

# Nerium News

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLEANDER SOCIETY



July 2023 Newsletter

INTERNATIONAL OLEANDER SOCIETY

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Coggeshall

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Van Phipps

*Newsletter:  
Heidi Coggeshall  
(please email  
international.  
oleander@  
yahoo.com) if you  
have an article*

Greetings Fellow Members,

On June 4th, Betty Head, a friend, mentor, nature conservationist and namesake of our Oleander Garden Park, passed away at the age of 94. The family called us to request our help in making a spray for Betty's casket. Sounds like a simple enough task but the logistics are a challenge! But when your mind is set on a beautiful spray of Oleanders for the funeral of a Galveston icon who just happens to have an Oleander Park named after her, you make it work! A million heartfelt thank you's to Marcy, Terry O, Kellye, Lydia, Donita, Moody Gardens and Karen at Knapp's Flower Shop. The result was stunning - a special one of a kind cascade of Oleanders for a special one of a kind woman!

Betty's family graciously named the International Oleander Society as their preferred non-profit organization to receive donations. After consulting with Betty's family, our board voted to use the funds to purchase sod for the Betty Head Oleander Garden Park thus lowering maintenance costs as well as labor stress on our Nerium Nippers. Over the last two years, we have laid 7 pallets and need 7 more to complete the project. The Galveston Aggies have been helping us every step of the way on this project and are committed to seeing it through to completion. We love our Aggies!

Thanks to Mary Lou Kelso for working with the City of Galveston to secure a proclamation naming July 10, 2023 (her birthday) as Betty Head Day on the Island.

Our Treasurer, Kellye Graham, has resigned. Kellye is moving out of state to be closer to her family. We are going to miss her terribly but wish her good luck in this new chapter of her life!

I am acting as your interim Treasurer until new officer elections in October. If you or someone you know would like to be the IOS Treasurer, let me know. Also, let me know if you want to run for a board position. October will be here before we know it!

Save the date for our October 25th Membership Luncheon!

Enjoy your Summer and stay hydrated!

Peace, love and Oleanders,

Amber Jenkins, IOS President

## Betty Head Obituary

Cecil Elizabeth “Betty” Spoor Head joined her Heavenly Father and beloved husband, Paul, on June 4th, 2023, at the age of 94. Born on Galveston Island on July 10, 1928 to Robert N. and Bernice (Lumley) Spoor, Betty was a life-long resident of the “Sand Billy,” the nickname she bestowed upon her beautiful Galveston. The love she had for the island was evident in her life’s passions and was only eclipsed by the love she had for her family.

Betty graduated from Ball High School and later went to North Texas State University, where she earned a degree in Histology. Betty came home to the island and started working at UTMB at the age of 18. She was tasked immediately with traveling to Mexico City to learn proper lab procedures. The knowledge gained there helped establish the dermatology lab where Betty continued to contribute to its success well into her 90’s. She also received her Bachelor’s degree in Research from UTMB at the age of 55. She went on to teach and mentor many residents and faculty during her tenure at UTMB. She was equally inspired and fulfilled by her job and published several significant scientific research papers. But her published writings extended beyond science into poetry and prose where she allowed herself to indulge in the whimsy that was very much a part of her true nature. She had an artist’s soul with a scholar’s intellect.

In the early 1950’s, the island hosted weekend dances. It was at one of these that she caught the eye and heart of a passing Navy man. Upon his exit from service, he returned to Galveston to make her his bride. Paul loved Betty deeply and together they had three children, Robert, Phillip and Elisabeth. They created a full life together, celebrating over fifty years of marriage, the births of six grandchildren, several great-grandchildren, as well as many other personal and professional successes.

Betty was a founding member of the International Oleander Society, the Friends of Moody Gardens, a member of the Wednesday Club, Daughters of the American Revolution, a lifelong member of Trinity Episcopal Church and Altar Guild and was involved in many other civic duties around town. Above all, Betty imbued class and innate goodness that inspired her friends, colleagues and family. She will be remembered as a beautiful lady, a matriarch, a north star. We will forever celebrate and love you Mom, Grammy and “Sam.”

Betty will be deeply missed by all who knew her. She is preceded in death by her beloved husband, Paul. She is survived by her brother, Robert “Buddy” Spoor and her children: Robert Head (Kay), Phillip Head (Rena) and Elisabeth Head Hernandez (Mike). Betty leaves behind a cherished legacy through her 6 grandchildren, 3.5 great-grandchildren, as well as nieces, nephews, cousins, brothers-in-law, and sisters-in-law, along with the additional grandchildren and great grandchildren through having blended families.

The family would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Betty’s caregiver, Julie Curry, for her exceptional love, care and support for the last 2-1/2 years. We would also like to express our gratitude to AccessCare Hospice and their team of Melissa, Michelle and Oscar, who took exceptional care of Betty for the last 6 months and made her journey home peaceful.



Photo courtesy of the Galveston Daily News

And as for her final message to all, Bye Bye Now!

## City of Galveston Proclamation



City Manager presenting to the Betty Head family and her friend Mary Lou Kelso

Text from the City of Galveston Proclamation signed by Dr. Craig Brown – Mayor (unfortunately I cannot cut and paste the full document due to my Word processing skills)

**WHEREAS**, Cecil Elizabeth “Betty” Spoor Head was born on Galveston Island on July 10, 1928;  
and

**WHEREAS**, she graduated from Ball High School, and North Texas State University with a degree in Histology and earned a Bachelor’s degree in research from UTMB; and

**WHEREAS**, she was a founding member of the International Oleander Society and the Friends of Moody Gardens among many other professional and civic duties and accomplishments; and

**WHEREAS**, the International Oleander Society maintains the Betty Head Oleander Garden Park located at 2624 Sealy Street; and

**WHEREAS**, Betty imbued class and innate goodness that inspired her friends, colleagues and family and she will be remembered as a beautiful lady, a matriarch, a north star.

**THEREFORE**, we the Mayor and City Council of the City of Galveston, do hereby proclaim Monday, July 10, 2023 as:

**“ Betty Head Day”**

Affirming the City of Galveston’s commitment to the support and appreciation of the International Oleander Society and its members’ dedication to the Betty Head Oleander Garden Park and the continuing endeavor to promote Galveston as the Oleander City.

In testimony whereof, witness my hand and the Seal of the City of Galveston this 24<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2022.



## Amelia Ann Lewis Dyer

This year we were greeted at the Oleander Festival by two of Mrs. Amelia Dyer's great grandchildren. Mrs. Dyer first oleander.... They provided this background of Mrs. Dyer – a force in Galveston.

“Amelia Ann Lewis (our great-grandmother) was born in Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. She met Isadore Dyer, a native of Germany (our great-grandfather) after moving with her family to Galveston. They married in 1846. Isadore's sister, Rosanna, married Joseph Osterman, a local merchant. Upon returning from Jamaica, he gave Amelia two oleanders. She successfully propagated them and they thrived here in Galveston. She was mother to 13 children but sadly only two survived to adulthood. (It's a wonder she had time to garden at all!). She was a devoted partner and helpmate to Isadore, who died in 1888.

A son, Isadore, pursued a career in medicine. He served as Dean of Tulane Medical School in New Orleans, and championed the cause for lepers. He established the first treatment center for leprosy (now referred to as Hansen's disease) in the U.S. at Carville, Louisiana, 75 miles from New Orleans.

Amelia died in New Orleans on Oct. 11, 1903. She is buried in Galveston in Oleander Cemetery.

Due to your kind efforts, we have a lovely and tangible reminder of our forebears.

Thank you from all of our extended family.

Nancy Dyer Muller and Eugenie Dyer

New Orleans – April 29, 1923.”



Two of Mrs. Dyer's great  
granddaughters



Mrs. Isador Dyer oleander

## Betty Head Oleander Garden Park



This spring in May we participated in the Clean Galveston tour. Thank you to all our visitors and volunteers who participated!

We participated in the Olli Garden Symposium promoting both oleander knowledge and our membership. Here is a photo of Marcy Moloy and Lydia Miller. "Olli" is the Osher Lifelong Learning Center providing great programs to senior citizens.



And we had a booth at the Friends of Moody Gardens Herb Fair – a great annual event!

Finally, we again say goodbye to our very good friend and long-time devoted volunteer Treasurer – we will miss you Kellye Graham!!





# WWW.OLEANDER.ORG

Visit our website to learn more about us and the flower!

And follow us on Facebook: International  
Oleander Society



Any questions: [international.oleander@yahoo.com](mailto:international.oleander@yahoo.com)

To Join, you may:

- 1) Sign up on our website [www.oleander.org](http://www.oleander.org) via PayPal
- 2) Venmo to @internationalOleander-Society
- 3) PayPal: [International.oleander@yahoo.com](mailto:International.oleander@yahoo.com)
- 4) Email us at [International.oleander@yahoo.com](mailto:International.oleander@yahoo.com) with your phone.  
We will call you back to get your credit card number.
- 5) Mail your membership or donation to the address below:

International Oleander Society  
P.O. Box 3431  
Galveston, TX 77552-0431

Please indicate the membership of your choice and include both your mailing address, email address and phone.

Renewable Annually

- |                |          |
|----------------|----------|
| (1) Individual | \$20.00  |
| (2) Family     | \$30.00  |
| (3) Lifetime   | \$300.00 |
| (4) Business   | \$100.00 |

(Business members will receive a certificate to display in their business, listing in our newsletter and on our website)

\_\_\_\_ Or donation of any amount is appreciated.

THANK YOU