

George B. Melrose Wins The 2006 Margery Sachs Service Award

The eleventh annual Margery Sachs Service Award was presented to George B. Melrose, the former chairman of the Town of Tonawanda Commission for Conservation of the Environment. The award was presented on October 14, 2006 at the 2006 New York State Conference on the Environment held at the Chautauqua Institution.

Given in memory of Margery Sachs, one of NYSACC's original Directors, this distinction is presented annually to an individual for "lifelong environmental concern and service." Appropriately, Mr. Melrose has recently completed a 35 year career as the Chairman of the Tonawanda Environment Commission, a board that he helped establish in 1971.

George Melrose is a graduate of Brown University and received a Master of Science in Aeronautics. He went on to work for the Bell Aircraft Corporation in Buffalo, NY which "proved to be a challenging, exciting and rewarding career," according to Mr. Melrose.

Throughout his forty years at Bell Aircraft, George Melrose was involved in projects that impacted world history. He worked on the design and development of experimental aircraft, guided missiles, space vehicles, the Apollo missions, and the 'Star Wars' project.

Nearly forty years ago, while functioning as the Chief of Aeromechanics with the Space Flight and Missiles Division of Bell Aircraft, Mr. Melrose was appointed President of the Technical Societies Council of the Niagara Frontier and was elected to the advisory board of the Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences. His commitment to the field of aeronautical science, as exemplified through his active and broad-ranging involvement in this discipline, is equal to that of addressing paramount environmental concerns in his own community.

From 1970 to 1975 George Melrose addressed environmental issues at the county level as Chair of the Erie County EMC. He urged his hometown to establish a CAC.

Once the legislation passed, he was appointed chairman of the commission. Soon thereafter, Mr. Melrose was appointed chairman of the Tonawanda Planning Board. In the mid 1970s, he was presented with an award from the US Environmental Protection Agency for his work on environmentally-significant initiatives.



Environmental projects that George Melrose had a hand in include overseeing the remedial action and cleanup of radioactive and solid waste sites within Tonawanda, a significant tree planting program along major thoroughfares and "point gardens" that welcome commuters as they enter the Town.

George Melrose and his wife Darl, have two children, Mark and Diane, and five grandchildren. Together, through thousands of hours of volunteer work, George and Darl's civic minded activities have greatly impacted the Western NY community, and any recognition of George is a direct reflection of Darl's service as well.

"I am honored to receive this award for having been active over the years with the Erie County EMC as well as the Tonawanda Environment Commission," Mr. Melrose said. "It has been a pleasure to witness the progress made in our town, which has led to the improvement of the quality of life throughout our community."

While George Melrose himself was a rocket scientist, it certainly doesn't take one to comprehend the significance of his contributions to environmental campaigns in his community. As a community leader and a mentor, George Melrose exemplifies the holistic qualities that the Margery Sachs Service Award symbolizes.

www.nysaccny.org

**Look here for information for and about
Conservation Advisory Councils
and Conservation Boards.**

The NYSACC Awards

Every year NYSACC honors those CACs that have found creative ways to enhance the quality of their environment. Presenting these awards provides NYSACC with an opportunity to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of member organizations and to show the kinds of projects that improve environmental awareness and contribute to the quality of life in our communities. These projects can be replicated by contacting the chair of the CAC.

Next year's award winning projects are happening right now. Don't forget to nominate your CAC when you do deserving work. An awards application is available at the NYSACC website www.nysaccny.org. Applications may be submitted any time during the year.

Town of Tonawanda Commission for Conservation of the Environment Energy \$mart Holiday Decorating Contest 2006 Education Award



Joy Squires, NYSACC President, presents the award to Kevin Leous, Tonawanda CCE Chairman and Peter Rizzo, CCE member and NYSACC Director.

The Town of Tonawanda Energy \$mart Holiday Decorating Contest was an initiative of the Town of Tonawanda CCE. Each year the Commission holds a holiday decorating contest, highlighting homes that demonstrate significant holiday spirit. In September of 2005, it was decided that the pro-

gram should be altered to promote energy efficiency in holiday decorating.

The Commission partnered with the NYS Energy Research and Development Authority and LED technology companies that specialize in light emitting diode products. Throughout the fall and early winter the groundwork was laid to promote the contest among area schools by educating students on the importance of energy conservation and encouraging them to decorate their own homes with these principals in mind. Schools were also provided with LED light strands to display for the holiday season.

The Commission encouraged homeowners to enter their energy efficient holiday displays into the contest. Each home was judged on a number of environmental factors, including the amount of electricity used, energy saving devices, use of LED lighting, and overall aesthetics. On December 19, 2005 winners were honored at the Tonawanda Town Board meeting and awarded cash prizes provided by area businesses, along with energy saving compact fluorescent lights donated by NYSERDA.

For further information contact Peter Rizzo, CAC member, at 1 Puritan Road, Tonawanda, NY 14150, e-mail at pcrizzo@gmail.com.

Town of LaGrange Conservation Advisory Council Wappinger Creek Restoration Project 2006 Action Award

The Town of LaGrange Conservation Advisory Council completed a major project to restore a critical section of the Wappinger Creek bank in August, 2006. It required approximately 32 months and more than 500 man-hours of volunteer effort by many organizations including Dutchess County EMC, Trout Unlimited, Boy Scout Troop 50, Dutchess Quarry and the Town of LaGrange.



Dr. Maung Htoo, LaGrange CAC Chairman and NYSACC Director, accepts the award from Joy Squires, NYSACC President.

The restoration of the bank section is critical for two reasons:

first, the Town of LaGrange Wappinger Creek Greenway Trail is located within a few feet of the bank edge and secondly, erosion is severe at this location since this bank is located on the outside of a 90-degree creek bend.

In the last few years, erosion has accelerated because of housing development upstream with the subsequent increase in storm water drainage. Since the trail easement boundary on the land side has an absolute fixed location, continued erosion could literally cut the town trail in half.

The project was complex since it required a town-wide public hearing, and approvals from the Town Planning Board, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, US Army Corps of Engineers and the private landowner who owned the access path to the creek bend.

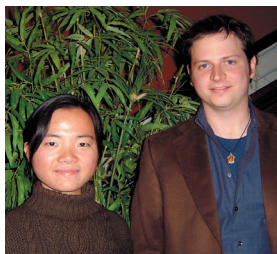
The first attempt to restore the bank through the use of grasses and shrubs with a few feet of rock at either end failed. The cause was a nine inch rainstorm in October 2005 and the subsequent flooding.

The second attempt at restoration consisted of lining the bank with one hundred and twenty tons of huge boulders, donated by Dutchess Quarry, and planting grass seed and shrubs along the top of the bank. Watering these grass/shrubs was accomplished by use of a special pump specified by CAC that was purchased by Trout Unlimited.

The project demonstrates the leadership of the Town of LaGrange Conservation Advisory Council in all phases of the project including soliciting donation for the huge boulders, obtaining the necessary permits, coordinating the volunteer activities of several organizations and persevering in the restoration effort.

For further information contact Dr. Maung Htoo, CAC Chairman, at 10 Rabbit Trail Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603, e-mail at mhtoo@verizon.net

NYSACC's Student Scholarship Winners



NYSACC, as an organization, and NYSACC Directors, in particular, have a strong commitment to encouraging involvement of students in NYSACC and in conservation commissions. We believe firmly that they are the hope for the future of the environmental movement.

For this reason NYSACC offers student scholarships to our annual Conference on the Environment. This year's scholarship winners are Hanqian Zhang and Michael Gale.

Hanqian Zhang is a second year graduate student at the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University, majoring in environmental engineering. Her focus is on water resource management. She graduated with honors from Beijing Forestry University, College of Materials Science and Technology.

Hanqian is interested in multidisciplinary approaches to address the emerging water problems in China by analyzing the current status of water quality, quantity, and distribution, related social problems, potential solutions and reasonable suggestions which may facilitate the alleviation of water crisis.

After graduating from Yale in May of 2007, Hanqian plans to conduct two summer internships, one in England and one in Australia. She expects to work on water economics and equity, as well as watershed management. Hanqian is also applying for a PhD study at Oxford University.

Michael Gale is a graduate student at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, studying environmental policy and working to form a new student organization in Syracuse addressing environmental policy. He plans to work in environmental policy at the federal government level.

Michael has worked in the environmental field at the Baltimore Zoo, the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, the National Geographic Society, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the International Fund for Animal Welfare. He has also served as a research assistant to a member of the Irish Parliament.

He has served as Director of Environmental Affairs for the University of Florida Student Government and as Communications Coordinator for SustainUS, the U.S. youth network for sustainable development. Michael is a founding member of Society for Tomorrow's Environmental Policy (STEP), a graduate student organization dedicated to environmental policy.

For other references regarding student involvement refer to the Winter 1998, Summer 2000 and Spring 2005 issues of NYSACC News.

Websites of Note

Our student scholarship winners are not the only youthful environmentalists, as these websites will confirm. Could your CAC/CB tap into some of these organizations for student members?



- www.unep.org/tunza/youth
Website of the TUNZA Youth Strategy - a UN organization which develops activities with a vision toward fostering a generation of environmentally conscious citizens capable of positive action.
- www.earthforce.org
Earthforce trains educators in programs that enable young people to lead community action projects focused on creating sustainable solutions to local environmental issues.
- www.yesworld.org
Website of Youth for Environmental Sanity, an organization which inspires and empowers young change-makers to join forces for a sustainable way of life by operating action camps and offering school performances.
- www.udall.gov/udall.asp?link=200
Website of the Morris K. Udall Undergraduate Scholarship awarded to students who have demonstrated commitment to careers related to the environment.
- www.yesc.org
Website of the YMCA Earth Service Corps, a service-learning program for teens ready to make a difference in their communities.
- www.sustainus.org
Website of SustainUS, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization of young people advancing sustainable development and youth empowerment in the U.S.

NYSACC News

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NYSACC News is published three times a year. CACs are encouraged to submit press releases, articles, artwork or photography to the editor.

For additional copies of NYSACC News and address changes, contact the Newsletter office.

Light Pollution: Our Vanishing Dark Skies

There are generations of children growing up who have never seen the Milky Way Galaxy, because of light pollution. Light pollution is rapidly degrading the sky's quiet majesty and our nighttime environment. Excessive and misdirected outdoor illumination wastes precious energy, resources and dollars; it increases power plant-generated air pollution, causes glare that blinds drivers and pedestrians, intrudes onto our property and invades our privacy.

Light shining across property lines is commonly known as light trespass. This unwelcome intrusion can prevent neighbors from enjoying their property outdoors after dark. The negative impact of light trespass can also rob nearby residents of a sound night's sleep when it shines through windows, thus needlessly increasing stress levels and may even affect their health.

Medical research has proven everyone's body needs a dark environment to sleep. If that sleeping environment is interrupted by unnatural light the body suppresses its secretion of melatonin. Melatonin is a vital hormone that all mammals produce that helps to rid the body of cancer-causing "free radicals" which can cause extensive cellular damage.

Wildlife can be badly affected by light pollution. Birds, bats, fish, insects and amphibians find their night habits changed - reproduction, migration, etc. - by the presence of prevailing lights that distort the natural day-night cycle.

Properly designed outdoor lighting shines downwards, putting the light where it is needed and often uses less energy. The glare from poorly designed security lighting causes dark shadows that provide easy cover for criminals. Well designed (shielded) security lighting lights the scene, rather than causing glare that easily masks criminal activity.

There is much you can do to eliminate light pollution. Begin by getting your elected officials to adopt light pollution control ordinances. Ask your local municipality to purchase streetlights that point the light at the ground, where it is needed, rather than upward into the sky or sideways - into drivers' eyes. Don't leave your outside lights on all night. Try to reverse the trend of light pollution so children can actually see the Milky Way.

Check out these web links to increase your understanding and awareness:

www.darksky.org
www.selene-ny.org
www.crlaction.org
www.iesna.org

Reprinted from Long Island Lighthouse

Mike Cavanaugh Receives Award

At the 2006 Conference on the Environment, NYSACC and NYSAEMC honored Mike Cavanaugh, of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for his many years of involvement and support.

As a Citizen Participation Specialist in Public Affairs, Mike worked for many years with CACs and EMCs administering NYS's reimbursable funding program. He came to be a friend and a source of encouragement and support to many of us.

Mike has faithfully attended the Conference on the Environment held annually and has coordinated NYSAEMC's yearly June NYSDEC Update.



Joy Squires, Mike Cavanaugh and Mikel Shakarjian, NYSAEMC President.

A pilot, restorer of wooden canoes, and outdoor enthusiast, Mike was sent by DEC to assist in Katrina hurricane aid in Jackson County, Mississippi. He spent three weeks in September 2005 working 14 to 16 hour days conducting media tours, orientations for recovery volunteers and supporting public information efforts. Mike says the memories of what he saw will never fade.

After 33 years, Mike has not lost his interest and involvement in our organizations, his passion for public participation, and his commitment to NYS's natural resources.

Forming a New CAC or CB?

NYSACC has received inquiries concerning the formation of a new Conservation Advisory Council or Conservation Board. Questions have been raised about how and why to move from being a CAC to a CB. These inquiries have come from people in Rockland and Ulster Counties and from the Towns of Rensselaerville, Berne and Rochester. There may be interest in other areas. We just don't know. Contact us through our website, e-mail or by telephone. NYSACC Directors are prepared to help.

If there is interest, NYSACC could run a workshop on forming a CAC in a central location. We would cover our enabling legislation, Article 12F of NYS General Municipal Law Section 239x which is the basis for the existence of municipal CACs. The workshop would provide materials of value to CAC operation, possible activities and the sharing of experience of established Conservation Boards.

Watch for information of this possible spring workshop on NYSACC's website, www.nysaccny.org and in NYSACC News.

Pete Warn's Snow Story

The lights went out at 5:15 PM, Thursday, October 12th - the day before the 2006 Conference on the Environment was to begin at the Chautauqua Institution in the southwestern corner of New York State. They came back on seven days later, almost to the hour.

During that week, we saw emergency responders and recovery crews work prodigious hours in less than wonderful weather. Snow plow drivers drove through the night. Tree trimmers climbed 70 foot high

maples and elms to clear limbs dangling above power lines, and cleared traffic lanes for the power restoration crews and their heavy equipment. Power line crews worked from the comfort of a bucket high above their truck when they could, and more often on foot spikes on a pole - which is very hard on the legs. These men worked 14 to 16 hours a day for 10 days straight.

I talked with crews from Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, both Carolinas and Connecticut. I'm sure there were many other states represented. Many of them work this catastrophe gig regularly. Many had been to Katrina and other hurricanes.

What happened here was not anywhere as bad as a hurricane. There was very little damage to homes and buildings. The heavy wet snow stuck to the leaves which were not yet off the trees. This caused the branches and limbs to come down. Remember, we picked this weekend for the Conference because the colors should have been at their peak.

There was little to no wind to blow trees over, so only a few trees toppled over on structures. Limbs and branches came down on cars and power lines - and that is the gist of the story. Actually, the gist of the story is to analyze how dependent we have become on a steady reliable source of electricity.

The weather phenomena that created this unique catastrophe will be an interesting study for the meteorologists. One of the factors noted is that Lake Erie is some 18 to 20 degrees warmer than normal at this time of the year. This provided an unusual temperature and moisture exchange for the cold air coming across from southern Canada. There was a combination of winds, moisture and heat, questioning our federal administration's reassurances that global warming is a figment of our imagination.



Photo by David Spira

Some lessons learned:

The power companies had cut way back on trimming the trees around their power lines. It's amazing how much vegetation was growing directly above the lines. It probably looked like a good economy cost savings idea at the time - not spending the equipment and manhours on all the routine trimming. - but they are paying for it BIG TIME now.

A new high efficiency furnace will not run

off a generator if you have replaced the plugs on your old 100 foot extension cord and not paid any attention to getting the polarity correct. Polarity and grounding are vital in the workings of high tech electronics. I needed an eight year old grandchild to teach me that.

The NYS Thruway can be shut down to allow one way traffic. Long convoys of power company trucks and all sorts of emergency responders were allowed unrestricted passage into an area when normal traffic was curtailed. I had assumed they shut down the Thruway for snow removal. What did I know.

The supply of patience was one of the things that could not be shipped in. After the tree trimmers and power line men have done their restorative magic, the phone companies and cable companies are allowed in - usually a week or two later. They usually rent space on the power companies' poles, so they cannot come in until the power company feels conditions are safe.

If these power lines, phone lines and cables were underground we would not have these problems. The supply of natural gas was never affected, because their lines are underground. If all lines were underground, they would have been unaffected. However, I suspect we would probably have a whole new set of problems to deal with.

Hurricanes, tornados, and earthquakes are a whole lot more devastating. New York State is still a good place in which to live. We can handle the big snow events and such disruptions. This inconvenience only highlighted our dependence on electricity. Let's pay better attention to how it is made, and how it is distributed to us to make it more reliable.

I was not questioning that "Mother Nature Rules." I already knew that. I didn't think I needed refresher training on that. But she provided it anyway. BIG TIME.

Pete Warn

President's Message

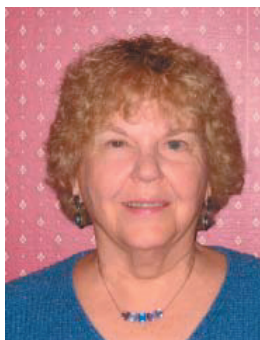
Environmentalists are tough! Remember the old adage "Neither rain, nor snow, not heat nor gloom of night stays -----." Well, it is really about environmentalists.

This column does not usually contain a post-conference discussion, but how can I possibly miss telling you some stories?

The 2006 Conference on the Environment took place Friday through Sunday, October 13 to 15 in Chautauqua, which is 80 miles southwest of Buffalo. Thursday, an extraordinary weather event hit Buffalo and the towns to the north. Up to two feet of heavy, wet snow blanketed the area, falling on trees, which had not yet lost their leaves. Throughout the night branches and trees fell, taking down power lines. Even the Buffalo water supply was threatened. Conference attendees not directly affected by snow awoke to discover it would be difficult and in many cases, impossible to get to Chautauqua.

The Buffalo airport closed, so Simon Skolnik, NYSACC's Vice President couldn't get through. Rochester and Syracuse attendees traveled the southern route as the Thruway was closed. Pete Rizzo, NYSACC Director and member of Tonawanda's CAC, dug people out, cut trees, and worried about the driving ban. He was responsible for organization of the Friday afternoon program. Pete Warn's story is on page five of this newsletter. The NYS Secretary of State, Christopher Jacobs, the Keynote Speaker, couldn't get out of Buffalo.

The most terrifying story, though it had a happy ending, involved Eve Fertig, NYSACC Director, chair of the Alden



CAC and former recipient of the Margery Sachs Service Award. Eve is the director and wildlife rehabilitator of The Enchanted Forest Wildlife Sanctuary, Inc. She, and her husband, Norm, have devoted their lives to personally caring for sick, injured, orphaned and distressed wildlife. So out they went Thursday night to feed their animals. The storm intensified. A tree fell blocking their way back into their house. They tried frantically to climb over the tree. Desperate, Eve noticed their wolf/dog Shana digging a tunnel under the tree. She and Norm leaned on the dog's back and Shana pulled them through to safety! The Fertigs are in their eighties. Eve is a tiny 86 pounds. The storm wiped out their food and medicine supply as well as damaging the facility. If you would like to help, any donation to restore their supplies and the facility would be most appreciated. The address is Enchanted Forest Wildlife Sanctuary, Inc., 111380 Cary Road, Alden, NY 14004. www.nfwhc.org/groups/enchanted.htm.

On page three of this newsletter, we tell you a little about Han-qian Zhang receiving a student scholarship. She had been to Manhattan only twice, but managed to find her way from New Haven, Connecticut to a magazine rack in a bookstore to find Holly Dunitz, an EMC member from Rockland County. Holly had offered her home for the night and a ride to the Conference. These two young women connected and provided us with interesting opportunities for networking.

We keep saying NYSACC is about networking, environmental issues, ways to solve them, and preserving and protecting New York's quality of life. Most of all, it is about the people who are part of it; people with perseverance, passion, and pluck. Environmentalists are tough!

Joy Squires

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