

A History of the Orchid Society of Minnesota

Written by Sandy Murphy in 1975

The Orchid Society of Minnesota was formed in 1964 by Mr. Dave Christianson of Hinckley and Mr. George Heuer of South St. Paul. Both Dave and George were keenly interested in the native orchids of Minnesota and also grew tropical Orchids in their greenhouses. Being members of the American Orchid Society, a world-wide group, they used the AOS roster to contact members in Minnesota. They were able to contact about 22 people at the time, all very enthusiastic (including my husband Greg and myself). The first meeting was held at the Heuer's home in March, 1964.

That was merely ten years ago, but Orchid growers seemed few and far between compared to the membership today, which now numbers close to 150 people. In fact, our state society, which is affiliated with the American Orchid Society and the Mid-America Orchid Congress, is now one of the largest and most active groups within the Mid-America Congress, which covers 17 states.

How did the Orchid Society of Minnesota grow so fast? OSM has been involved in Orchid displays and judged shows for 8 years, which are not only esthetically pleasing, but have educational merit. These displays and judged shows have attracted huge numbers of people. A recent example, the Society display at the St. Paul Conservatory fern wing drew so many people, especially on the second day, Sunday, that people had to wait close to an hour before they got to the entrance of the fern wing. Unfortunately, as closing time came many hundreds of people had to be turned away, even

after an extension of one hour. Sheets explaining the home growing of Orchids (tropical) were given away, AOS Orchid culture handbooks were on hand, and during the two-day display OSM members were on hand to answer all sorts of questions about Orchids.

People who wish to find out more about Orchids are directed to the Orchid Society of Minnesota monthly meetings (September through June at the Horticulture Building, University of Minnesota, St. Paul Campus) where they may learn what Orchids are and how to grow them under lights in the basement, on the windowsill, or in a greenhouse. There is a program for the novice from 12 to 1 PM which offers a virtual gold mine of information. The regular meeting begins at 1 PM and always includes an excellent program that should please and interest most anyone. The 10-year anniversary this March was planned to include Dr. Gary Baker, a botanist specializing in Orchid breeding at Beall's in Vashon, Washington. Dr. Baker brought hundreds of fine Orchid Plants and flowers and delivered one of the finest talks on Orchids most of us had ever heard. Occasionally, some of our programs feature members who have been Orchid collecting in countries such as Jamaica, Mexico, Columbia, South America, etc.

Greg and Sandy Murphy were founding members of the OSM. This is an article Sandy wrote in 1975.

Last month, Greg mailed the article to me.

So much has changed. So much, especially what is good, remains the same.

Thank you to Sandy, Greg, and all those who felt orchids were a thoroughly fine avocation for Minnesotans.

*John Widen, Editor.
March, 2008*

My husband Greg (the current president of the OSM) and I prepared a program a couple of years ago on the Native Orchids of Minnesota. While Greg contribute most of the slides, being a long-

time camera enthusiast, quite a few slides came from members who had access to Orchids that we had not been able to find. There are many OSM members besides Greg and I who revere our Native Orchids. James LaVinge, the man whose magnificent orchid portraits you'll see in this issue of the Conservation Volunteer, is a member. He helps bring attention to the native orchids of Minnesota whenever he displays his work. Dr. Ralph Holman of the Hormel Research Institute, U of M, in Austin, has recently received grants from the AOS to study the chemical make-up of orchid fragrances and also, to study the relationship between our Northern *Haernaria obtusefolia* and a female mosquito, its pollinator. Dr. William Rathbun, a member, has been working with Mr. John Mathison to preserve a bog in northern Minnesota that has an estimated 1,000,000 *Cypripedium reginae*, our state flower, plus many other bog Orchids. There are many other members of the OSM who accord as much interest in our native orchids as they do to tropical types.

Some of our members give lectures on Orchid growing to interested groups.

The Orchid Society of Minnesota has been hailed as an activist group in the area of interest in our native Orchids by other Orchid societies across the country in recent times. We feel this is most fitting as our constitution includes the information that the group shall disseminate information about our native Orchids and help preserve them. This upcoming Spring and Summer shall find various members of the OSM at work transplanting some of the Orchids native to Minnesota from land they own, maybe knowing it will be plowed or bulldozed, to the U of M Arboretum, Chaska.

We welcome newcomers to our Society, as we feel it is an extremely friendly and exciting group of people who find a thing more beautiful than ever when it is shared.

Sincerely, Sandy Murphy

Formation of the Orchid Society of Minnesota

J. Greg Murphy

Sunday March 7, 1964 should go down in Orchid history. At 2:00 PM, 10 enthusiastic orchid growers came together and formed the Orchid Society of Minnesota (OSM).

Dave Christianson from Hinkley and George Heuer, South St. Paul contacted all members of the AOS who were listed in the AOS Membership Directory so we could come together to share our interest in orchids. As a result, ten hardy souls convened at the Heuer's home. They were: Dave Christianson, George and Stella Heuer, Hugh and Ruth Cocker from Rochester, Herb and Mary Ann Snyder from Brainerd, Chuck Lampright from St. Paul, and Sandy and Greg Murphy from St. Paul.

We held elections for the newly formed Society:
President – Chuck Lampright

Vice President – Dave Christianson
Secretary – Ruth Cocker
Treasurer – Herb Snyder

At this meeting we decided to have monthly meetings and hold Charter Membership open for two months, until the May meeting. In the mean time, each of us would contact other Orchid enthusiasts about the newly formed OSM and invite them to a meeting. By the end of May we had 63 members. What wonderful growth, much faster than our orchids were growing. At the April and May meetings there were wonderful discussions about the Society, its purpose and future (including one member's suggestion that our dues should be set at \$100 per year to "keep out the riffraff.")

Please remember this was 1964!

*Greg included
a few remembrances
of his own.*

JW, Editor