The Founding of Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation in 1966 by Arthur and Isabel

Long winter evenings found Isabel Watres and her son, Arthur, reading. Two books by Fairfield Osborne, “This Plundered Planet” and “The Limits of the Earth,” had a profound influence on them. What, they wondered, would become of Lacawac after they were no longer here? Attempts to interest the local government in preserving Lacawac from developmental excesses, on the basis of its sheer beauty, were unsuccessful. Beauty does not pay taxes! Arthur and Isabel decided to make a trip to the Museum of Natural History in New York in search of author Fairfield Osborne, for his advice.

At the Museum they were befriended by Dr. Richard Pough. In that year (1952) Dr. Pough was the first president of the newly established Nature Conservancy. Having become members of the Conservancy, Arthur and Isabel, at Pough’s suggestion, went to speak to Dr. Radcliffe Roberts, the Director of the Academy of Natural Sciences, in Philadelphia. The Academy was becoming an important research center for aquatic ecology under the guidance of a dynamic scientist, Dr. Ruth Patrick. Shortly thereafter, on a cold winter day, Drs. Roberts and Patrick made a visit to Lacawac. Dr. Patrick observed that Lake Lacawac was probably the southernmost unpolluted glacial lake in the United States, and that it would be invaluable as a baseline lake for research and education. For the past forty years, man’s touch at Lacawac had been light, thereby protecting the watershed. Continued control over Lacawac, to protect the integrity of the Lake, would provide a living laboratory for research projects. To that point, Arthur and Isabel had felt that the beauty of Lacawac alone provided a basis for protecting the land. Now they had a serious, humanistic rationale for protecting Lacawac, and one that might attract support over time.

Arthur and Isabel spent the next fourteen years endeavoring to find an institutional partner to provide strength, stability and significant programs at Lacawac. Having failed to find an institutional partner of recognized strength and stature, the Watreses formed the Lacawac Sanctuary Foundation in 1966, and turned over the lake, most of the infrastructure and much of the land to it. By 1967, the Sanctuary had become a field laboratory for scientists from the Academy of Natural Sciences and for researchers and graduate students from the University of Pennsylvania.

Today Lacawac is a thriving environmental education center and biological field station with sustaining partners Miami University of Ohio, Drexel University and the Academy of Natural Sciences.

Celebrating 50 years of excellence in Research, Education and Preservation

A Special Thank You to Bob Eckstein for his design and work on this anniversary newsletter. Bob is a long time Lacawac volunteer and currently serves as a member of the trustees.
Farm to Plate Anniversary Dinner en Blanc
August 13, 2016

Lacawac’s Anniversary Dinner was celebrated at the Watres Lodge with over 125 in attendance. The Farm to Plate meal was provided by Chef Ben Sutter and the staff of Settlers Inn.

Watershed Education Program Support

Through visual models and experiments, student learning are measured by several outcomes: recognize freshwater as their source of drinking water, identify their school’s watershed address, describe the water cycle, explore factors that affect groundwater, and classify the plants and animals, as well as explain the value of wetlands. Lacawac’s field station is a fully equipped research facility for freshwater explorations.

The program has been generously supported by the following companies and foundations:

- The Robert Y. Moffat Family Charitable Trust
- Talen Energy - Hawley Rotary Club
- Overlook Estate Foundation – Schiel Family Foundation

Our Special Friends of 2015

- Price Chopper’s Golub Foundation
- Willary Foundation
- Drexel University
- Miami University
- Pennsylvania State University
- The University of Scranton
- Southwestern Energy
- Peter Paul Olszewski Jr. Esq, Chair of Trustees addressed the guests. Right: Craig Lukatch, President

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Above: Dr. Craig Williamon, Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient. Below: Dr. Susan S. Kilham, Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient

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Memories of Lacawac

“I do remember one evening sitting out back of the lodge with Ed Wesely and Arthur, thinking and talking about Lacawac: its needs, direction, and efforts in general. Arthur was always concerned about Lacawac’s board in those days. He knew I was thinking about starting a land trust and building a board for what became of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. In any case, he must have figured it out, since Lacawac has successfully grown over the years. I think Arthur would be proud of Lacawac today. And I know he would be proud of what you are doing right now to celebrate those 50 amazing years at Lacawac.”

– Barbara Yeaman

“This big picture, this event is a blip on the Lacawac screen, but it’s one of my better memories and probably occurred around 2005. I loved walking out to the dock on Lake Lacawac to experience the loveliness of the lake and of that expanse of water and sky, but the trail was so narrow and tilted to the right as you walked out that I often expected to decant me into the lake. I described the concern and got permission to trim the bushes some, level the path, and add some stones along its right side. I was out there at work on this project when Arthur showed up, as he often did when aware of any project, and started talking about one of his concerns about the sanctuary—maybe it was the continuing need to dismantle the beaver dam at the runoff. Once I realized it wasn’t going to be a short discussion, I got one of the wooden chairs from the stone patio closer to shore, and put it where he could sit close to me while we continued the work. We were both pleased by that arrangement, and I was and remain delighted to have made the passage to the lake easier and pleasanter.”

– Sam Jackson

“We moved up to Greentown here in the Poconos in 1988. After moving up here we both started volunteering at Promised Land SP until someone told me about Lacawac and I went there to see it. I was given a tour and told the Director I would like to volunteer. She asked what I could do. I answered ‘anything’ and got a questionable look. Began doing some small maintenance and Terry worked on many programs. In the summer I ran weekly and special tours. This continued until a few years ago when I moved closer to shore, and put it where he could sit close to me while we continued the work. We were both pleased by that arrangement, and I was and remain delighted to have made the passage to the lake easier and pleasanter.”

– John Whitehouse