

# The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



## A History of the Friends Moana Odell Beim

### Moana's Story edited by Lisa Locken

Moana Odell Beim was the daughter of the late Clinton M. Odell, founder of Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. She was a past President (1975-1976) and former board member and was active in the organization for many years. Following are edited excerpts from an interview conducted on December 13, 2002, by Steve Pundt, President of the Friends at that time, and the late Lisa Locken, editor at that time of *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup>, the Friends' newsletter. At the time of the interview, Moana was 92 years old. She passed away on February 9, 2007.



Moana Odell Beim (left) and  
Lisa Locken, editor of *The  
Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup>

**Dad really was the dreamer of that Garden.** When I was a little girl there was nothing over there (in the upland prairie garden), just nettles. I went over and helped him pull up all of the wild things. Dad worked his head off but he loved it and would have gone right on doing it, but he got too old. Isn't that too bad! It's too bad to grow old. I'm 92. He was a great lover of nature. I just loved the Garden, too. Dad and I were pals. And I was the only one of his four children who really liked going out with him.



Friends President Steve Pundt  
and Moana Odell Beim

Every afternoon Dad would come home at 4:00 and call me. He had a pet name for me. I never liked my name. Instead of calling me Moana, he'd call me Mana. He'd come home and say, come on, Mana, we're going to walk around the lake, and walk around the lake we did and he got me acquainted with Lake of the Isles, which is four miles around. You know, the flowers and everything around there was lovely. I had a lovely childhood growing up. So in the afternoon, Dad and I went out. We walked Lake of the Isles and we'd go out to the Wild Flower Garden.

When it got to be winter, Dad and I loved to be out at the Garden when it was snowing. If it was a mild day he would build a fire. We would get some bread and some raw bacon. He'd get some sticks and we'd put the bread on one stick and the bacon on the other stick and toast them and eat them half cooked. The food tasted wonderful whether it was raw or otherwise.

**Eloise Butler was Dad's high school botany teacher.** Dad became a very successful insurance man. He was president of White and Odell down by Loring Park. After he had an illness he ended his insurance

career. He was president of the Burma Vita Company when Burma Shave got started. I can remember when Burma Shave was born. Dad just thought he had really gotten something, and his company had so much fun with that. On Dad's birthday they gave a party for him and covered the cake with Burma Shave! So Burma Shave lasted about 20 years, but what it did was evolve with the roadways, and the roadways got faster and faster and Burma Shave died faster.

Dad had a good life and was productive, and he did a lot of good. He was so proud of the Friends, what he did, and the group who started it. Well, Gee, he had Donald Dayton on that. He really got a good group for the Board of Directors. They were all friends, and he just went after them. I remember Donald Dayton. I worked for Dayton's for awhile. And Dorothy Binder; she was a personal friend of Dad's mother. Russell Bennett; he was a very well-known businessman. Leonard Ramberg was the same, and Martha Crone: you know who she was. If you looked at Dad's list of friends, you'd see that they were very active in Minneapolis.

I can remember Dad coming home. I'd be home from school and Dad would be saying to my mother, "I think I'll go out and see Martha (Martha Crone, curator of the Garden) for awhile," and they had the same interests out there. Whenever she needed something repaired or done, Dad just did it. And he gave a lot of financial aid. When he threw himself into something, he was whole-hearted. He was a good guy. I miss him. He was a good man, and did so many things for the good of the people and the city and the park board; they all were important to him.

When the upper prairie garden evolved, there wasn't much there, just nettles. We were picking nettles by the thousands. I used to wonder, Dad, where did you get that idea? (to turn the prairie into a part of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden). You never could tell what his ideas were.



Drawing of the Fringed Gentian which appeared on the masthead of *The Friends* Newsletter.

**Dad named *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup>.** I remember when he named it. He said, "It's extinct. The Fringed Gentian is extinct as a plant." And I can remember how he used to go searching for that Fringed Gentian along creek beds and everywhere he knew they might have grown, but he never found any. (Editor's note: Although the Fringed Gentians no longer grow at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, the flower is rare, but not extinct as Odell feared.)

I think that the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden is marvelous. And to have it in the heart of the city. So I can give my Dad a lot of credit. Dad knew that the upper prairie garden would be perfect for wildflowers. At first there weren't any flowers up there. If Dad told me to pull up ragweed, I'd pull up ragweed. He gave me a nickel for every one hundred ragweed I'd pulled up. I got a lot of nickels but I loved doing it.

**The garden path.** I was the person who developed the nice wide path that goes from the front gate down to the shelter. The way I did it was to arrange a garden hose along the route I wanted it to go. I was sure happy to get rid of that straight down plunge that used to be there.

I used to take my Girl Scouts out to the Garden. And I could teach them so much out there. They loved it. They'd much rather go the Wild Flower Garden than they would to scout camp. I'd teach them the things that I had done and my dad had done. It was all very meaningful, and the girls were very interested and they listened closely.



I was on the Friends Board of Directors. I remember my father started that board. He was old when he started it. My brothers weren't interested, so he pushed it off on me. And I took over and I didn't want to, but after I took over I loved it. It's in my blood.

Somebody told me to sit on the porch of the shelter and listen to the birds. They said the birds were so active. And I did and I loved it. I am a bird watcher, too, and I was a birder with the Scouts. Gee that was fun. Those little girls about 11 or 12 years old are so enthusiastic! They are so darling and I had such a good time with them in the Garden.

So, that's my story. I hope I've been a little help.

**Left:** The current path layout from the front gate down to the Martha Crone Shelter.

### 50th Wedding Anniversary Photo of Clinton Odell surrounded by his family



Above left to right: Allen Odell (eldest son) and spouse Grace; Raymond N. Beim and spouse Moana Odell Beim; Amy and Clinton Odell; Barbara Odell Coleman and spouse James; Betty Odell; Leonard Odell (Photo courtesy Minnesota Historical Society, Martha Crone Collection).

Lisa Locken (1936-2007) was a long-time member of the Friends and editor of *The Fringed Gentian*  
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