

Best AVM Articles for 2001

Linda Golubski - Going Home: My Violet Memories

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In August of 2000 we loaded up our Jeep and headed from Missouri to Massachusetts for our first ever family reunion. I saw cousins I hadn't seen in over 30 years! What a wonderful time we had! But more memories awaited me.

While driving around the town of Oxford (birthplace of Clara Barton – founder of the Red Cross) I took pictures of the “old homestead”, my church, elementary school, junior high school, high school and baseball field (I was a tomboy). Then, I saw a familiar sign in the front yard of a lovely little white house on Main Street. The sign simply said “African Violets”. It was leaning against a telephone pole in front of the house. I remembered that sign from when I was a little girl.

When I was 8 or 9 years old, I'd walk a mile (we lived in the country) to this lady's house and for 25 cents I'd buy my mother an African violet for Mother's Day. This kind and knowledgeable woman would tell me how to care for the plant. I remember being fascinated by the lighted stand she had in her living room which was always full of blooming African violets. I remember thinking how I'd like to have one of those someday. (Little did I know!) All of this brought back so many memories.

My mother, who was traveling with us, said I should stop. I told her it had been over 40 years, surely it wasn't the same woman. Maybe her children had the house now or maybe strangers. Maybe that's why the sign was leaning against the pole instead of being firmly planted in the front yard. My husband pulled over in front of the house and said I would never know unless I went and knocked on the door. So Mom and I got out and walked up the steps.

I could see a lighted plant stand with blooming violets on it in the middle of the living room, just like I remembered. Mrs. Helen Yeagle came to the door. I explained how I bought violets from her for my mother when I was a little girl and wondered if she still sold them. She invited us in and we talked “violets” for quite awhile. My mother told her how much she had influenced and inspired me as a child into what has been a life-long love affair with African violets.

She only had one shelf of violets now and they were all the same plant with medium green foliage and double pink flowers, well grown though. She couldn't remember its name but that wasn't important to me. I call it “Mrs. Yeagle.” I asked if she would sell me one and she did. When I told her that I lived in Missouri now, she said she would pack it properly for the trip in a cereal box with slits in it to hold the pot. As she was packing up my plant, she said that it had been a long time since anyone had bought a plant from her.

We visited a while longer and unfortunately it was time to go. Mom asked if she could take a picture of us together for my memory book and as you can see, she was most accommodating. Mrs. Yeagle is a retired piano teacher with a passion for African violets. She didn't remember me and quite frankly I didn't even know her name until this visit. I always called her “The Violet Lady”.

As we said our goodbye, Mrs. Yeagle said that it was good to have been remembered, and I

thought to myself how good it was to have such a pioneer in violets. A light stand 40 years ago, she was so ahead of her time! Mrs. Yeagle, you are a treasure! Thank you.