

Roger Walker

2013 Inductee

Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers Hall of Fame

The Puget Sound Dahlia Association would like to nominate Roger Walker for the Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers Hall of Fame.

With his trademark baseball cap firmly in place, Roger looks like another Seattle Mariners fan in the crowd. But this unassuming, competent, no-nonsense guy wears lots of dahlia hats that many people do not notice. Roger got his start growing dahlias shortly after he and his wife, Bev, bought their first – and current – house in Bellevue in the early 1970s. A few dahlias grew their first Spring in the house, and being a consummate lifelong learner, Roger needed to know more about the plants.

He attended a Puget Sound Dahlia Association show and made his first mistake: asking Phil Traff about dahlias. Over the course of a few years, the Walkers' yard was slowly taken over by dahlias. The final holdout – a bed of spinach in the back yard – saw its last planting in the late 1980s. Around the same time, their yard was featured in an article about dahlias in *Sunset Magazine*, with an image of the bed of CEFN GLOW that once grew in the front yard playing prominently in the article.

In addition to serving as Secretary of the Puget Sound Dahlia Association from the 1970s until his retirement from the Board in 1997, Roger also served as both president and vice-president of the Federation. He is a charter member of the Federation of Northwest Dahlia Growers, and a signer of the original governing documents and was the first education chair.

Another dahlia hat worn by Roger has been as seedling bench evaluation chair for the American Dahlia Society. He has the unenviable task of collecting all the bench evaluation scores from each show, working them into the format to be published in the *ADS Bulletin*, determining the Lynn Dudley medal winners and doing it in time to be published in the December issue. It was mainly for this daunting task that the American Dahlia Society awarded him its prestigious gold medal at its 43rd annual show held in Everett, Washington in August, 2009.

When Phil Traff implemented his dream of a nationally (and internationally) recognized publication which became *Dahlias of Today*, he recognized the talents of Roger as being key to the success of the publication. That trust was not misplaced. Upon Phil's death, Roger assumed the reins of the publication and carried on Phil's vision, and under his tutelage it has grown from its original 36 pages to the present 100 pages. Originally all the photos were in black and white, but technology made it feasible for the editors to decide to have all the photos in color. Even though the masthead lists Roger as last in the list of editors, that is only a fluke of alphabetization.

Roger, together with Martin Kral, was the one who thought of the quality articles, asked the authors to contribute, dealt with the printers, made decisions on the photos, and contributed many articles himself. It was also Roger, in his capacity as an officer of Puget Sound Dahlia Association, who made sure the treasury had enough funds to cover the printing of *Dahlias of Today*. Those of us who have known Roger for many dahlia years have been aware of his devotion to wife Bev, his pride in sons Robert and Colin, and his dedication to the teaching profession for thirty years. When he retired from teaching in 2000, this indefatigable man easily made the transition to working in another field, this time for Group Health Cooperative, coordinating training and higher education for nurses.

But because Roger is so good at compartmentalizing, these family matters were a background to dahlia growers for his love of dahlias. Little did we realize that with the birth of granddaughters Annie and Aria, he would turn into the quivering mass of Jell-O that Grandpa Roger has become. These tiny little girls have completely won his heart and (I think) supplanted dahlias as his first love. Who woulda thunk it?

*Contributions by Susan Ambrose, Martin Kral, and Colin Walker
For Puget Sound Dahlia Association*