



*Mrs. O. Raymond (Eleanor) Hunt*

President 1975 - 1977

Mrs. Eleanor Hunt was born and spent most of her early years in Berea, Kentucky. She said that World War II had a huge impact on her life. She married at 19 in 1944. This made it inevitable that World War II would play a role in her early married life. Her husband was in the Navy stationed on the West Coast, and Mrs. Hunt took a troop train from Kentucky to San Diego to meet up with her husband. The day she took the train she said she was a little apprehensive since it was full of soldiers going to war, but she said the troops could not have been kinder. While her husband was in the Pacific Area during the war Mrs. Hunt completed her college at Berea. She said several times that "all the young men were gone during the war." She replied that the bombing of the Japanese cities with the atom bomb saved millions of American lives. At the end of the war Mr. Hunt returned home and completed medical school.

In 1969 Doctor and Mrs. Hunt chose to move to Wilmington to set up his practice and raise their family of four children. Being able to sail their sailboat was a prime motivation for the move. Mrs. Hunt implied it was hard to get the Navy out of a sailor.



Eleanor said when she moved to Wilmington that she knew no one. Her next door neighbor Oma Cavanaugh invited her to a Garden Club meeting, and then a year later sponsored her as a member. Mrs. Hunt really enjoyed meeting the women in the club and she became involved as it is obvious in her home that she loved gardening.

Eleanor served as secretary first of the Cape Fear Garden Club but then the year the club celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary no one would allow themselves to be nominated for president. Mrs. Hunt heard about this at a board meeting at the Cape Fear Country Club which was taking place just before the 60<sup>th</sup> celebration with a regional dignitary here for the meeting. Eleanor does not remember why but she spoke up and said she would be president. She said she was the first volunteer president.

In 1975 she began her term as president of the club. In trying to get committee chairs she had difficulty when she called the ladies because at the time first names of the women were not listed in the yearbook as they were listed only as Mrs. So in So. Eleanor thought it was embarrassing to call the potential committee members Mrs. So in So. As one of her first acts as president she had the first names of the members in the yearbook along with their married names. She said when she went into office that meetings were not very well attended, and she decided that the programs needed more variation. So she contacted a lady she knew in South Carolina who was a well known flower arranger to do a program. The lady said she would be glad to come but that her fee was \$250. Since the Garden Club did not have a budget for the programs, Mrs. Hunt offered the lady a week at her beach cottage. With that the lady came and did the program and 125 members attended the meeting. Mrs. Hunt also said that she and Joan Pence had a meeting with the Azalea Festival Committee and over some objections managed to talk them out of getting a percentage of the Garden Tour tickets. She said they agreed to give the Azalea Festival Committee a reasonable contribution from the Garden Tour.

Mrs. Hunt was also instrumental in getting the Arboretum off the ground. She said at the time people told her there would never be enough volunteers to keep the Arboretum going. But today it is largely kept up by volunteer master gardeners.

For a tiny sharp blue-eyed lady, it seems that Eleanor Hunt has contributed greatly to the city of Wilmington as well as the Garden Club. She is intelligent and engaging and definitely a cat lover. It is obvious that she cares about beauty, the city of Wilmington, and the Cape Fear Garden Club. Her contributions to all three will be appreciated by many in the community.