

# MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR BARBARA MULLIN

MAY 6, 2024

## ***Introduction:***

*My journey with Barbara started in 2022, when I learned about the Perennial Bloom Award, a lifetime achievement award that had Barbara's name all over it. The application called for a narrative and huge amounts of personal information, which only Barbara herself could give me. This required her to spend hours and hours digging through boxes in her attic, and she loved it! She and I spent months with emails and phone calls, putting the application together, which I submitted in January of 2023. Our journey ended this year with the best-kept secret that she indeed had won the **Perennial Bloom Award**.*

*Nancy has asked me to read a shortened version of the narrative. [I would like to explain to non-garden club members in the audience, the acronym GCNJ stands for Garden Club of New Jersey, as does the term State Garden Club.]*

Barbara was born to the purple – of lilacs, irises, and lavender. When she was seven, her father began work, as a grower in the New York Floral Trade. What he taught her about peonies remained an essential part of her gardening playbook. She created her first floral arrangement at the age of eight and continued to make floral designs for her family for 80 years.

After a forty-year career in banking, Barbara took early retirement and became active in a Senior Education group. She was asked to step in temporarily to teach a class on **“Gardening Tried and True in Central New Jersey.”** She said, **“I didn't know all about nature, but I did know about growing things. During a 10-week session, I must have given away 50 arrangements and all sorts of plants to accompany my lectures.”** She taught the class for 21 years.

In 1998, Barbara and her sister went to the Rake and Hoe House Tour and were awestruck. Within months she had become a member of the garden club and unknowingly embarked on a second career. She took on many roles within Rake & Hoe. She served as the Club Historian for over 15 years, a job that entailed compiling annual photo albums of the club's floral events. She loved her photography.

Barbara began participating in the state Flower Shows, and became known as the "Energizer Bunny" for her enthusiasm and her willingness to do whatever was needed. One year she even hauled wagons of mulch to help plant 1000 violets.

# MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR BARBARA MULLIN

MAY 6, 2024

In 2009 she took on her most ambitious assignment: chairing the State Flower Show; it was a huge challenge and a great success. She later became President of GCNJ and made a lasting impact. When the GCNJ Treasurer became ill and died during Barbara's presidency, Barbara drew on her considerable banking skills and temporarily handled both jobs, while training the person who had been elected Assistant Treasurer. Barbara also worked side by side with Jeannie Geremia for two years, to achieve her vision for New Jersey to adopt a State Butterfly.

Board Member Diana Kazazis has described Barbara as “***an exemplary GCNJ President. When she stepped down, she was the most appreciated President by the board in many years. She showed caring and commitment to whatever it was she dedicated herself to.***” Barbara saw a spark in people and brought dozens of younger gardeners into the State-and-local flower shows.

Barbara was admired as a woman of great generosity of spirit. For over 25 years she prepared floral arrangements twice a week for her church. We think of gardening as her passion, but sharing was her passion. She was always sharing plants fresh from her garden. She shared her knowledge of plants with audiences of gardeners and recruits. By giving away cuttings, rootings, bulbs and starter plants, her lectures were always popular learning experiences. When Rake & Hoe or neighboring garden clubs found themselves suddenly without a speaker, it was Barbara who would step in as speaker, equipped with her ever-ready bag of mechanics and giveaway flowers and plants.

Barbara was an inspiration to all of us. She will be remembered fondly. I want to thank Barbara for trusting me with her stories, and Nancy for inviting me to share them with you. I would like to close with this sentiment: “I never thought that a heart that big would ever stop beating.”

Thank You. Joe Da Rold