the man in Florida, and she propagated.

Lee: She wanted to call it Florida, but she resisted naming it after her and that more positively reinforces the name. It is a gorgeous plant and being named after her makes it more saleable.

Interviewer: Any other plant named for her?

Lee: Not that I know of. It would be hard to name anything after her because they are natives. She loves evergreen azaleas, and maybe some of her own selections, some that she does herself would be more appropriate. She has some fantastic native azaleas. If they were mass produced and in the market, that would be a great plant named after her. I have thought I might name evergreen azaleas, some of my southern indicas after her. It would be good to honor her, but I don't know her favorite.

Interviewer: I didn't know if there was a particular yellow or orange that maybe she has ones that she especially likes.

Lee: I do know that of her natives she likes some of the lavender-tinted. Her favorites of the evergreens are the Robin Hill hybrids.

Interviewer: Where does the name Robin Hill come from?

Lee: It was named after John Gartrell, in New Jersey, and he did the plant breeding and the place where he did it was Robin Hill. The plant Watchet is a Robin Hill hybrid, and Margie was probably the first one in the south that started testing that plant. Flowerwood got the plant and started testing it, and you know it has some fall bloom tendencies. Louisiana named Watchet as one of the Louisiana select plants, but as far as getting it down here and trying it, Margie was the one who actually pioneered the plant. Before I knew that she was doing this, people were absolutely resisting new varieties, all together, in fact where I worked you couldn't even ask, they would not take a new variety. If it was not Formosa or the top ten on the list they did not want it. Nursery people in general across the south have become more varied, and want more stuff and she has been a pioneer in that new wave to try new stuff. But I don't know if she would have a favorite azalea, they all are.

Interviewer: Is there anyplace in the south that really does propagating or research to produce new plants for the south as is being done in the north?

Lee: Research in the South? In Poplarville, the USTA has opened new facility that is suppose to be the center point of many things in the southeast, and it just now getting off the ground. Dr Cecil Pounder is there. Most plant breeders in the south know Miss Margie or have gotten plants from her or seek some sort of guidance from her because I

know she has a close relationship with those breeders because she gives them lots of plants. LSU is not too big on breeding but I think they are gearing up. But Alabama and University of Georgia is doing plant breeding but as far as lower south, I think we are just now getting cranked up. As far as evaluating, I guess Tom Dodd Nurseries is the pioneer type nursery in the deep south to try everything and did plant breeding as far as o. In the 60's and 70's they got ahead and probably still are today. They evaluated deciduous azaleas and Gresham magnolias.

Interviewer: Do they still do that today?

Lee: They still do it, but the senior Tom Dodd has retired. The business has been broken up into family businesses and control, but they are still generating a lot of different plants. They are still generating many plants that are going to come out of that company. They have not caught up in the marketing mania of this the best plant in the world. I was talking to them in November, and they had a new red holly. It was absolutely gorgeous. It is more kin to the Blue holly-a hybrid between a blue holly and a red holly. It is beautiful, and they like to release to the trade. They have been selecting plants since the 1960's and the 1970's. They are at the cutting edge of plant breeding, at least from my perspective, but I may be too involved with those right around me. Fred Galle, who has passed away now, wrote the books on hollies and azalea. He spent time down here at Margie's nursery working on those books. Margie was an endless supply of knowledge on the hollies and the azaleas. I believe he stayed down here for quite a while. Her connections are not only in the southeast but all over. I like to travel with her because she knows everyone. I am so bad on names, and she will know everyone's names and their kid's names. She'll say oh you know you met this person in Nashville or somewhere else.

When she went into the nursery business, she did not have to make it. It was I want to make it in this nursery business in a different way. A lot of people don't have that option. If I can sell that Formosa I am going to and not think about introducing anything new.

John Mayronne

March 2, 2004

author's house in Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Interviewer: How did they start the nursery?

Mayronne: They had the property, they kept buying land, and they both inherited some land from their families. Bryant and Margie bought most of the land themselves. He worked running heavy equipment for T.L. James, and she was working in Covington. Then the dairy came along, but the nursery came after the dairy. Mid-Seventies was about the time they started of nursery. Their families were all around when they moved to the farm. They saved money to buy land.

Interviewer: What are liners?

Mayronne: Liners are a bunch of little plants. It takes a yr or 2 to make a saleable plant from a liner.

Interviewer: Were any of her family in the nursery business? Who lives nearby now?

Mayronne: Doris, and her husband had a very prominent nursery, Evergreen, but they lost it doing some farming in Mississippi. Margie use to have a little green house at her house where she kept her specialties: wild azaleas. Doris's two sons have a good nursery by Poplarville. Lyda has health problems and lives in Amite. Margie has issues with all. She had two brothers who were huge; at least 6'4" and heavy. They were married a few times, wild and squandered their money. Bryant was also very tall but slender. Youngest sister is Dixie and they get along really well. Dixie is a firecracker, very nice, lives in Bogalusa. Dixie is interior designer and her husband is a lawyer. Aunt Pauline gave Margie little seedlings of Silver Belles.

Interviewer: When did you meet Margie?

Mayronne: I met Margie after I graduated from college. I was interested in native plants, and someone who had graduated before me, took me there. And she had all these wonderful things. Big leaf magnolias. We are like addicts, when we meet someone who is interested in the same thing, we immediately bond. We travel, we go to meetings. She is a smart woman who worked hard, and she is not a push over. Her children have tried some things and this will disappoint her. Tim had a small nursery but am not sure if he still has it. Worked off-shore and was hurt. There is some animosity there with the children. Mark is the baby and has gotten preferential treatment. He comes in late, and Margie and Margie Ann ends up taking up the slack. Jeff has had some substance abuse issues-alcohol. He is probably her brightest child. Margie worries about pushing too much. Margie Ann is smart. Freddy was kind, good, a genuine person. He was easy going and might have helped to direct things in the right way. Jeff is not accountable. Jeff and Mark were the subjects of differences by parents. Freddy's daughters were a mess, but they went into the Army and are doing great. Margie Ann's daughters are doing great.

Interviewer: Tell about her relations with other plant people and institutions.

Mayronne: Margie is connected to all these plant persons. You might go with somebody else to her nursery, and you might leave with five plants. She will say something like: Ohh just take this. Oh I have to make more cuttings from that, but I will get you one. She is very generous. Especially places like Hilltop she gives so much. People have gone into her greenhouses and taken things. People will get things that they are not suppose to get, and she will straighten them out. Sold by mistake. They will load stuff

on the truck that are not suppose to be sold, and she will give them a piece of her mind. Some have chewed her out, and you can bet she composed herself, but she let them know, she let them know what. Bryant, who was big and had this deep voice, would load you any plant in that place. Yeah, load it on the truck. And if it was something Margie did not want sold, Blap, she would jump him. And all of a sudden, he would go, well we better take that off. The problem is she would have something special, and it was different, but she wouldn't block it, and believe you me she knows everything that is in that nursery. She always has this neat stuff, and I don't have any place to put it, but sometimes I take it, and will just find someplace for it.

Mayronne: She won't let people she doesn't care for have a special plant. Others she will let have anything and everything.

Interviewer: What does she do at the nursery? work with customers? propagate?

Mayronne: Margie Ann does some of the bookkeeping. Some man comes in and does the payroll. Margie runs a tight ship. She works all the time. Whenever they have a family get together, it is at her house. She usually cooks something on the weekend to last for the week. She now has someone clean her house. Her house is always picked up. Margie is frugal. She will drive to Covington or to Dixie's house, but to Baton Rouge Margie Ann will take her or someone else will. She won't go to something unless she can go with someone else. We often meet like at the Mall in Hammond. She doesn't like to drive at night. She might have had cataract surgery; she is always dressed neat and clean but tailored, but not real, real fancy. She has a great sense of humor, so warm and neat and so much to talk about.

Interviewer: What plants do you associate with Margie?

Mayronne: Wild azaleas, big leaf magnolias. If you say, Margie do you have this and you can be sure she will get it. This is the difference between Margie and the run of the mill nursery that grows hawthorns. When she gets something she doesn't like, she will just get rid of them. She use to have more varieties. She has a lot. She use to have fifty or sixty with around fifty in each group. She would have more interesting varieties. She is cutting back on that. It was hard for her to keep track of them. If you needed a specific variety she would get it.

Interviewer: What would happen to the nursery if she was not there or cut back on her hours?

Mayronne: It would be expensive to hire a person to oversee the nursery. She might just work with her specialties. Robin Hill azaleas are all cuttings. But it is more cost efficient for her to get liners. It is hard to keep everything sorted. She will buy things, and when it arrives it might be trash. It is offensive of growers to ship some of that stuff. Or they will send something that is not what they said they were going to ship. This hurts the nurseries up front. They should be truthful. Then you can make the decision as to whether you want it or not. You will get a big pot with a little plant in it. She sometimes has something that is very good, and it would get lost. She doesn't always keep up with everything because she has so much going on.

Interviewer: How has she affected the plant palette of Louisiana?

Mayronne: She is the one who has brought the plant palette of Louisiana to where it is today, and that is why she has had so much recognition. She has pushed the edge; she is one of the few. She is interested, and she is very conscientious about her reading and going to lectures and connecting with other plant people. She finds out, by reading

catalogues and other writings, trying this and bringing in things to evaluate. You will talk to her about a wonderful plant, or she will see one somewhere, and she will get cuttings wherever she is. So many of the other nurseries are always based on money and the bottom line; they are concerned with what is selling so they are growing the same typical things. Her goal; is there another possibility? Yes, she wants to make money, but she is more interested in seeing what the plant will do and if it is something different. Sometimes she will take a loss.

Dr. Neil Odenwald

February 15, 2004,

At his house in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Interviewer: When did you first meet Margie Jenkins?

Odenwald: I have known her for many years and more about her. She enrolled in my first summer course I had for extension workers. This was in 1973- 1974 and the Landscape Architecture Department let me open up for a three week short courses primarily for county agents and others who were interested in design and design theory. In three weeks, you could only cover a certain amount of material, and Margie enrolled in that first course. I remember that from the first she was interested in plant material. We went to Rosedown, and that was when she first encountered the hip gardenia. Margie put a few of these little sprigs in her purse, and it was from these that she introduced the Rosedown hip gardenia to the trade. She was a person up to that time who grew ligustrums and yaupons, which were the bread and butter of the nursery industry - field grown materials. And Margie was not 16 at the time, she was getting up to her middle age. You would think that would be the time for a person to slow down in their lives rather than taking on a new enterprise. So I would say Margie had two lives - that earlier life when they had a dairy, and then the nursery that was a very stable operation for the green industry. But after this class, and I think Margie would say this, she saw plant material with a new vision, she expanded her horizons. Not only personally, but she started communicating with people who were pioneers in the green industry. She visited a lot and starting going to what I would call the more sophisticated symposiums and conferences that give her a stronger knowledge base, and it was from there that she

started launching her plants. And she was a good propagator and horticulturist. So she started launching this second career in the plant industry.

Interviewer: How was she so successful in this second career?

Odenwald: She could have a transition period. Naturally she kept those materials that were very stable, and she had a secure market base with more the bread and butter materials. She started broadening her horizons and visiting gardens; she went abroad several times, and I think that did wonders for Margie. She went on National Nursery trips which had people of prominence in the horticulture field. So they were talking a language and doing things that Margie, it seems to me, was not accustomed to doing. With these new mind broadening experiences, she was able to come back and she brought plants materials from places like New Zealand, such as Japanese Maples. She would place these in her nursery for the required quarantine time, and all during that time she was propagating, she was taking cuttings. She was gradually introducing these materials into the industry.

Another thing important thing about Margie is that she is a horticulturist. She can talk just about anybody's language. She can talk to the person who has just a faint knowledge or the babes in the industry, but Margie is a person who can talk with people now who are quite learned in the trade. She has had enough experience in her own greenhouse to tell you very clearly, you take this cutting in June-to get this kind of percentage of rooting, so through experiences and communicating with other people she has grown tremendously in this. And then another thing, Margie has that warm winsome personality. There has always been a big gap unfortunately between the horticulturists who grow the plants and the designers. But Margie can bridge that gap, and she has done

it frequently. She is knowledgeable enough that if you want a particular plant with a certain form or texture she can tell you about a plant that she thinks will fill those needs. She has had a remarkable success in her communication with a broad sector of two major professional groups. She has been honored by the American Society of Landscape Architects for her work with plants, because she is not content with just the ordinary. She is always pioneering new possibilities for the industry, and I think she has done a remarkable job in that area. Given her personality, her spirit, and her work ethic it is just unbelievable, she drives herself and she is inquisitive. She has to get to the bottom of issues. Why something will root on June 15, but not on July 1? I think of things like the native azaleas. I think there have always been mysteries about how to propagate certain plants, and one of them is the native *canescens* (azalea). Margie can tell you exactly the time is between a very soft new growth but before that new growth hardens off. It is in that intermediate stage that to most of us, it would be so impossible to propagate something that is as soft and flaccid as the new growth on a *canescens* azalea. But not Margie. She found that window, and it is like a week to 10-day period. I cannot go and say how many more she can do. But it is interesting to me that you can ask, "Margie do you know about so and so?" And she will say, "Yes, I have 50 cuttings of that, or I took cuttings from so and so's plant, and it has done this and this and this. So while she is being recognized in the design and production profession she is also back working in those greenhouses that she doesn't let just anybody see. Not until they get out into the nursery.

Interviewer: Do you often receive advice from her on plant selection?

Odenwald: Another thing I think about with Margie. When I am doing a design I always think I have to use plants that are pretty tough because generally we are dealing with people who are not strong gardeners. So you always come back to what you know will grow. I think of Pride of Mobile azaleas and Formosa azalea, and those are tough plants. If you are going to have an azalea, these indica type will grow. And if you ask Margie she'll say, "Oh I bet you Neil Odenwalh told you about those because he always sticks with those old tried and true ones, but let me tell you about a new one." She's always plowing new ground; she always working with some of these others. On the negative side maybe some of these things that she has tried have not been as successful as the Pride of Mobile or the Formosa, but she is not afraid to try new plant material.

For instance, I am revising my plant book, and one of the last times I was over there, she carried me in the field to show me the crosses between the *Cornus florida* and the *Cornus kousa*. *Kousa* is our northern dogwood, and *florida* is our southern. There is this possibility of having the benefits of a later flowering dogwood with many of the good characteristics of our native dogwood. Margie has those growing in the field.

Another things that's interesting about Margie is when she knows I am doing a design she will say just try this plant, just take it to try, and I have out in the front one of those crosses. She didn't make the crosses, I'm not trying to tell you that, but when she hears about the crosses or anyone who have done this, she will be on the cutting edge; she will be one of the first to introduce that plant into her nursery. She will be able to tell you quickly what to expect from these plants in these growing conditions... Here she had these dogwood trees that are 10' tall, and I have written a book about plants, and I had not even heard of it.

This is her second life, and I cannot say enough about what she had done. She has caught a vision, and she surely does not do it for the glory, and she certainly does not make a bunch of money off of it. But she will push the ten and twelve of these new plants. People have followed her lead, and she has made a great difference in the industry. I have a *Prunus Mume* that she gave me, and it is the earliest flowering plant you can have in the Louisiana landscape-the flowering apricot. She introduced the *viburnum Lucidum* to me. I have introduced it to the Glouster Arboretum. I don't know how many plants she has given; scores to Glouster, and to Hilltop here and to the restoration at Long Vue in New Orleans. That's what she likes to do. She likes to get these plants out into real live gardens where she can see what they will do.

Interviewer: What plants has she introduced?

Odenwald: Margie has done more to broaden the palette of azaleas than anyone. She has introduced the Robin Hills and many other rhododendrons in the trade. Consequently many of the professionals are starting to use them. If you go to Margie's operation in Amite, you will see plants that you will not see any other place. You will not see one or two, but she will have a whole mass of several hundred of a particular brand of a robin hill that she will say this is a proven plant. Another area that she has done an amazing job with is natives. Native azaleas, native *viburnum*, cypress, some of the hollies, hydrangeas. She had introduced many maples- the Japanese maples. She won't necessarily sell you a plant because she has to have it to propagate. She has that wonderful patience. Knowing that she couldn't be around for too many more years, but she is doing it like she has a whole lifetime to work with these plants. She surely does not get in a rut, because she doesn't have any favorites. She will go the whole scope of

the plant life. People who say, oh you can't get it. Well, here's a woman where you can get some new stuff, if you will just go to her. You cannot just sit in an office and look through catalogues that again will primarily promote the tried and proven. But at Margie's you will have maybe one or two of those that are like fine art, and you can be proud of it, and it's not like everyone else has. You can go to Margie and say, I want a plant that is interesting and unique in color form or texture, and she will have something for that place.

Most successful nurseries have to very careful as to what they produce to survive. But in this second part of her career she has had the success of the dairy and the timber to let her experiment with some plants that might not have been possible at another date, or by others.

Interviewer: What has made Margie successful?

Odenwald: A lot of people would have the technical knowledge that Margie has, but I think that the quality that Margie has is her passion for plants, and I don't care what you are doing, you have to love it if you are going to make contributions to that industry or profession. So I think her passion for plants, and her love of people. You know she is a people person; you go to her nursery; and you say oh I know you are busy; and she stops and takes you as if she has all day. Knowing that she has wagon loads of plants to get out that day, but it's like you are the only person in the world, and she gives you all her attention. Another thing is that Margie will go far and wide; spend lots of time, and it is expensive to travel, and Margie does not charge to be an evangelist for her love of plants. So she will go to places, and, one on one or in groups, she shares her knowledge and experience that lots of people don't take the time to do or they can't afford to take the time

because they have to make a living. Margie can go out and share this knowledge. And she is inquisitive. She wants to get to the root of the what, the how of plant material. She never is comfortable to rest on her laurels on a particular plateau, and consequently she is making those people with big reputations look at her a second time, such as Michael Dirr and Don Shadow in Tennessee, and Margie is up there with them in woody ornamentals. She can sit down and talk with those at a very high level of understanding and knowledge of what those plants will do.

Wayne Womack

Starbucks Coffee on Corporate, Baton Rouge

March 23, 2004.

Interviewer: When did you first meet Margie Jenkins?

Womack: I would guess it must have been 15 or 20 yrs ago. Probably I heard her speak at Hilltop. She was a great friend of Marion Drummond, and I use to go with Marion to her nursery because she had such an incredible selection. We just developed this friendship. Margie is one of those people who are quiet and internal, but once she senses you are a plant person she is too generous. She would load me down with plants until I would say; I cannot take any more; and I don't know if I can even grow these. So she was wonderful. Our friendship developed like that, she is always so sharing. She was growing Texas buckeye, and I had one. So I would gather the seeds from here and take them up to her and that would start her on her next year's supply of seedlings. We had lots of contacts, and she always welcomed me whenever I was there. She is one special lady. She is a tenacious, dedicated person who would go to the end of the world to get something done properly and try to find new things that would grow in our climate. And then she is such a superb grower. She has such an intuitive sense of how to grow things. That is fascinating to watch. She is certainly the person doing exactly what she should be doing. Her energy is amazing, and I think part of that is she is doing what she loves and is superb at it, and as a result she stays very energized and very youthful. It is a treat to watch her. She is her own problem since she is so successful that she has to have all these employees to help her. She is sort of like Martha Stewart. What they will do if Margie is gone?

Interviewer: Do you use plants from her nursery?

Womack: I regularly use plants from her nursery. We are an area that tends to be very safe in our plantings by continuing to replant the same things over and over. Camellias and Azaleas are an example. But there are so many new things that have come out, but if people do not know what it will do, they do not want to take a chance with the new. I have always loved to use those new plants, and Margie and I are partners in crime that way. We have both liked to use the new and that has probably stimulated our friendship.

Interviewer: What new plants are you talking about?

Womack: The new ones include: The evergreen Japanese oak - *Quercus glauca*, evergreen sweet bay magnolia, (native thing) *gordonia axilaris* a plant she introduced me to. These are superior plants and certainly the oak tree should be everywhere, really one of the most beautiful evergreen trees, nothing like a live oak. I have never understood why it has not caught on. It is very hardy here; it thrives in our heat, and will take our poor drainage. There is always something coming along. She gets a lot of plants from New Zealand, and she had gotten some magnolias, oriental magnolias, *solangiana*. She was aware that these were not very good varieties, the color wasn't good. Then she happened to get just the root stock that they had grafted on to, which is one of the most spectacular *solangianas* there is, and she started carrying the root stock because it was better than the graft. She is always discovering things like that. Of course, there are the native plants that she has built such an audience for, like the native azaleas. The native azaleas always have a hard time because they are subtle, deciduous; they often look bad in a container. They often look like a bunch of sticks. So it has been an uphill fight selling the average person on native azaleas.

Interviewer: What other plants do you associate with her?

Womack: Oakleaf hydrangea and the deciduous viburnums; various trees, such as the parsley hawthorn, and Mexican plum, calycanthus, the spice bush, there is a long list that she has worked on. Everyone wants to plant dogwoods, which are so difficult along the flood plain because of the heavy soil, and we could be planting the hawthorns and the silver bells which can be just as beautiful in their own way as the dogwood. Dogwood has such an image so everyone thinks they have to have it. So I think Margie in her quiet way has grown these other plants and has tried hard to disseminate them through the various nurseries that she sells to. The whole ecological movement of the 1960's and 1970's helped. People got more interested in growing things that are pertinent to the area they live in, and they began to appreciate the more subtle class you see in the woods. So you see something like the oak leaf hydrangea which is such a spectacular plant that most people really love it. But it is so hard to grow around here if the soil content is not just right. Margie has a wonderful soil mix that you almost don't want to take your plants out of their pots because she has come up with the perfect growing medium for them.

Interviewer: How do you think she has gained all this knowledge?

Womack: She goes to lots of meetings and conferences. She knows everyone; all the old nurserymen are as thick as hops, and she has a great name among all the plant people in the south.

Interviewer: What has made her so successful?

Womack: It really comes down to: she is a natural at what she does, and she does not dislike any plant. Any plant has potential, and she will give it a whirl. She has not just been interested in natives. She will test viburnums from a low zone.

Interviewer: Has she always shown you her discoveries?

Womack: She has this special area by the office where she keeps the things that are not for sale. This is like her Pandora's Box, with all these exotic things one has never heard of. She found a dwarf cleyera, which she did from cuttings, but then she got distracted and never did any more with it. I kid her and say we have to get this out. She is drawn in so many different directions, that this is one thing that has been put on hold. But, she is good at things like spotting things in the woods or in a nursery that are different, and she knows right away that this might be a potential new plant. And that is so exciting.

APPENDIX C

MARGIE JENKINS' NATIVE PLANT LIST

LOUISIANA STATE HORTICULTURE SOCIETY
Annual conference and Membership
Some Favorite Native Plants – Margie Y. Jenkins
January 15, 2004

CALLICARPA americana: American Beautyberry, French Mulberry – A rather coarse 3' to 8' tall, open shrub from throughout the S.E. Light lavender-pink flowers on new growth in late May into June. Fruit about 1/4" in diameter, fleshy, usually magenta, occasionally white, and loved by birds and squirrels. Makes a good shrub for naturalizing or massing. Will fruit in shade but is denser and more fruitful in sun. Does better in moist soil. Zones 7-11.

CHIONANTHUS virginicus: Fringe Tree, Grancy Greybeard, Old-man's Beard - Billowy white fragrant flowers in mid-Spring. Large shrub or small tree to about 30'. They are male and female, the male trees usually giving a better show of flowers. The female plants are quite ornamental with the seeds looking somewhat like green grapes during the summer and turning dark blue in early fall. They are relished by the birds. Leaves turn yellow in the fall before falling fairly early. Found throughout the S. E. Zones 5-9.

CLIFTONIA monophylla: Black Titi, Buckwheat Tree – A small nearly evergreen tree to about 24'. Fragrant white flowers, in racemes at the ends of the previous year's twigs, opening in spring before new leaves appear. Fruit small winged drupe. Grows in acid shrub tree bogs or wet woodlands along stream courses and in flat woods depressions. To my knowledge there are four, which have been found that make pink flowers rather than white. Ruby Williams, who lived in an adjoining parish from me, found the first one I acquired. The next one came from Caroline Dorman's Preserve in North Louisiana, which is planted by the pond. Richard Johnson, who lives there, had to go out in the boat to get cuttings for me. Since then I have purchased the one the Dodd family is growing and also the one that Flowerwood Nursery is growing. The one from Flowerwood was found in Florida by Jim Berry and has been named "Chipola Pink". They state the mature height for it is 10-15 feet. Native S. Central and S.E. GA., FL. Panhandle, S. AL., S.E. MS., S.E. LA. Zones 7-9.

CRATAEGUS marshallii: Parsley Hawthorn – A small tree with thorny branches and thin scaly bark to about 25'. White clustered flowers appearing in March and April. Fruit 1/3 inch long, red, ripening in October and persisting on tree after leaves have been shed. Grows in low woods and wet areas, but is adaptable to average garden soil. Native from VA. to FL. and W. to TX.. Zones 6-9.

CYRILLA racemiflora: Titi, Swamp Cyrilla - A small tree or large shrub of exceptional character with nearly evergreen leaves. In late spring it is very attractive in bloom with fragrant white flowers borne on 3 to 6" racemes. Can be grown in low moist areas or high ground. Good fall color. Considered a good honey plant. Native from VA. to FL. and W. to TX.. Zones 6-9.

LYONIA lucida: Fetterbush – A three to five foot high, arching evergreen shrub. The pinkish white, up to 1/3" long flowers occur in racemes from the axils of the leaves are rather pretty. Prefers a moist, well drained soil in at least partial shade. There is a selection that was found near Round Lake, FL. by Jim Berry of Flowerwood Nursery, which they have named "Round Lake." It was selected for its compact growth habit and disease resistance. It is a tough little evergreen shrub, which they say will mature at 3" tall and 3" wide. From what I have seen, it is going to be a great plant. Native habitat from VA. to FL. and W. to LA. Zones 7-9.

FOTHERGILLA major: Witch-alder - A deciduous flowering shrub to about 6' to 10' with fragrant white bottle-brush like flowers. Summer foliage is a leathery dark blue-green. Not affected by diseases or insects. Fall color ranges from yellow to orange and scarlet; often with all colors present. Indigenous to the Allegheny Mountains from northern NC. to TN. to northern AL. Zones 4-8.

HYDRANGEA quercifolia: Oakleaf Hydrangea - A large coarse textured shrub with exfoliating bark and large oak-shaped, 3-7 lobed, 3 to 8" long, deep green deciduous leaves. White showy flowers borne in 4 to 12" long, 3 to 4" wide erect panicles. As flowers age they change from white to purplish pink and finally brown. Fall color can be quite spectacular, changing to shades of red, orangish brown and purple. Habit is upright, little branched and irregular. Best in afternoon shade, moist, well-drained soil. Native to a wide area of the S. E. U.S. Zones 5-9.

ILLICIAM floridanum: Starbush, Star Anise, Stinkbush - An evergreen shrub or small under-story tree to about 10'. Glossy dark green leaves that emit a somewhat anise-like odor when crushed. Flowers 1 1/2" wide, dark red with many strap-shaped petals, ill-scented; fruit 1 1/4" in diameter, greenish. Dry fruit is many lobed "star-shaped." A great plant for the shade. Grows in moist wooded ravines from S.W. GA. and the inner FL. Panhandle from the Ochlockonee River westward, throughout the coastal plain of AL. Westward to S.E. LA. Zones 7-9.

ILLICIAM parviflorum: Ocala Anise, Small Anise-tree - A large evergreen shrub with handsome olive green foliage that provides a slightly different color than the lustrous dark green of many broadleaf evergreens. Rich sassafras smell to crushed leaves which are held very upright. A great screening plant that will grow to about 15' tall. No disease or pest problems. Small yellow flowers about 1/2" wide appear in May - June and go virtually unnoticed and no undesirable odor. Will tolerate extremely moist soils and does well in dry situations. Mike Dirr says it is the best Illicium for sun and shade. Coastal Plains, GA. to FL. Zones 7-9.

ITEA VIRGINICA: Virginia Willow, Sweetpire - A small shrub valued for fragrant flowers and its ability to grow in wet places. Leaves 2 to 3 inches long, deciduous; flowers tiny, less than 1/4" long in drooping racemes 4" long. 'Henry's Garnet' has brilliant reddish purple fall color and up to 6" long flowers; both fall color and flower superior to the species. 'Sarah Eve' was discovered in Florida by Nancy Bissent who named the plant for her daughter. Sepals and pedicels of flowers are pink but the petals are white, fall color not that great but it is more evergreen. Flowers much earlier than other cultivars. Virginia Willow grows in wooded swamps of the floodplain and along streams. Native from New Jersey, S. to Florida and westward to E. Texas. Zones 7-9.

MAGNOLIA macrophylla var. ashei: Ashe Magnolia - Variety ashei is shrub-like in habit and smaller in all ways than the var. macrophylla. Plants of the var. ashei flower when only a few years old, while plants of var. macrophylla require about fifteen years to flower from seed. Large creamy white flowers, purple-stained at base and a pleasing fragrance. The smaller, shrubby habit as well as early flowering age makes this variety a spectacular ornamental for garden use. It should be planted in well-drained soil and in protected places as winds soon riddle the large fragile leaves. It grows in the sandy soil along the banks of the Apalachicola River in the Florida panhandle. Zones 6-9.

PINUS glabra: Spruce Pine, Cedar, Turkey Pine - Medium to large tree. Bark is very different from other pines, a dark gray, hard and tight, not breaking up into large plates as is the case with other pines. Makes a great screen where a very large screen is desired, limbing to the ground. Needles short and small cones. Coastal Plain, SC. to FL., W. to S. MS. and S.E. LA. Zone 8.

TAXODIUM ascendens: Pond Cypress - Smaller growing than Bald Cypress and producing less knees. Foliage is slender bright green, needle-shaped, and rich brown in winter. Bark is light brown and deeply furrowed. Pond Cypress is always found around landlocked bodies of water whereas Bald Cypress is indigenous to running water. Adapts to moist, acid soils, upland soils, full sun and extremely wind firm. Native to S.E. U.S. VA. to FL., and W. to S.E. LA.. Zones 4-9.

ZENOBIA pulverulenta: Dusty Zenobia – A gracefully arching shrub to about five feet. The leaves may turn yellow with a tinge of red in the fall. Pretty panicles of pristine white, anise-scented, narrow bell-shaped flowers at the end of the branches in mid to late spring. Requires acid, moist, well drained soil for best growth. Full sun to partial shade. ‘Woodlander,s Blue’ is a selection that has powdery blue foliage during the growing season. This variety has beautiful fall color of brilliant orange and red in autumn if in full sun. Native NC to FL. Zones 5-9.

VACCINIUM elliotii: Elliott’s Blueberry, Huckleberry – Deciduous shrub to 6 to 10’ high with a broad, bushy-branched crown that often occurs as an under story plant in deciduous woods. Habit is upright arching with long, slender, supple, green shoots. The handsome green leaves turn rich red and reddish purple in fall. The small white flowers often open before the leaves appear. The black berries ripen in summer and have great flavor. Grows in a wide variety of habitats from wet to well-drained soil. Pretty at all times. Native from S.E. VA. to N. FL. Westward to E. TX. and AR. Zones 6-9.

VACCINIUM arboreum: Winter Huckleberry, Tree Huckleberry, Sparkleberry – This is the largest of our native blueberry species that grows from a shrub into a tree only after many years. Seldom reaching more than 20 feet tall. It often has somewhat of a sculptured look or the grizzled appearance of a large bonsai tree. Small white flowers borne on previous year’s growth. Fruit, black, dry and mealy, persistent into winter. It displays fine red color in the fall and has very attractive peeling bark. Native to VA., GA., FL., AL., MS., TN., TX., and KY. Zone 7-9.

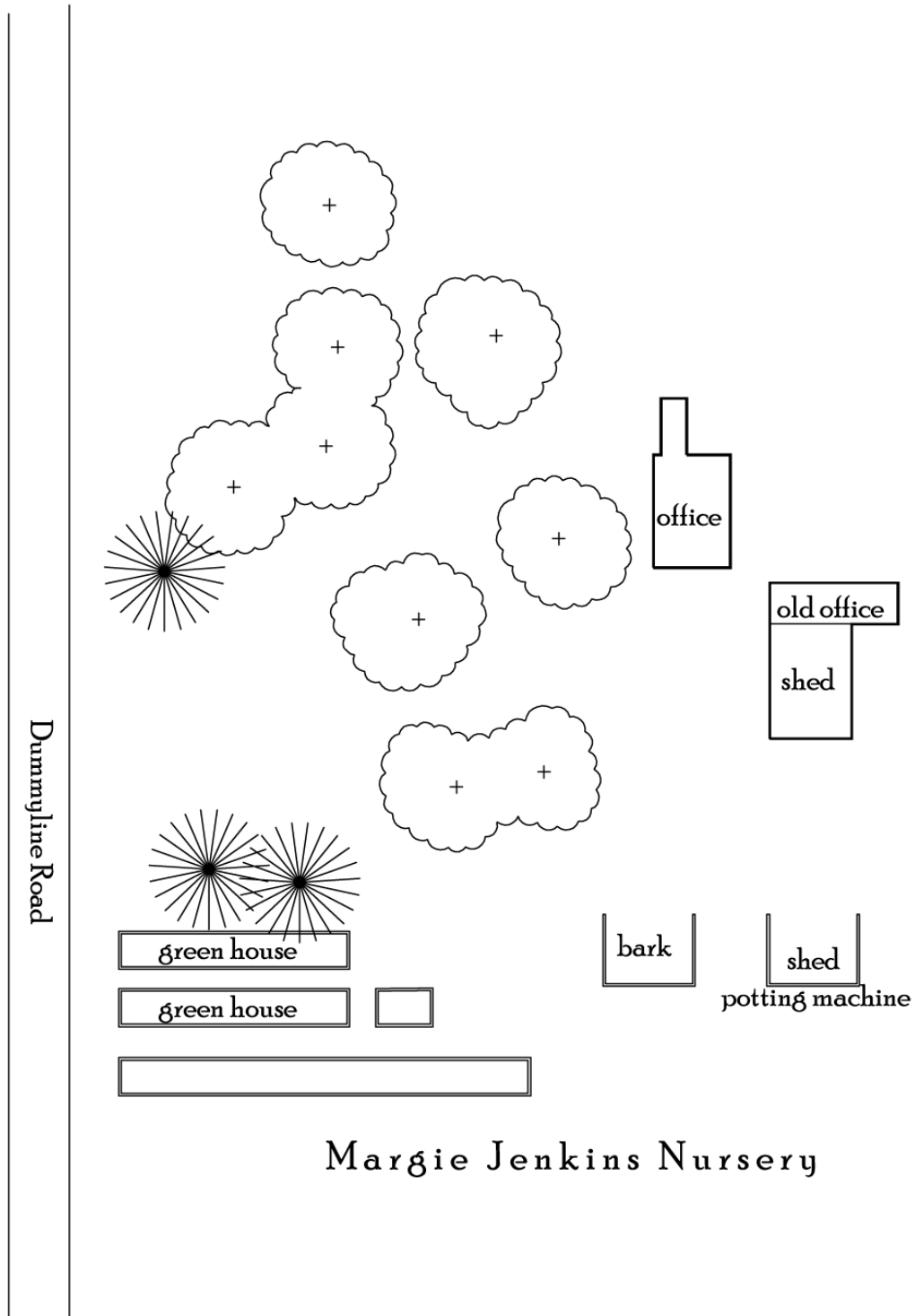
RHODODENDRON austrinum, canescens: Native or Wild Azalea – Deciduous fragrant flowering shrubs to around 10’ in height. Both bloom March and April and make a splendid addition to the shrub border. Will bloom much better in the sun. They like moisture but must be well drained. Austrinum color ranges from a soft yellow to orange. Grows from N. and W. FL. to S.W. GA., S. AL. and S.E. MS. Zone 7-9. Canescens has a tremendous variation in color from white to deep pink. Grows from NC. and TN. to N. FL., GA., AL., MS., LA. and TX.. Zones 5-9.

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APPENDIX D

JENKINS NURSERY LAYOUT



VITA

Gayna Johnice Billue Veltman was born in Hugo, Oklahoma, to Syvenna Rogstad Billue and Gaines Harrison Billue. Her father built refineries which entailed moving quite often. He later started a company that put in underground storage wells while her mother was teaching at Midwestern University. She graduated from high school in Wichita Falls, Texas, and went to the University of Oklahoma the next year. She married F. N. Solliday while in college and had one daughter, Cynthia while finishing her work at the university and obtaining her degree in business administration. They moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma and had another daughter, Laura. Unfortunately their marriage ended, and Gayna attended the University of Tulsa to obtain her teaching certificate. In 1968, she married L. H. Veltman, and they had two children, Krista and Lee. She only worked outside the home a few times and for short periods. When her marriage to Veltman ended, she traveled for a time and then decided to return to school to attain her master's degree in landscape architecture. She picked Louisiana State University because it has a good reputation for landscape architecture and her youngest daughter and two grandsons live in Baton Rouge.