

NEWS NOTES

Spring 1991

DCNHF STEWARDSHIP AWARD RECIPIENTS

Good Luck, from Mother Nature

"The land doesn't belong to any one individual...it belongs to the planet earth. Your ownership is only custodial and as a custodian, you are responsible for its care. That's the kind of thing I was taught by my parents and grandparents." With these words, Bud Morton describes the origins of his understanding and respect for the land which have motivated him over the past 84 years.

Brought up a small town kid in Ellsworth, Wisconsin, Bud spent much of his childhood roaming the woods and hills, camping out under the stars and listening to the night sounds of the woods. In daylight, he searched out the nests of birds, the beds of wildflowers, the dens of small animals, and was always looking for tadpoles. At the age of ten, one of his projects was to post "bird sanctuary" signs around the wetlands he came across.

Having made such a close acquaintance with mother nature at an early age, it is then no wonder that many years later, she and Bud began corresponding. One evening before a County Board Meeting which would hold a critical debate and decision on the future of the Nine Springs E-Way Corridor, Bud took the opportunity of the opening reading, to pass along a letter he had just "received" from mother nature which offered clear guidance on the decision.

During his ten years on the County Board, Bud chaired the committee that consolidated lakes management, the forerunner of the Lakes and Watershed Commission. He also served six years on the County's Natural Beauty and Environmental Council, another 5 years on the City-County joint Environmental Commission. Bud is a charter member and on the Board of Directors of the Friends of Dane County Parks, Inc and in retirement is enjoying his work as a Dane County Parks Commissioner.

Bud says his "letters to and from mother nature" became a technique to encourage the County Board that the Nine Springs E-Way Corridor would eventually become a reality and that it was an end result worth working for. Scratched out on the backs of pieces of paper and set aside after being read, not much of the exchanges remain. But the Nine Springs E-Way, which Bud sees as one of the County's finest accomplishments, is an indication of their content and the character of the man behind them.

For the Birds

Joe Hickey has been present at many beginnings:

- the formation of The Nature Conservancy in 1951
- the development of its Wisconsin Chapter in 1959
- the origin of the International Peregrine Conference in 1965
- the founding of the Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation in 1983

A quotation by Alexander Clark states, "Look well to your beginnings, and the results will manage themselves." Joe Hickey was not content to just get actions started, however. He was also interested in results. As a professor of wildlife ecology at the U.W. Madison, he did extensive work on D.D.T. and its effects on raptors like the peregrine falcon; research which contributed to the banning of this pesticide in the United States. The peregrine falcons that can now be seen in the area of Van Hise Hall are a reminder of the research of Dr. Hickey and his graduate students.

Extremely modest about his many contributions to the preservation of wildlife and habitat, Joe would not himself tell you about the many awards he has won. Among these awards are The Nature Conservancy's Green Leaf Award, U.W. Chancellor's Award for outstanding teaching, National Wildlife Federation Special Conservation Award, the President's Award of the Raptor Research Foundation, and the Distinguished Service Medal of the National Audubon Society.

The Dane County Natural Heritage Foundation honors Dr. Joseph Hickey, who was instrumental in its formation and a member of the Board of Directors during its early development, for his continuing commitment to preserving the future in Dane County.

The Lalor Road Community

The early morning trumpeting of the sandhill cranes carries over the Waubesa Wetlands, announcing the arrival of spring and the sandhill's return home for the summer. "The cranes are back," becomes the greeting among the neighbors on Lalor Road. The yearly March homecoming of the cranes captures the attention of the human community living on the edge of the 1,000 acre wetland preserve.

Lalor Road, continued.

This respect for the land and marsh ecosystem dates back to the earliest settlers to the area, the Lalor Family, who came to the Northwest Territories in 1848 and chose the area for its many fresh springs. The marsh's good state of preservation is a credit to the people who farmed the nearby hills over the last century.

In 1965, the first 100 acres in what was to become a major preservation project was donated to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries by Carl and Julia Bogholt, whose dream was to purchase and preserve the entire wetland. In 1972, Ted and Dorothy Berkan, motivated by a love for the marsh and the cranes, gave 27 acres to the DNR Fisheries. In 1974, the DNR designated both parcels as State Scientific Areas, giving it a much greater visibility as a significant natural area.

With 127 acres preserved and many more yet to secure, the dream for the 1,000 acre preserve began to build. A newcomer to the road, Cal DeWitt, a professor of Environmental Studies at U.W. Madison, opened his class research presentations to the community. Margaret Lalor and Dorothy Berkan shaped events through involvement in Town politics, and Cal became Town Chairman. Mary and Clarence Sondern voiced concerns from their experiences in New Jersey. Development of the Town of Dunn Open Space Preservation Handbook and Land Use Plan led to subdivision ordinances and zoning that reinforced preservation efforts.

In the following years, threats to the integrity of the marsh were met with positive action. The Bogholts donated property with large and beautiful springs to The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Alice Watts donated land to the TNC and a conservation easement on wetland buffer area to the American Farmland Trust and DCNHF, and the DNR and TNC purchased key pieces which brought the marsh close to the 1,000 acre goal.

The community along Lalor Road has welcomed several new residents who are taking up the long tradition of enjoying and looking after the marsh. For this task, the entire community is rewarded with the clangor of the cranes who faithfully return to the marsh each spring.

The Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation...On track in Dane County

What started in the late 1950's as a dream shared by a group of Wisconsin outdoor enthusiasts to preserve Wisconsin's glacial heritage, is now 30 years in the making and nearly half complete.

The Ice Age Trail traces the edge of the 1,000 mile moraine left by the last Wisconsin Glacier more than 12,000 years ago. From Potawatomi State Park in Door County to Interstate Park in Polk County on the Minnesota border, the Ice Age Trail covers such spectacular scenery as Kettle Moraine, Devil's Lake, and Chequamegon National Forest.

Behind this effort to build the Ice Age Trail are the hundreds of committed volunteers, a 30-member Board of Directors, and the handful of staff who make up the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation. With 450 miles complete, and many more to go, the organization is concentrating its efforts on securing the trail in the more rapidly urbanizing areas of the state, with Dane County as the priority.

Trail development in Dane County began in 1962 when Madison pharmacist and outdoorsman, J.J. "Doc" Werner, put on his hiking boots and got to work in Dane and Sauk Counties. His early work in the 1960's laid the foundation of the trail which was begun by volunteers through handshake agreements with area landowners in the 1970's. Rapid growth in Dane County in the 1980's has induced an even greater effort to permanently protect the trail through land and easement acquisition.

Momentum is gaining in Dane County. Gary Werner, son of "Doc" Werner, and trail coordinator for Dane County, has seen notable progress in the last few years. The Trail has been incorporated into several area land use plans and State funding is available for trail acquisitions. In February, the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation announced a key acquisition in the Town of Roxbury made in cooperation with Dane County Parks Department.

With nearly 65 miles of trailway mapped in our County, today more than ever, the Ice Age Trail is on track in Dane County.

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