

# Beacon of Tranquility: David Harber's *Mantle* Sculpture at GSG (Part 1)

By Kay Cooper

with contributions from GSG Site Manager Judy Zatsick

*Note: This is the first of a two-part series. The second article will appear in our Summer 2022 issue to provide an expanded discussion of David Harber's works and his environmental commitment.*



We are truly fortunate at Green Spring Gardens (GSG) to have a beautiful sculpture by David Harber, an internationally respected British sculptor whose works are displayed around the world and who is dedicated to environmental conservation.

## Description of the Sculpture

The sculpture entitled *Mantle* is located on the terrace of the Gazebo Garden. The following is a description of *Mantle* from David Harber's website:

*Mantle* is made of hundreds of bronze petals linked into a cellular lattice work of turquoise verdigris. The underside of each leaf is gilded, giving the *Mantle's* interior an ethereal golden glow, as if suggesting an inner life force.



The playful use of light and reflection is a key element that makes his sculptures so complex and enchanting. His sculptures draw viewers in and invite them to question what is presented.

Although an electric light is installed inside the 20" globe at the base, it's really not needed since interior gilding provides its own golden aura.

## **Origins of GSG's *Mantle***

The credit for bringing this sculpture to GSG is the result of a fortunate collaboration between Dr. Sally A. Sibley, a GSG patron who donated the funds for the sculpture, and Judy Zatsick, now GSG Site Manager, who listened to Dr. Sibley's ideas and guided the selection and installation process. Dr. Sibley, a prominent resident of Fairfax County, was interested in donating a memorial in honor of her husband, son, and another family member.

Dr. Sibley was the president and CEO at the Phillips School located on Braddock Road near GSG. The school focuses on students with learning disabilities. Dr. Sibley worked as a strong advocate for these students for 42 years. She was honored with many awards for her outstanding service, including the Special Gratitude Award by the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens' Associations in April 2016. This annual award recognizes and honors those citizens whose contributions have enhanced the quality of life for citizens of Fairfax County. The 2016 award presentation stated: "Dr. Sibley is an educational leader who promotes the success of all. This award is a testament to her belief in empowering others through education."

When she lost her family members, Dr. Sibley wanted to honor them with a special memorial. She chose GSG as the site because she often visited to enjoy the tranquility of the gardens, and she especially enjoyed sitting in the gazebo area, the site chosen for *Mantle*.

Judy Zatsick, who is gifted with an artist's fine eye, guided Dr. Sibley's choice of the sculpture and oversaw its installation. She knew of Harber's work and the way his sculptures mirrored nature. She thought his works would be an appropriate sculpture for a garden. She showed Dr. Sibley some of Harber's sculptures, and together they chose *Mantle*. The following is Zatsick's firsthand account of the selection of *Mantle* and its installation process:

Green Spring did not have any sculptural memorials, nor permanent artwork.

I spent a significant amount of time over the course of a year researching local sculptors, which she initially desired. However, she just did not like anything I found. We looked at fountains as well. It was important for me to drive the aesthetic. I discovered Harber's work a few years before and was drawn to the *Mantle* because of the cutout leaf shapes as well as the

luminous quality imparted by the gold electroplating in the interior. I suggested she look at his work, and she really liked it as well. We agreed on the *Mantle*. I placed the order and it arrived in a huge crate. Very exciting!

The next part was to find a plinth for the sculpture to stand on. That was very interesting. I couldn't find any premade plinths that worked. I discovered a stone mason/artist in Vienna who had done extensive work at the Washington National Cathedral and recent renovation of the Capitol Dome. His studio and workshop are located on a little alley in Vienna. It was fascinating to see the work being done there carving stone. I selected a pale sandstone and shape, and he created a plinth.

A bronze plaque at the base of the sculpture displays three stars and the names B. Gen. Thomas N. Sibley, Katherine H. Sibley, and Tom Sibley, along with the following quote: "Perhaps the stars in the sky are loved ones letting us know they are near by guiding us through the night."

The first name mentioned on the plaque is that of Thomas Nelson Asbury Sibley, Dr. Sibley's husband who passed away in 2000. Brigadier General Sibley was a retired US Army officer who was a much decorated veteran of WWII. He graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point in 1938 and devoted 36 years in military service to his country. His obituary states:

B. Gen. Sibley received many decorations, including the Bronze Star, Europe's EAME, Combat Badge, French Croix de Guerre with star, and the Philippines Independence Medal. At the end of his career, he received the Distinguished Service Medal for his crisis-management skills during the Six-Day War in the Middle East.

*Part 2 in our Summer 2022 issue will provide an expanded discussion of David Harber's works and his environmental commitment.*

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