

# AZALEA CITY



story and photography by **Harry Livermore**

I have now been in Valdosta for 18 years. I arrived near the end of February, 1989. Nothing could have prepared me for the explosion of color I was about to witness when spring came to South Georgia. I am still in awe of the colors in our town. One day, Valdosta is just another nice place to live—Patterson Street with its glorious old homes, culminating with the crown jewel, The Crescent, on the corner of Patterson and Gordon; Williams Street, bordered by huge live oaks, creating a tunnel of green making it relatively cool even in the throes of one of our summers; pines, palms, palmettos, magnolias, crape myrtles and other trees are plentiful, and many of them stay green all year around.

Then seemingly overnight, Valdosta becomes a symphony of color. The azaleas bloom: red ones, pink

ones, white ones, salmon colored ones, some that are so dark they appear black from a distance all grace our yards and our parks and vacant lots. This is indeed, the Azalea City. I find myself smiling as I drive down each of Valdosta's streets on my way to church or the post office or to the grocery store. I am reminded of what I heard S.I. Hayakawa say of the spring colors in San Francisco. "They fill me with such joy that as I drive around, I pound my steering wheel in delight." I don't know that I've ever pounded my steering wheel, but I sure do a lot of smiling and grinning and even issuing an occasional audible appreciative chuckle as I walk past yards full of Valdosta's colors on my Morning Walk **VM**