

In 1984 Dick McClellan, one of the founding members of the National Capital Cactus and Succulent Society, wrote a series of articles for the Eastern Spine newsletter recounting the beginning and early history of our society. Below is a synopsis, in part, of those articles.

Beginnings

On July 21, 1974, a small group met at the Samson House at Brookside Gardens. The group had a common interest in cacti and other succulents. By the end of this meeting, the National Capital Cactus and Succulent Society was established. None of that original group remains a member today. The society name, NCCSS, was decided upon but it wasn't until November 1974 that an official newsletter was developed and given the name *Eastern Spine*.

At the second meeting, a President was elected and members discussed plants they had brought to the meeting. The third meeting, in September 1974, had a set of By-Laws written and adopted. The fledgling society agreed to affiliate with the Cactus and Succulent Society of America and have membership dues of \$5.00 per individual and \$7.50 per family. This meeting also featured the first educational program, Growing Cacti and Other Succulents under Lights.

The fourth meeting of the fledgling NCCSS featured guest speaker Dr. James Early, who spoke on Plant Diseases. The treasury now had \$64.32, and although we began to have plant sales at the meetings, our membership was still so small, not much money was made. The final program of that first year was on the care and culture of cacti by Lee Linett. Looking back the hardest task was coming up with program topics and then speakers to present the programs. There were ups and downs, conflicts and differing opinions, personality clashes, but the new NCCSS survived them all.

The Second Year

In January 1975, the NCCSS had an influx of new members, primarily due to an article in the Washington Post by Tom Stevenson on cacti and succulents. There were so many new members the Samson House meeting location at Brookside Gardens couldn't accommodate all of them. Fortunately, one of the new members was Fr. Peter Weigand, of St. Anselm's Abbey. In March, thanks to a generous offer by Fr. Peter, the meetings of the NCCSS moved to the St. Anselm's Abbey School, where they have been ever since.

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