

# History of The Mid-Atlantic African Violet Society

## by Ken Barbi

The Mid-Atlantic African Violet Society (MAAVS) is an association of persons with an interest in African violets (AV) and is affiliated with the African Violet Society of America (AVSA). It was formed as a regional African Violet Society for the Middle Atlantic United States (US) including Canada. MAAVS now has no regional boundaries and encompasses the whole world. *It celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the 2022 Convention in Baltimore, Maryland.*



MAAVS has a single Convention and Show each year in the Fall. Each convention has a large group of North American African violet commercial vendors, often conducts an AVSA Judging School, and has seminars from famous horticulture names. They are a group that included not only African Violet Judges, but all violet and gesneriad growers interested in attending an *affordable, fun convention* where they could *share ideas and get to know people* from other clubs. Vladimir Kalgin, from Moscow, Russia, has attended several of the Conventions, and offers yearly prize money to exhibitors showing the Best Russian/Ukrainian hybrid. The MAAVS Convention Show has a Collection Class of 3 Russian/Ukrainian standard violets, and provides a ribbon for Affiliate Club shows that include a Russian/Ukrainian standard violet Collection Class.

MAAVS is also fortunate to have noted hybridizers as members: Marie Burns, Paul Sorano, Rob Robinson, John Brownlie, and George McDonald. MAAVS also have members affiliated with the Smithsonian Institute *United States National Herbarium*. Needless to say, these folks bring many new gesneriads to us.

### **MAAVS History**

The thought for a new violet society was introduced by Joyce Stenger (Sugarloaf AV Club) at a meeting of the Potomac Council of African Violet Judges (PCAVJ). Her idea was to have a Mid Atlantic Meeting of violet judges so that they could exchange judging ideas and unify the groups. This motion was seconded and passed. Before the motion could be implemented, the Gulf War began which meant key people were not be for planning. Jack Wilson (then president of the PCAVJ and a US Naval Officer) sent a note informing the Baltimore AV Club (BAVC) that the Potomac Council of African Violet Judges will not pursue the motion. Ken Barbi (a US Air Force Officer) was also on active duty working at the Pentagon. Diane Richardson and Marie Burns of the Baltimore African Violet Club (BAVC) decided to form a group that included not only the judges but all violet growers.

The first organizational meeting was by invitation in Marie's living room in Baltimore, Maryland, on Saturday, March 9, 1991. The following people were in attendance: Marie Burns (BAVC), Diane Richardson (BAVC), Sharon Toolan (BAVC), Janet Haag (BAVC), Joyce Stenger (Sugarloaf AV Club), Ken Barbi (PCAVJ), Laurene Jones (Old Dominion AV Club), Carol Van (Tidewater AV Society), Audrea Salzmann (Tidewater AV Society), Andrea Burrell (Sugarloaf AV Club), Julia Stahl (BAVC), and Betty Lages (BAVC). At this meeting, the small group of individuals (in a surreal environment) each put \$20 into a startup fund (actually a hat), and installed Diane Richardson as the first President creating MAAVS. Eight months later in November, 1991, MAAVS held its first annual convention in Virginia Beach at the Holiday Inn on the Atlantic Ocean. The first national announcement of the formation of MAAVS was written by Ken Barbi and appeared in the May 1991

African Violet Magazine (AVM).

### **MAAVS in The Twenty First Century**

The official MAAVS web site [www.maavs.org](http://www.maavs.org) was launched in November 2001 by Tom Glembocki - and now goes by [www.midatlanticafricanvioletsociety.org](http://www.midatlanticafricanvioletsociety.org). Four years later, in December 2005, MAAVS entered the electronic age by E Mailing its Quarterly Publication, **The MAAVS Memo**. This publication is intended to keep members informed about the health of the Association, and the plans for the annual Convention and Show along with its Show Schedule and Registration Forms. After the Convention, it publishes pictures of the winners. Periodically, various African violet authors contribute new articles of interest to the membership on African violet and gesneriad horticulture.

Our Annual Convention and Shows are held in hotel ballrooms with our members receiving special room rates. We usually start off on a Wednesday with an AVSA Judging School, then take entries on Thursday. Judging is on Friday morning with a welcome dinner that night where we get crazy in costumes! On Saturday, we mix and mingle often taking local tours; and attending AV, gesneriad, and design seminars. The Awards Dinner is on Saturday night.

### **MAAVS AVSA National Convention Sponsorships**

AVSA 2002 Convention - In the Spring of 2002, May 19 - 25, MAAVS was host to the 56th International AVSA Convention in Washington, District of Columbia. The African Violet Show was one of the best ever since MAAVS has some of the finest African Violet Growers in the country.

AVSA 2010 Convention - For 2010, MAAVS was once again called upon to host the AVSA National Convention. The 64th International Convention of the African Violet Society of America was held in Raleigh, North Carolina, from April 11 - 17, 2010, at the Hilton North Raleigh. The convention theme was "The Once and Future Violet", and honored the development of the African Violet from the earliest species to today's modern hybrids.

AVSA 2014 Convention - MAAVS Membership unanimously voted to co-host the AVSA National Convention with the Lone Star Violet Council of Texas. The convention took place in Nashville, TN from May 26 to June 2, 2014. The Convention was an overwhelming success with the highest number of registered attendees of the past 20 years.

### **MAAVS in 2022 and Beyond**

In November 2022, MAAVS conducted its first Convention since 2019 due to the Corona Virus. Many more activities are planned under the new leadership of our new President, Minh Bui. Our 2023 Convention will be held in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 1 - 4, 2023, and will have an AVSA Judging School.

### **Former MAAVS Presidents:**

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| Diane Richardson (deceased) 1991 - 1995<br>Sue Hoffmann 1995 - 1999<br>Linda Abplanalp 1999 - 2001<br>Ken Barbi 2001 - 2005<br>Rodney Barnett 2005 - 2007 | Rich Follett 2007 - 2011<br>Joan Santino 2011 - 2015<br>Brenda Petry 2015 - 2017<br>Sue Hoffmann 2017 - 2022<br>Minh Bui 2022 - Now |
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