



Roots & Branches

The Origins and Directions of the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society

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Early Activities and the First Out-of-State Speaker

By Jack Wikle (from the 30 Year History)

On April 15, 1973, Keith Scott of Chagrin Falls, Ohio came to Ann Arbor as the club's first guest speaker from outside of Michigan. Some 35 members and guests were present for this event. The earliest secretary's reports tell a story of weak meeting attendance after the initial flurry of shared excitement. Just four members and four visitors attended the September 6, 1973 meeting. Attendance at the March 1974 meeting was also eight.

In an effort to reinvigorate the group, Keith Scott was brought back to Ann Arbor April 26, 1974, to do a demonstration open to the public and to conduct a workshop. Workshop participants paid a \$15 fee, which included all supplies. Swollen by members of the Bonsai Society of Michigan and other visitors, the audience for Keith's demonstration, presented in Matthaei's auditorium, was estimated to be 200 people. Your author, who was among those present, remembers the room being very full.

Following the Keith Scott event, I attended the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society's regular May meeting also, and became very conscious that traveling to Matthaei required half the driving time I had been spending attending Bonsai Society of Michigan meetings in East Lansing. My memory is that seven members and visitors were present in classroom 125 that night. I am not sure if I included myself in that count. Items of discussion were the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society's goals and its future, including the possibility of disbanding. Also discussed was

the immediate need for a new and more complete slate of officers if the group was to continue. At that time, the only officers were a president and secretary-treasurer. Adding to the sense of urgency, David Sly, then president, absent that evening, was moving soon from the Ann Arbor area.



EDITORS NOTE: Keith Scott (above) served in the U.S. military in Japan during the Korean conflict where he was first exposed to bonsai. After returning he earned an English degree at Purdue University and later taught at Youngstown State and eventually at the Shaker Heights School District. He was a member of the Cleveland Bonsai Club and later joined the Columbus Bonsai Club. Keith gave many presentations to the bonsai community including his "How to create art from chaos" working on developing cast-off shrubs into bonsai. Keith passed away on Friday, May 6th, 2011. Photo by Jack Wikle.

If you have missed any of the previous issues of this publication they are located in the [History section of the AABS website](#).

NEXT WEEK: *Bonsai Enthusiast Says: Think Small*

HOW YOU CAN HELP WITH OUR 50TH CELEBRATION

1. To help us in this celebration effort, all Ann Arbor Bonsai Society members present and past, and all others wishing to contribute are invited to submit personal statements (60 words or less) to be published in our Yearbook. Each text contributor is also strongly encouraged to submit a favorite photo (with caption) of a bonsai tree or a bonsai activity to accompany his or her personal statement. (We can scan old prints or digitize color slides for anyone needing this help with old pictures.) [Upload Form is here](#)
2. Let's all Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the AABS in style with shirts that have our commemorative logo printed on the front. Shirts will be available for purchase for \$20 each at our monthly meetings, at the Annual Club Show August 29-30, and at The Flower Market in Dundee, Michigan.



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