



LONE STAR AFRICAN VIOLET COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

January / February 2015

Volume XXX No. 1

Dear Lone Star Subscribers:

It is with great pleasure that this special edition of the Lone Star African Violet Society Newsletter is dedicated to Hortense and Ray Pittman. The Pittmans have given a good portion of their lives, talents and resources to the development of the hobby of African violets. This issue pays a special tribute to their many sacrifices.

This is a Texas size edition to show our giant degree of appreciation to them. Articles, paragraphs and photographs have been generously supplied by various Lone Star members and Pittman friends from all over the country and Canada. This is just our meager way of saying "thank you" to the Pittmans for the fantastic varieties, the warm friendships and the many contributions they have made, and continue to make, in the violet world. Their knowledge of hybridizing and growing African violets and streptocarpus are continuously shared within Texas and far beyond.

In addition to being such avid and excellent growers and hybridizers, the Pittmans are delightful people and friends. Hortense always has a smile and is a southern lady at heart. Ray will keep you laughing constantly with his priceless sense of humor. Both are generous with their plants, knowledge, time and expertise.

Marjorie has said she believes this is the best issue of the Newsletter ever. I am grateful to Marjorie who has done a beautiful job of compiling everyone's ideas into this magnificent issue. Many thanks are in order to all of you who made it all possible with your contributions. When so many people come together in a joint project, what a success it can be! Hopefully, this was a big surprise that arrived just in time for Hortense's birthday on February 13. A special thanks also goes out to Jan Davidson, because this special edition was her idea.



The lovely 70+° days have me frantically repotting my violets and putting down leaves. There is nothing quite like the hint of spring to really get me in the mood. It is amazing how your violets "smile" back at you when they are repotted. It is like they stretch their foliage out in thanksgiving.

The AVSA Kansas City Convention packet is now available online. Visit www.avsa.org under the Convention section to get a pdf or print your personal copy. There are several Texans who will have special responsibilities. Richard Nicholas will be the Moderator for the Growers' Forum, Ben Haning will present a workshop on trailers, I will do a workshop on propagating chimeras and Bill Foster will lead the Judges' Breakfast. There are a limited number of double rooms at the Holiday Inn KCI Airport, so get your reservations in early.

Many spring shows and sales will be happening across the state of Texas in the next few months. It is a time of excitement, education and shopping for varieties to purchase for your collection. Ask questions of the top award winners and see if they have some tips to offer. Share those young plants with you friends and club members. Help others to catch the fever of growing a young plant into a gorgeous specimen.

Happy New Year!



Hortense with her daughter, granddaughter, and great granddaughter at our LSAVC 2014 convention!

The Pittmans

By Bill Foster, Mesquite TX

I think I first met Ray and Hortense at the 1978 AVSA Convention in Austin. It may have been a year or so earlier during the formation of LSAVC. Before long they were more like family. African Violet people seem to grow into a big happy family.

Paula and I were invited to spend a few days with Ray and Hortense when they still lived in San Antonio. We were either eating or on the go. They took us to the big amusement park, which I think was then called Texasville. We spent the day there eating and going to shows.

However, none of them would ride the roller coaster with me! They took us to visit the Hill Country African Violets and a visit with Ken. During that visit Paula enjoyed playing with Miss Reddy, the Pittman's little toy poodle. We had lost our poodle ten months before and I didn't want to get another one because losing one was so difficult. On our way home on Saturday night Paula asked if she could get another poodle. I agreed and she had found Bailey, a red toy poodle, by Monday.

One memorable trip the four of us made together was to the Century Celebration of Spindletop at Beaumont. Evelyn Lord, Chairperson for Celebration and former mayor of Beaumont, called Hortense and I personally to invite us to the luncheon and the celebration. Evelyn was an AVSA member and she recognized us at the luncheon. The centerpieces were 'Spindletop', a violet hybridized by Hortense. Hortense had also named a violet 'Evelyn Lord' to honor Evelyn when she was Mayor. The celebration was great with the rumble of the gusher and the spray of oil; water was the oil. But we wore ponchos to keep us from getting wet. The first President Bush was a guest speaker. Everywhere we looked we saw bodyguards and a helicopter hovered over the area. Gentleman Ray then treated us and the AVSA office staff to lunch.

I don't remember a convention when a group of Texans didn't go out together to eat or drink a time or two. We could always count on Ray to keep us laughing. I feel so blessed to have them in my life. I could get into some stories I have heard about Ray and Hortense's dating days, but don't have the time or space.

Winneregreen and Alamo Gold Fever were two of my favorites from Hortense's earlier hybrids. All the violets and streps are now my favorites.

Hortense and Ray

By Ruth Rumsey, Editor, AV Magazine



I started working for AVSA in 1993, as a secretary. That year I had two kids in college, and had closed down the small business that I ran from home. In the fall of 1994, the current AVM Editor left the job, and I was taken by surprise when then-President Hortense Pittman came to Beaumont and asked if I would take the Editor position.

It was something I was very excited about, and as a writer, and dedicated gardener, it was something I knew I would enjoy. Hortense was very supportive, and I often called her for advice. I very much appreciated the opportunity.

I met Hortense's wonderful husband, Ray "Sundown" Pittman, and knew that there was something very special about this couple. Through the years, they have both been good friends that I can turn to for advice or encouragement. And we do have fun together.

In 2001, the one hundredth anniversary of the Spindletop Oil Gusher in Gladys City – now a part of Beaumont, Hortense, Ray, Bill and Paula Foster, came to join us for the celebration. It was very cold, and we sat outside all huddled together near the replica of the gusher, waiting to hear former President George H.W. Bush speak.

I have so enjoyed their friendships and feel very fortunate to know them. I was very surprised, and honored, when Ray named one of his lovely Streps after Ruth Goeke and I. 'Radar's Ruthie' is a gorgeous plant, and of course, my favorite.

The Pittmans epitomize one of the best things about AVSA; the friendships just get stronger every year. (The photo with us in 'nose glasses' from one of the Lone Star conventions, is still proudly displayed, with others, on the AVSA office bulletin board.)

Hortense and Ray

By Ron and Jan Davidson, Red Oak TX

We first met Ray and Hortense in 1986, while we were stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. We had just returned from a tour of duty in Saudi Arabia. Jan had always grown house plants to include African violets while moving around in the Army. She was not able to take any house plants to Saudi.

While driving around the area she saw a sign advertising an African Violet Sale. Since she was in the market for new plants, we stopped and purchased a few African violets. They talked her into joining the CenTex African Violet Club and AVSA.

Jan had purchased one of Hortense's hybrids 'Lucky Lass' a cute little variegated miniature. She entered it in the local show and won 'Best Miniature' rosette. From there on she was hooked. On returning home that evening she came running into the house telling me that she had won and met this fantastic lady that had made her plant. This wonderful lady had judged the show and it was Hortense Pittman.

In the AVM we found out that Magic Knight AVS was having a plant sale in San Antonio. We decided to drive down to the sale for the day, where we met both Ray and Hortense. You would think Jan had met the Queen of England. Jan was talking to Ray and telling him about her little plant 'Lucky Lass' and asked him if he had any more good ones. He said 'they're all good' and chuckled. He even helped her pick out some more plants. All that help by Ray in picking out more plants caused me to have to build another stand.

Some of the Pittman plants Jan has enjoyed growing are 'Little Pro, Precious Pink, Petite Jewel and Magic Blue' to name a few. Some of the Pittman plants Ron has enjoyed growing are 'Alamo Explosion, Alamo Sunset and Alamo Sunshine' to name a few. We grow and enjoy their Jolly series and Raydar's strep series. What we like about Hortense plants is they stay small and bloom true. What we like about Ray streps is they have fantastic color combinations in the blossoms.

When the Pittman's were in charge of the DIXIE AVS Convention in San Antonio, they had invited Jan to do the Educational and AVSA Exhibits. This was Jan's first major convention. I drove her down and we checked into the hotel and I unloaded the car, then I had to fly to Washington D.C. for a meeting at the pentagon. Ray assisted her in the set-up of the exhibits and helped provide some of the key elements of the AVSA Information Exhibit. When I arrived back late Friday night, she said if it had not for Ray's assist and his laid-

back manner she would not have been able to complete the exhibits.

When we moved to the Dallas area our local cub needed more sales plants. We contacted Pittman about getting some sale plants to sale at our local sales. Our first trip to their home in San Antonio was an eye-opening experience to see their set up. They had enclosed two-car garage with plants stands and shelves from the floor to ceiling. They were hybridizing both the standards and the small ones. You had to climb a ladder see the plants on top. Ray showed us the complete set-up with all the electric in attic to reduce the heat factor. They were very organized and very efficient to grow that many plants in such a small area.

Ray and Hortense are an inspiration and encouragement to all new growers. We asked Hortense to give a program to our home-school members. She invited our club to their home and gave us a wonderful program on hybridizing. The students were very impressed on how to hybridize and the results of her crosses. They couldn't believe all of the plant stands full of beautiful grown little miniature and semiminiature plants.

I will always remember Ray's tips for growing show plants.

- 1 Set your mind to grow show plants.
- 2 Make a schedule
- 3 Stick to the schedule.

He said anybody can grow quality show plants and to prove it. He picked thirty (30) plants off the shelf and set them aside. He made a schedule of what he was going to do each week. He would not allow Hortense to mess with his plants. He followed his schedule and to prove his point he showed all thirty (30) plants at our spring show. He received all blue ribbons and a number of special award ribbons.

Like many of you, we joined an African Violet Club to learn more about growing African violets. We remained members because of all the friends we have met around the USA, Canada and the world. We are very much honored to know and work with Ray and Hortense Pittman over the years. They are very kind and helped us to understand what friends are for real. They are true friends to us and all AVSA members. We look forward to working with them for years to come. They are one of kind – very outstanding and always there to help.

Happy Birthday Hortense!

Once Upon a Time: The Violet Lady

By Richard Nicholas, Denton TX

Anne and I have been growing violets for quite some time. We are often asked how we got started in the hobby. Though we have had a few violets for many years, the real answer to that question is "It's Hortense's fault!" Why?

In the 1980's we lived in San Antonio with a few violets and began adding a few more. As we took our evening walks we passed a garage lit up with many florescent lights. We finally summoned the courage to stop to ask – and we met Hortense and her husband. We were not sure what his name was. Some called him J.R., sometimes he was Ray, and sometimes Sundown! The visits became more frequent, unknowingly interrupting their dinner, as Hortense and Ray graciously shared supplies, plants, and advice. Of course, we had no idea we were meeting with Violet Royalty. We just called her The Violet Lady. Needless to say, she inspired Anne's collection of minis and semis and even tempted me into growing a few of the "little ones." We would not be growing the way we do today if we had not met "The Violet Lady" and Ray. They will always be a huge part and influence on our violet hobby.

A few years ago Anne was asked to present a program our story of growing both large and small violets. That program, which Anne called "Life Among the Giants" accompanies this article just for fun.

Life Among the Giants

By Anne Nicholas, Denton TX

Long ago in the land of San Antonio, there was a wonderful Lilliputian plant territory known as Hortense's Violets. In this vigorous kingdom, Queen Hortense and King Ray ruled with wisdom and loving attention and tended to their multitudes of tiny African violets. Up until this general time period, violets had mimicked their plant ancestry and were usually ten inches and up in diameter. But Queen Hortense and King Ray had perfected the art of miniaturizing these wonderful plants. The King and Queen successfully grew tiny violets that were less than eight inches in diameter. Their violets, under their dedication and care grew to be known not only in the land of San Antonio, but from border to border of the greater nation. The King and Queen of the tiny kingdom traveled far and wide and were presented with many honors for their lovely small plants. They shared their



Hortense Pittman in her violet kingdom



Ray Pittman in violet room

knowledge and wonderful small plants with many capable and excited new growers of the tiny violets.

Life Among the Giants (Continued)

Meanwhile, back in the land of San Antonio, there was a giant of a man who was quietly cultivating his own garden of African violets. This man carefully selected varieties of large violets and grew them to gigantic proportions – some even 30 inches in diameter. He loved his gigantic violets and achieved success in the growing and showing of his giant plants. This gentle giant was married to a school teacher who spent much time in her classroom but more and more enjoyed the time she spent with her husband at African violet shows and with violet friends.

As this husband and wife learned more about their violets, they were pleased and surprised to discover that they lived in the very neighborhood of the Lilliputian violet territory. Since they only knew about the care and growing of their giant violets, they were curious about the tiny violets. They began to take evening strolls over to the castle of the Lilliputians in hopes of catching either the Queen of the King outside the castle and being asked to view the tiny treasures inside the castle. The king and queen were always gracious and shared their knowledge and wisdom with the man and his lady.

Thus began this saga of Life Among the Giants. Queen Hortense graciously shared some of her tiny violets with the man and wife. The lady was delighted and took the little treasures home and placed them among the shadows of the giant violets grown by her husband. She carefully tended them as she had seen her husband do with his beautiful large plants. The little plants grew and flourished. But it was soon apparent that they could not grow among the giants because they needed their own space and light. Therefore the husband and his wife prepared a special place just for the tiny violets. Instead of living among the giants, this new place allowed the little plants to live in good health and good fortune right beside the giants. And all of the tiny violets and of the giant violets settled in and lived happily ever after side by side.



Tomboy Blue

Joe Bruns, Illinois

In 1985 my wife, Janice, and I attended the 1986 AVSA convention in St. Paul, where Hortense introduced 'Precious Pink'. By the time we got there, they had sold out of the plant, and only had the display plant left. Jan was so disappointed. Later that day, Ray presented her with their display plant. I don't know if he realized how happy he made her. From that day on this lovely couple became very dear to us. In fact, we tried to emulate them in our marriage and relationship with each other, as their love for each other is obvious to anyone who knows them.



Hortense and Ray with Joe Bruns, LSAVC 2014



Best Precious Pink – AVSA 2010, grown by Danny Tidwell. Hybridized by Hortense Pittman

Thank You!

Thank you, Hortense and Ray, for your many contributions to the African Violet Society of America. We appreciate your generosity in sharing your expertise, your skill with people as well as plants and your dedication to AVSA and its members. Your contributions in various leadership positions were influential in the strength and direction of AVSA. As President of AVSA, I gladly speak on behalf of the Officers, Directors and Committees of AVSA in extending our thanks for your generosity in the giving of your time and in spreading the passion for the African Violet. We wish you many more years of sharing your passion.

John Carter
President, AVSA



Jolly Lilac



Teen Kiss



Pink Puff

Danny Tidwell, New Braunfels TX

I moved to Texas about 7 years ago and had never been to an AVSA convention show. The Tulsa show was coming up and I decided to drive up for a day to see the show. The show itself was pretty impressive. I was in the show room and this little lady approached me and asked how I was doing. I did not know who she was but when she introduced herself as Hortense Pittman WOW I had just met violet royalty!!! I think maybe that meeting Hortense was the highlight of my trip. Thank you, Jane, for sending her over to talk to me.

I have since had the privilege to visit Hortense and Ray at their beautiful home in Celina. I so cherish those visits and listening to the stories and violet adventures That Hortense and Ray have had through the years. One that comes to mind is when they were in I believe Canada at a Convention when she got some of her first starts of mini/semi as leaves and made a false bottom in her makeup case with cardboard to get them home. She said she was very, very nervous when customs searched her bag but they did not find them.

Ray has some tales as well and he is so passionate about his beautiful Streptocarpus hybrids, as he should be. They are such a beautiful couple and I am so fortunate and blessed to know them and call them friends. I am looking forward to more visits with them in the future.



Ray & Hortense Photo contributed by J. Rexilius

Coming events:**Spring Branch African Violet Club**

Annual Spring Sale

March 7 - March 8, 2015 - TX

Spring Branch African Violet Club

34th Annual Spring Sale

Judson Robinson Jr. Community Center

2020 Hermann Park Drive

Houston, TX 77004

March 7 Show: 1pm – 5pm

Sale: 9am – 5pm

March 8 Show and Sale: 10am – 3pm

Free Parking available at Judson Robinson Jr.

Community Center.

Info: Karla Ross (281) 748-8417

Email: kjwross@yahoo.com*Info: Karla Ross, 281-748-8417**Email: kjwross@yahoo.com***First Austin African Violet Society 46th Annual**

Judged Show and Sale

"Violets in Faerieland"

March 21-22, 2015

11:00 am - 4:30 pm Saturday, Mar 21

11:00 am - 3:30 pm Sunday, Mar 22

Austin Area Garden Center

Zilker Botanical Garden

2220 Barton Springs Road

Austin, TX 78746

Lots of African violets and related gesneriads will be on display. In addition, African violets, related gesneriads and growing supplies will be for sale. Admission to show is free. Entry fee to Zilker Botanical Garden is \$1-children 3-12/seniors 62+, \$2-adults 13-61 and \$3-nonresidents. See our website at www.favvs.org or contact Susan Kautz at gizzmo@austin.rr.com or [512/365-1818](tel:5123651818) for additional information.

Dallas Metro Trio AVS Spring Show and Sale**March 27-28, 10 am - 4 pm****North Haven Gardens**

7700 Northaven Road

Dallas, TX

*Info: Mary Corondan Email:**mcorondan@yahoo.com***Magic Knight African Violet Society****Violets Hop Down the Bunny Trail****Friday, April 3, 2016: 1-4pm****Saturday, April 4, 9am-4pm****San Antonio Garden Center****555 Funston Street****San Antonio TX****Info: Jane Rexilius, 830-632-9846****Email: Janerex@aol.com****Who--The First African Violet Society of Wichita Falls Annual Show and Sale**

Theme—Golden Jubilee With African Violets

When—April 10 & 11, 2015

Times—April 10, 2:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. and April 11, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Where—Fellowship Hall of University United Methodist Church, 3405 Taft, Wichita Falls, TX

Show Chair—Patty Daniel patty@ppa.kccoxmail.comShow Co-Chair—Sue Ramser ramserwf@wf.net

Free to the public

LSAVC Texas Convention**November 4-7, 2015****Inn of the Hills****Kerrville, Texas**

Hortense and Ray Pittman

By Jane Rexilius, New Braunfels TX

Jo Schrimsher – Victoria, TX

The Pittman's have been very helpful to me since the early 1980's. They helped me learn how to start up the Victoria AVS and they did programs for us. They helped me learn about growing show plants. They answered my questions about setting up my business and taught me about propagating, watering, lighting, where to buy supplies and so much more. They have been mentors and dear friends and available to answer questions and to help with problems. Sundown's humor and Hortense's graciousness have been a blessing to me.

Their contribution to the African violet and streptocarpus world with their hybrids is monumental.

They have also contributed significantly to AVSA, Dixie AVS and Lone Star AVC.

Jill Reiss – Denton, TX

I met Hortense first at one of our Denton shows. I thought how much she reminded me of my own grandmother and her love for violets. This is who I got my love of plants from and the reason I grow violets. So I was excited to see someone like Hortense so passionate about her plants. As I got to know Ray and Hortense thru the next 9 years and seeing the beautiful plants they have hybridized, I feel I am so lucky to know them. I am in awe of the beauty of what they do and especially continuing at their age. They both constantly amaze me.



Ray & Hortense Photo contributed by J. Rexilius

Two of my favorite friends are Hortense and Ray.

Our friendship began years ago when Ray asked me to judge a Magic Knight show in San Antonio. That was my beginning of a long friendship. I went home with a box of Hortense's plants. So began the "Care Package". This was a box of surprise plants ready for me to pick up. What a treat to open it when I returned home.

While living in Houston, we made many trips to New Braunfels, preparing for our retirement. My trip always included a visit to San Antonio, which resulted in another "Care Package".

Our friendship developed through the Dixie Conventions, Lone Star, AVSA, and local clubs.

Ray can tell you about Drusilla's, his favorite Seafood Restaurant in Baton Rouge. That is another story Ray will have to tell.

After Hortense and Ray moved to Celina, the "Care Packages" continued. Any time I was near there, I knew I would have a "Care Package" waiting. The packages grew larger over the years. What a thrill to open the box when I returned home. Hortense named a plant for me – Joyful Jane. Unfortunately, it did not last, but other beautiful plants still do.

Hortense and Ray – you are tops on my list of friends.

Happy Birthday, Hortense!

By Marge Savage, Midland TX

It was the 1999 AVSA Convention in Houston, "Lone Star Violet Round-Up". Marilyn and Roy Hall and Tom and I were hosting the Hospitality Room. Our room was large, L-shaped and the one-person kitchen/bar looked out on a comfy sitting area. We put out the call for help in the Hospitality Room in one-hour segments. Hortense signed up for one of these, filling all the time slots. I was thrilled. Such a famous person and she was signing up to help with the menial tasks. Hortense arrived Saturday morning as Miss Ellie's Apple Dip was running out of apples, again. So I set Hortense to slicing apples. As she worked away, violet people arrived greeting her saying, "So, they've put you to work!" She was finishing the apples when she looked out longingly on our visitors chatting in the sitting area and asked, "Well... where is the food?" I freed her from the cubicle and we walked around the L-shaped room to the large dining table, where more friends visited with her. Hortense was in her milieu.

Dolores Gibbs, San Marcos, TX

I first met the Pittmans when our First Austin group was invited to their home in San Antonio on a field trip. The first Pittman plant I remember growing was Sundown, a standard violet.

The best advice I have received from Hortense was to grow only as many as I could easily take care of. The best advice (if you can call it advice) I had from Ray was when I was in charge of making coffee for the Central Texas Judges Council and he always said to make it stronger. I never quite got it strong enough for him and Bill Johnson.

A few of the Pittman violet varieties now in my collection are: Peppermint Girl, Jolly Star, Precious Red, and Jolly Diamond. The only strep I have at the present time is Raydar's Darling. The Pittman varieties I *wish* I had in my collection are Sundown, Precious Pink, Jolly Orchid, and any of the Celina plants I might find.

I will never forget the time when I was a very new grower and I took a nurse that I worked with to visit the Pittman's in San Antonio without calling ahead, and Hortense with a smile let us come in and was so very kind.

My favorite Pittman violet is Peppermint Girl because I won Best Mini and 2nd Best in Show at the AVSA convention in Chicago. I shall always love that plant.

Some of the major contributions the Pittmans have made

Peppermint Girl


to the violet world are their leadership as President of Lone Star, AVSA, and Dixie, their contribution to the violet world with their beautiful minis and semiminis that they have hybridized and shared with the world, and of course their kindness and generosity to all of us whether we are just beginning to grow violets or need help along the way.

Barbara Kelly, Denton, TX

I met the Pittmans when I went to my first Denton workshop. The first Pittman plant I remember growing was Jolly Orchid. Some of the best advice I have received from Hortense is "Don't Overwater". The best growing tip I learned from the Pittmans is "Put your leaves in just a bit of soil and cut out to pot to provide more light to the leaf. I currently have Pittman violet varieties in my collection, among which are Jolly Frills, Jolly Butterfly, Jolly Latino, Jolly Jubilee, Jolly Lilac, Jolly Peach, Peppermint Girl, and Texas Buttercup. My favorite Pittman is Jolly Fairy. I have Ray's streptocarpus Raydar's Tensie, and Raydar's Tip Top. I WISH I had Tensie by Hortense.

I will never forget the time when I went to the Pittman home to pick up plants for project plants, and we sat and talked for an hour or two, and surprised them with supper.

The Pittmans have made major contributions to the violet world. They have hybridized an unbelievable large variety of quality plants, and they have always been so generous of their time and knowledge.

Through the Years with Ray and Hortense

by Meredith Hall

I first met Ray and Hortense in the mid 70's when my Mother and I were thinking about opening a violet shop in Houston. We were told that there was a great shop in San Antonio that only sold African violets. We decided to make the trip to check it out—and there we met Ray and Hortense. After spending several hours with them giving us all kinds of fantastic information we returned to Houston and did open our shop, thanks to lots of help from them. Then the AVSA convention was in Austin in 1978. They were growing these huge standard plants that were literally hanging off the end of the display table shelves. Not only did we see all of those beautiful plants but many of us became close Texas friends. We have gone through many AVSA conventions together but also Dixie and LSAVC conventions for many years. Not to mention the many local shows and just visiting to have fun.

All of these years since 1976 I have considered Ray and Hortense two of the greatest friends I have met in the violet world.

My Pittman Tribute

By *Mary Corondan, Dallas TX*

I first met the Pittmans at a Lone Star Convention many years ago. There was a bus that took many Louisiana growers to San Antonio to enjoy that event, and my mother and I were among them. Miniatures and Semiminiatures have always been my favorites and the Pittman varieties are of such great quality. I appreciate all the expertise Hortense has put into developing varieties that are of show quality that stay true to size.

There is always a standing invitation to visit the Pittman household. Ray will tell you to come by and see his streptocarpus. Both he and Hortense are always so generous with their plants. You will never go away empty handed. Ray will keep you entertained with his wonderful sense of humor and Hortense is always cooking up something delicious to eat! That is not to even mention Ray's phenomenal brisket.

For over 30 years I have been growing Hortense's miniatures and semiminiatures and have been well rewarded with their symmetry and abundance of bloom. One of my favorites from 1985 is Precious Pink, and I still grow it today. Currently, I have over 20 Pittman miniatures and semiminiatures in my collection.

I am growing about six different Raydar's varieties and enjoying them all. Once Ray began hybridizing streps, Hortense caught his enthusiasm and was inspired to relaunch her hybridizing of minis and semis. The Pittmans certainly have a passion for their hobby, and it is a hobby they can continue to cultivate and share throughout their lives.

Whenever humanly possible, the Pittmans bring plants to our local show and sale. Ray has been known to drive Central Expressway at 95 years of age to get his plants to the local show and sale location. Ray even donated 100 young streptocarpus for this year's LSAVC Convention. Wow! If only we all had that kind of dedication and commitment to making the show and convention a success, and do our part for the local and state clubs. The Pittman plants in shows are always a vision of horticultural perfection. They both spend a great deal of time grooming and repotting to create such glorious specimens.

Through the years, Ray and Hortense have provided a great deal of insight through the wisdom they have shared with me. Hortense has often said, "If you want something done, get a busy person to do it." How true! Ray has stated, "Remember to *have fun* at conventions. Sometimes we forget that, but it is very important to *have fun!*"

The leadership and many contributions made by the Pittmans have been nationally recognized. Pittman plants are often given Best Cultivar Awards in shows. In addition to many local offices held, Hortense has served as President of AVSA. The AVSA awards she has received are Honorary Life Membership in 1995, the Bronze Medal for Horticultural Achievement in 1986, and she was inducted into the AVSA Hall of Fame in 2008. Ray received the Hudson Memorial Award for Affiliate Leadership in 1991 for his contributions to Magic Knight AVS.

I greatly appreciate the Pittmans for their many contributions to the world of violets and streptocarpus. Their many growing tips have stayed with me throughout the decades. As often as I have heard Hortense speak about growing violets, I still learn something whenever she presents a program. The Pittmans continue to have a tremendous influence both on my violet growing and my life experiences. I feel truly blessed and grateful to have them as my friends and mentors.

Mary Corondan

Bill Price, Canada

I first met the Pittmans about 15 years ago at a convention. The first Pittman plant I remember growing is Definitely Darryl. Pittman violet varieties I currently have in my collection are Beacon Trail, Fun Trail, Sundown Trail, and Tensie's Trail. I have one of Ray's streptocarpus, Raydar's Magic. The Pittman varieties I wish I had are Flashy Trail and Sandy Trail. My favorite Pittman violet is actually two: Precious Pink, and Beacon Trail. My favorite streptocarpus hybridized by Ray is Raydar's Magic.

The Pittmans have major contributions to the violet world. They have introduced so many excellent African Violet Hybrids in virtually all the categories from miniatures to trailers. They are positive and encouraging people who so willingly give of their time and energy to help anyone grow these plants. They are always friendly and welcoming when you meet them, and are such great 'leader ambassadors' for our hobby. It has always been a pleasure to sit and chat with them whenever I have had the good fortune of our paths crossing.

Hortense and Ray

By Ken Froboese, Boerne, TX

I first met Hortense and Ray Pittman at the First AVS Violet Show and Sale held at the Wonderland Mall in San Antonio in the early 1970's, and of course they had the most beautiful blooming plants in the sale! (At the time, although I had been growing African Violets for a good while, I didn't have a huge collection, but that soon changed!) Each member of their club only had a small area to sell their plants and after I bought a couple from the Pittman's and took them to my car and came back for another look around, they would have even prettier plants back on the table to sell. After several trips back and forth to my car with plants, I realized that they had an "almost un-ending supply" under that table and I must have purchased 15 to 20 plants from them that day!! Their invitation to visit their home and see their Violets resulted in, not only lots more plants, but the purchase of many of Ray's plant stands, too. I wouldn't want to guess how many thousands of violets I've acquired over the years from them.

The Pittman's hybridizing, from the early standard varieties, the Alamo Series, their tremendous love and success with miniature and semi-miniatures, the Jolly Series, plus some good trailers, and then Ray's big hit with his Raydar Streptocarpus, and their winnings in the shows, will keep their name in the Violet world forever!

Over the last forty plus years, our friendship has been very special. I have loved competing against them, eating out, judging shows, making trips, getting to evaluate and acquire hundreds of new seedlings, staying at their home and just sitting around and talking violet good and bad times ----it's all been wonderful!!

I will never forget the time when Hortense, Ray and I, all three had our picture taken with "White Ribbons" won in an LSAVC State Violet Show.

I will never forget the time when Hortense and Ray entered over a hundred and twenty Violets in a State Show in San Antonio and had so many great quality plants of the same varieties, that they entered several varieties in 5 different classes (three different collections, regular class and Texas Hybrid class) and placement got very confused and got the plants and classes all mixed up.

Penny Smith-Kerker – Austin, TX

I first met Hortense when she installed me as an LSAVC director at an LSAVC convention some years back. I was very honored to receive one of her "Jolly" hybrids at that time. That may have been the first of many, many "Jollys" I have enjoyed growing since then. Hortense has hybridized many varieties that I have been able to successfully grow and show. Some of my favorites Pittman hybrids are some of her "older" varieties, such as "Spring Peach", "Spin-Out" & "Definitely Darryl." Hortense has always been very encouraging to me as a grower - graciously answering questions, sharing her knowledge, and delighting me with congratulatory e-mails related to my successes at shows.

After a hiatus from growing streptocarpus, I have been increasing my collection again and that growth really took off when I won a huge, gorgeous "Raydar's Tensie" at the LSAVC convention in 2013. What a wonderful step! Of course I have several more "Raydar's" now, but Tensie is still my favorite.



**Raydar's
Tensie**

**Jolly
Magic**

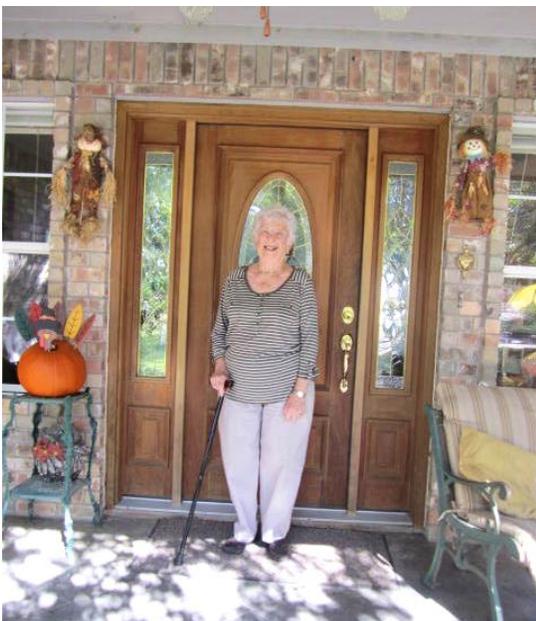


Hortense and Ray Pittman

by Andrea Worrell

I'll never forget the first time I saw Hortense and Ray Pittman. It was my first national convention in St. Louis, 1995. I had just stepped out of my hotel room into the hallway, and at the end of the hall headed my way were Ray and Hortense. They were dressed to the nines, and even from a distance their personalities radiated. Hand in hand they floated down the hallway together, smiling and giggling like two teenagers on their way to the prom. Their happiness and excitement was contagious. I felt like I was on the red carpet sidelines watching two stars glide past me. And let's face it, Hortense and Ray are violet royalty.

That was the first year I had discovered the violet world, African violet shows, and AVSA. Having been in it *several months* by then, even I knew who Hortense and 'Sundown' were. People couldn't get enough of Hortense's plants in Illinois, and 'Precious Pink' was in high demand. Luckily for me, Jan Bruns (in Hanover Park), and Hortense were close, so Jan was always fully stocked with Hortense's hybrids. Jan lovingly grew them as flawlessly as Hortense, and when she would set out a table full of perfectly grown plants of Hortense's varieties, they would sell out immediately no matter what else was around. You also couldn't go to a show without seeing 'Alamo's' lining the tables. Some of my very first small ones included 'Winnergreen,' 'Red Bandito,' and 'Tensie's Trail.' My violet collection is still heavily influenced by her beautiful plants, with over one-third being Hortense's hybrids. Her miniature 'Windsome' consistently keeps me on the winner's table.



Hortense at front door

What I was most fortunate to learn over the years was that Hortense and Ray's plants are just an extension of, and small glimpse into, their inner beauty, their truly delightful spirits. It's no wonder their plants are so special and so radiant, it's an overflow of who they are. Hortense is just pure love wrapped in a warm smile, and Ray is sunshine filled with joy.

Over the years as I continued to go to the national and Lonestar conventions, I had the opportunities to get to know them much better. The Pittmans I got to know are everything and more that you've ever heard about. They extend their warmth and generosity to everyone they know. How do you know when you've just been talking with Hortense or Ray? You're smiling. Joe and Jan Bruns would always describe Hortense and Ray as "a true Southern lady and a true Southern gentleman," and I think that's a perfectly apt description.

This past October I got to spend the afternoon with Ray and Hortense at their beautiful home in Celina. Their hospitality was welcoming and gracious. They made us a delicious meal, and getting to see Hortense's violets and Ray's streps was certainly a treat. Visiting on the porch with Ray and Hortense is definitely something to treasure, as I did. Maybe that's why this is one of my favorite pictures of Hortense, taken through her porch window catching her on the fly, doing what she does, making other people feel special.



One of the most fun things I think about my visit was seeing Ray and Hortense interact with each other and talk about their plants. Anyone who's seen the two of them together knows how cute they are.



But to see them both so passionate about their plants, and still going strong on their African violet and streptocarpus hybridizing work, is truly inspiring. I can personally say I am especially happy with her most recent introductions! Even so, I look forward to what they have in store for us for the future. For

now, I feel lucky and blessed to be able to call them both my dear friends.

Jolly Andrea, which Hortense named



after Andrea Worrell.



Hortense and Ray

By Margery Anderson Clive, Dallas TX

In the early 90s, Mark and I took a trip to Castroville and couldn't pass up the opportunity to visit the Pittmans in San Antonio. We met them in the late 80s and knew how much they were admired and respected for their inventiveness, creativity, commitment to education, growing, showing and especially AVSA. Our visit gave life to all that we had heard from their many friends and fans.

Minutes after entering their shop, I was speechless. They were patient and welcoming. I had so many questions. Like a kid in a candy store, I nearly got dizzy. I had never seen so many light stands teeming with the most beautifully grown African violets. Right away I realized that theirs was truly a dedicated partnership. Ray's ingenuity made growing such a pleasure. Hortense's creativity was limitless. They designed a system to make potting up plants a piece of cake and Ray explained how he had created a way to keep the temperatures cooler by storing the ballasts in their attic. And then there were those stands made out of PVC pipe which we tried with great success. There has been no end to Hortense's exceptional hybridizing. My favorite Pittman hybrid is 'Precious Red'. I always have at least one in bloom. Once they got settled in their new home, Ray surprised us with his wonderful streps.

Brava and Bravo to one of our national treasures. The sun never sets on "Sundown" and Hortense.

Ben Haning – Allen, TX

I met Hortense Pittman at my very first Dallas First Nighter club meeting a few years ago. She presented a program explaining how to groom violets for show. Hortense is able to explain violet culture simply, and that is very helpful to someone just learning to show violets. Hortense also gave me one of her miniature hybrids, Precious Red, at that first African violet club meeting. Precious Red is still my favorite miniature for show.

A couple of years ago I foolishly poisoned most of my plants with imidacloprid tree drench. Ray and Hortense gave me a nice collection of violets and streps to rebuild my collection of show plants. Hortense also wisely cautioned that when trying some new treatment I should try it on a few plants first to see if it is safe to use. I am very thankful to Ray and Hortense for their advice, plants, encouragement and friendship.

The Raydar Streps are here!!

By Richard Nicholas, Denton TX

Hortense Pittman is known all over the globe as a hybridizer, mostly of miniature and semiminiature African violets. Ray has always been her partner and supporter. Now something has changed. Streptocarpus varieties, cousin plants for our violets, are seeing a surge in hybridizing resulting in many new blossom colors and patterns. Well, Ray Pittman has joined this trend and has begun hybridizing his own streps. They are called the Raydar series: Raydar's Ruthie, Raydar's Magic, Raydar's Sassy, and many more. Anyone interested in streps should see them and should try one. What a wonderful story! We have not only some beautiful new varieties to grow, but also living proof that our hobby truly keeps each of us young!

Jolly Marvel



Jolly Cupid



Jolly Frills



Radar's Tensie



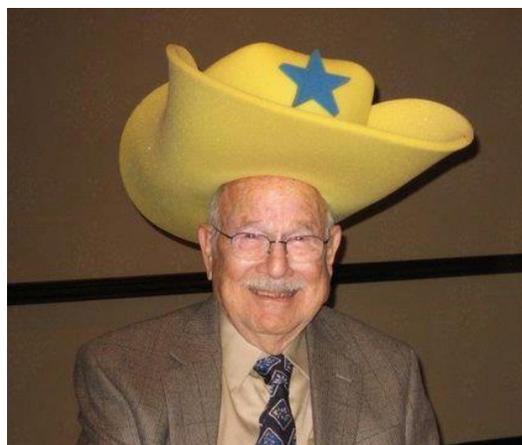
Radar's Magic



Radar's Ruthie



Radar's Sassy



Ray Pittman, LS06



Petite Ruby

Beverly Powers – Richardson TX

Ray and Hortense are known worldwide for their excellent hybrids. Their plants are exceptional and everyone is excited to see each new one. I don't grow a lot of minis but my favorites are Tiptop and Honey Blue Ace and my favorite Strep is Raydar's Sassy.

When our club had Home School children, Ray and Hortense provided them with plants and invited the group to their home to see their plant room. Hortense showed them how she hybridized and planted some seeds for them. We all learned a lot.

All this said, they are inspirations to us all for the people they are. I have never been around them when they weren't gracious and encouraging. They have a way of making everyone feel special. It has been an honor to get to know them over the years. They are always a blessing.



Orchid Trail



**Ray and Hortense at St. Louis Convention.
Photo contributed by M. Hall**

A Visit to Celina Texas

By Tom Glembocki, Apex NC (photos by Tom)

Did you know there is a little piece of paradise located in Celina, TX? When you first turn off the main road onto a gravel covered County Rd you know you're leaving the real world behind and entering a different environment.



County Rd in Celina, TX

The countryside itself is beautiful but down this country road a little bit the landscape reveals an even more beautiful tunnel formed by the overhead branches of a tree lined driveway. Turning down this drive the first thing that greets you is a railroad lantern, the signature of former railway worker Ray Pittman, as we approach the home of Ray and Hortense.



Tree lined drive of Ray and Hortense Pittman

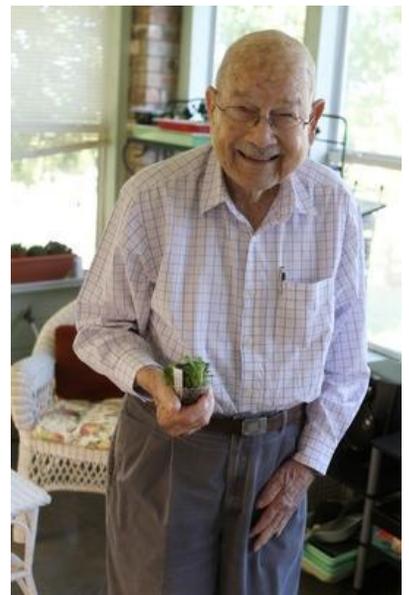


Stepping into this Celina paradise we were warmly greeted by Ray and Hortense.



Ray and Hortense on the back porch

The Violet world has been blessed with the hybridization and propagation fruits of Hortense for many years. Her minis are widely grown and win many show awards across the country. But wait, there's more!!!! Did you know that Ray has starting hybridizing Streptocarpus? The many light stands on the climate controlled back porch of Ray and Hortense are now starting to blossom with many of Ray's crosses.



Ray is quite the inventive person. Many people have heard the story of Rays garage where Ray removed all the ballast transformers from the fluorescent light fixtures of the Violet stands and relocated them in a metal duct outside the plant room. This duct had a fan attached to blow air through to cool the transformers. Over half of the heat produced by the fluorescent lighting fixtures is attributed to these transformers. Placing them outside the plant room helps quite a bit in keeping the room cooler.

What many people may not be aware of is the inventive way that Ray has rigged up to obtain clean water for the African Violets and Streptocarpus on the many plant stands. Attached to all the downspouts of the Pittman home is 4 inch corrugated tubing. This tubing is buried and goes downhill to a 1500 gallon water tank. A pump and conventional water piping is located in the tank to pump the water back into the house when needed for plant watering. Ray has a story that back in the old days he used to stand out by the tank to plug the pump in. Inside, Hortense would fill her water can to water the plants. Hortense used to shout through the window to Ray to let him know when she has had enough water. With the tank being a hundred feet from the house and the pump running while it was pumping water there was the occasion that Ray didn't hear Hortense in time to unplug the pump. It didn't take long for the ever inventive Ray to finally put a pump switch in the house next to the water outlet to control the pump remotely.



The window where the tank can be seen next to the fence downhill from the house.

**Watering Pittman Style
Downspouts hooked to 4" piping**



The 1500 gallon tank



Jolly Orchid



above: Violet minis (lower shelves) share the plant stand with baby Streptocarpus



Tank closeup



Watering with rainwater now just takes a flip of the switch. The light gives a visual indication of whether the switch is on or off.

We truly had a delightful afternoon in this paradise of Celina, Texas. The Pittmans are such gracious and delightful hosts. Thank you Hortense and Ray for sharing your world with us!

Ed. Note: Ray & Hortense

By Marjorie Bullard, New Braunfels, TX

This has been the most fun newsletter I have ever done. I was so sure there would be no contributions and I would have to just publish photos – but after a slow start things started pouring in!! And it has been GOOD stuff!! So much fun!

I of course have a story. Very new in violets and trying everything at once, I went to my first convention in Killeen. I entered a design (in which Bill Foster indicated very tactfully that accessories were supposed to be small and an actual trumpet was too literal of an interpretation).

The theme was The Heart of Texas or something like. I entered an Unusual Container – a Lone Star beer can with a Sundown Trail tucked into a cutout in the side (really kind of cute). I did get a blue ribbon, and also a \$15 award for the Best Sundown Trail in the show (the only one). I was so excited and made sure I thanked Hortense. I mentioned that I had to get another one when I got here because mine had become damaged in the trip. Hortense very graciously explained one of the **BIG RULES** in AV shows: Unusual containers are part of horticulture – NOT design.

I don't know how I ever managed to live through all of my embarrassments and keep coming back – but I do believe it is because of Hortense and Bill and Shirley and everyone who was SO gracious and welcoming – no matter WHAT!

**Hall of Fame Award
Hortense Pittman (Texas)
Reprinted from LSAVC 2008 May/June**

Hortense Pittman is recommended for the AVSA Hall of Fame Award in recognition for outstanding service to AVSA. She served as the twenty-seventh (27th) President of AVSA from 1993 to 1995. Her emphasis was for the society to operate in a more businesslike manner by modernizing the office and staff. She has hybridized over five hundred and seventy (570) varieties of African violets. These are listed in the Master Variety List of African Violets (First Class program).



Hortense Pittman has received the following AVSA Society awards:

Honorary Life Member Award in 1995.

Bronze Medal for Horticultural Achievement in 1986.

Hortense Pittman started in the Alamo AVS; San Antonio, Texas, in the late 1960's and joined AVSA at the same time. It was a day time club; she served in most of the offices to include the President. While she was President of the Alamo AVS, they had their first AVSA judged show in San Antonio.

In 1975, she assisted with the organizing of the Lone Star African Violet Council (LSAVC) to support the AVSA national convention and show in Austin, Texas, in 1978. She attended her first national convention in St Louis, Missouri, in 1977 to support the next convention to be held in Austin. She is still an active member of the LSAVC and supports the council in any way possible. Hortense has missed only one (1) LSAVC Convention and Show since it was organized in 1975, they were moving to north Texas during that convention.

In 1978, she became a commercial member of AVSA and had her first Display Table at the Austin convention and show. She has been a consistent winner of the Commercial Display Table and Commercial New Cultivar since that first show. She has supported AVSA sales room with a number of sale tables of quite beautiful African violet each year. She and her husband, Ray, gave

their first horticultural program during the convention in Austin. They have given a number of programs since then at the conventions. They are in the process of updating their AVSA library program from slides to a DVD program.

She joined the Magic Knight AVS, San Antonio, Texas, after her husband retired in 1977. She served the local society at every office to include the President. She moved to Celina, Texas, and joined the First Nighters AVS of Dallas in November, 1998 and served as President and numerous other offices. She dropped her commercial membership on moving to North Texas, but continues to hybridize, growing and exhibiting African violets as a member of AVSA.

She attended a hybridizer program in late 1970's by Harold Utz and that started her in the role of a hybridizer. Her first African violets were register to her and Utz in 1979. Since then she has over 570 African violets listed in the AVSA Master Variety List and First Class Program. She has a number of African violets listed each year in the annual 'Tally Time' and 'Honor Roll' sections in the AVM.

She became an AVSA judge February, 24, 1977, and is a Master Judge October, 2002.

It is quite interesting how she got started in African violets. Ray always purchased African violets for her birthday since she was born in February. The African violet is the flower for February. When they moved to San Antonio after being married 41 years ago she joined the San Antonio Garden Club and some of the ladies in the garden club also were members of the Alamo AVS. They asked her to join the Alamo African Violet Society since she was growing the African violets she had received from Ray as birthday gifts.

So we the members of AVSA can thank Ray Pittman for getting her started in the African violet world by being a faithful husband and buying African violets each year. She has been one of the top hybridizers and supporter of AVSA since she joined in the late 1960's.

She has served AVSA as Committee Chair, Director, Third Vice-President, Second Vice-President, First Vice President and President. She has served AVSA for almost forty years. She continues to serve AVSA by growing, showing and hybridizing of the African violet.

She is highly recommended to receive the AVSA HALL OF FAME AWARD



Precious Red

Jolly Joy



Celina Dark Velvet



Red Bandito

**LSAVC Convention
November 4-7, 2015
Kerrville, Texas**



**AVSA Convention
May 24-31, 2015
Kansas City, MO**

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FIRST CLASS

TO: