



## **Arthur Binion Amerson, Jr.**

**January 2, 1936 - September 23, 2017**

**by Steve Guynes & Ray Houston**

**(Information provided by Binion Amerson)**



## **Binion Amerson**

## ***Hemerocallis* 'Binion Amerson' (Bertie Ferris, 1996)**

Binion was born January 2, 1936, in Macon, Georgia, the son of Arthur Binion Amerson, Sr. and Agnes Elizabeth Dunn. Both of his grandparents were farmers and as a child he loved the outdoors. His mother was an avid garden club volunteer, officer, and flower show judge.

Binion graduated from Mercer University in Georgia in 1958 with a degree in biology and attended graduate school for a time in the Entomology Department where he became interested in arthropods of medical significance. From there he transferred to the University of Kansas and began work toward a Master's degree with specialization in acarology, the study of mites and ticks. Binion has been a leader in biological field research, ecological studies, technical writing, editing, and publishing.

During the summer of 1962, he spent two months in the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico with a team of faculty and graduate students studying animals and arthropods. The field study was funded by the U. S. Department of Defense and resulted in a classified document for the U. S. Army. Castro had just invaded Cuba and the U. S. military wanted to know what harmful animals were present, in case troops had to be sent into the area. His studies at the University of Kansas were interrupted in late 1962 when he accepted a job working for the Smithsonian Institution studying the plants and animals of various islands in the Pacific. This project was also funded by the Defense Department and was a secret operation.

Over the course of seven years (1963-70) Binion and his team surveyed the Northwest Hawaiian Islands, Line and Phoenix Islands, Marshall and Gilbert Islands, and American Samoa. They banded over a million birds and tagged numerous Hawaiian Monk Seals and Green Sea Turtles. As one of the team leaders, Binion wrote the natural history summaries of the islands, which were eventually published in the scientific literature. Following the Smithsonian work, Binion returned to the University of Kansas and completed his Master's degree in Ecology and Environmental Studies.

In the early 1970s, Binion went to work for Environmental Consultants, Inc. of Dallas with his initial project being a natural history study of American Samoa. He spent ten years with this company conducting ecological work in the United States, Central and South America, and several Pacific Islands.

After environmental work began to wane in the mid-1980s, Binion began work as a technical writer for computer software and hardware companies. He worked in this capacity until his retirement in 2001. During that time he was very active in the Society for Technical Communications (STC). He held several local and national offices and was instrumental in getting the 40th Annual STC Conference brought to Dallas. In 1999, he was honored for his significant contributions to technical communication and to the STC by electing him to the

rank of Fellow. In 2006, the Lone Star Chapter of the STC established the annual Binion Amerson Leadership Award, with the first recipient being Binion Amerson.

On a Saturday in late Spring 1994, Binion was at a North Dallas shopping mall where a daylily flower show was being held. Bertie Ferris invited Binion to attend a club meeting of the Daylily Growers of Dallas, and the next month he did. Bertie gave him a few daylilies and Irises and he bought more at the club's plant sales. Bertie became Binion's friend and garden club mentor. Binion joined the Daylily Growers of Dallas, the Iris Society of Dallas, and Brookhaven Garden Club. Later, he joined the American Hemerocallis Society and the National Garden Clubs, Inc.

That Summer and Fall, he learned how to grow both daylilies and Iris. The next Spring, he learned at one of the meetings how to groom and show daylilies in a flower show. The Iris flower show came along in April and he had only one Iris in his garden that was blooming. It was a nice tall yellow Iris that had three open blooms with a bud at the top. To his surprise, that single entry won not only a blue ribbon, but it also won Queen of the Show! Binion learned that day that it only takes one flower to win the top prize in a flower show.

Binion's love of daylilies led him to landscape his home in Farmers Branch. It was on tour in 1998 and 2005 during the annual Region 6 Meetings when they were held in Dallas. He transformed his yard from a collection of odds and ends to an official AHS Display Garden containing more than 700 daylily cultivars. Binion had only leased the home and in December of 2009 had to move and dismantle his daylily garden. He donated all his daylilies to the city of Farmers Branch where they are growing in the Farmers Branch Public Daylily Garden. This public garden is maintained by the Daylily Growers of Dallas. The garden is located just west of the Farmers Branch City Hall.

Binion registered two daylilies, *Hemerocallis* '**Agnes Amerson**' (1998), named after his mother, and *H.* '**Nina Worthy**' (2007), named after a past President of the Dallas Council of Garden Clubs.

In 1994, Binion went to the Chattanooga Winter Symposium and presented a program about the possibility of AHS entering the world wide web with a website. He also went to the New Orleans area and presented the same program to the AHS Board. They approved the concept, and in 1995, Binion and Tim Fehr developed a sample website for AHS, which was entitled "The Friends of the Daylily," and Binion served as the first AHS Webmaster.

When Bill Monroe, Jr. was no longer able to continue as the AHS Registrar, Binion was called upon, because of his computer experience, to take over the database system that Bill had created for daylily registrations. Binion served as AHS Registrar for one year.

Binion became very active in several garden clubs and plant societies since he became interested in daylilies. He was the President of the Dallas Council of Garden Clubs. He was one of only four male accredited National Garden Club Judges in Texas.

He was the Editor of the AHS Region 6 newsletter, *Daylilies of the Southwest*, from 2010 until the fall of 2014.

Binion died September 23, 2017. According to Melba Gordon, Binion's cousin, Binion donated his body to science. The rest of his family is buried at the Mineral Springs Baptist Church in Washington County, Georgia. The family hopes to be able to have a cenotaph erected at the church for him at a future date.