

The Beginnings of the Twin/Walker Creeks Watershed Conservancy Joyce Laudise

It was early summer of 2000, Dave Kirk was fishing at a stream near the house on Walker Lake that he and his wife Leanne had recently built, having left NJ for a quieter retired life in the Poconos. Bill Manner, a representative of the Pa Dept of Environmental Protection, happened by, casually asked for Dave's fishing license and they started talking about Walker Lake, the streams nearby by and Dave's passion for fishing. Dave was somewhat in disbelief that he could just take a short walk from his house to catch then release some of the best fish he had ever seen. Discussion got around to the need to protect such a special place. Ed told Dave about a meeting that would take place on Saturday, July 8, 2000 at the Pike County Conservation Office in Hawley. Ed mentioned that the main purpose of the meeting was to enlist citizens as volunteers to monitor and protect PA lakes, streams and wetlands **and** that state money was available.

Walker Lake and the Twin Lakes had been monitored over the years by their respective associations. Joyce Laudise had been in contact with Sally Corrigan at the Pike County Conservation District seeking funding for equipment to continue monitoring the Twin Lakes. Sally mentioned the July meeting to her.

Dave and Joyce both attended. Bill introduced them to each other and said they should work together because the Twin Lakes and Walker Lakes are smaller parts of a common watershed that enters the Delaware River. He suggested a watershed association would be eligible for a Growing Greener Grant if members worked to prevent pollution and keep this part of the Delaware River of High Quality.

Dave enlisted Ralph and Linda Cioppa, Peter Wulfhorst, and Joyce got PD McCullough, Peter Loewrigkeit, and Joe and Pat Messineo. They worked like beavers to get a plan in place. They (1) defined the boundaries of the Twin/Walker Creeks watershed, (2) identified interested stakeholders within the boundaries, (3) wrote a constitution and by-laws, (4) incorporated and filed for 501c3 status, (5) applied for and received a Growing Greener Grant.

The first public meeting of the Conservancy was held on June 23, 2001 at the Walker Lake Clubhouse. The following winter there was much to do. Using the

grant money, an outside consultant was hired to do a comprehensive study and offer suggestions for managing the watershed. He relied on Conservancy members for help with such things as measuring stream flow, identifying runoff and erosion sites, observing the flora and fauna and getting him out of a ditch in a snowstorm. A wet Chem. Lab was constructed in the basement of the Walker Lake clubhouse and allowed the Conservancy to do their own water analysis.

Dave was a chemist who had been Director of Toxicology at Merck and was responsible for protecting employees from chemical exposure. Joyce had been a teacher who was working part time as a teacher/naturalist with the Union County Park system in NJ. In the winter of 2002-2003 they wrote a manual for water testing and used it to instruct 13 residents who volunteered for lake monitoring in the summer.

Aided by grants and member contributions, other major Conservancy projects have included an oil tank/septic system survey with resulting outreach, plus remediation of storm water sites and depth readings for the three principle lakes in the watershed. Watching over the watershed including monitoring the lakes and the education of residents are ongoing.

Twenty years later and Dave's untimely death in 2016 and Joe Messineo's death in 2015 the need to protect our watershed is just as important as it was then. Whenever you put in hours of sweat equity and/or contribute financially to the Conservancy think of this proverb, "We have not inherited the world from our forefathers. We have borrowed it from our children." Dave, Joe and those who formed the Conservancy but have moved away or retired would be pleased to know the work they began continues with your help.