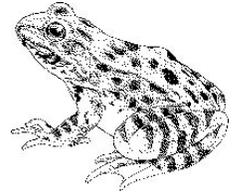


FRIENDS OF HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK



JUNE 2007

E-MAIL ADDRESS: info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

WEB SITE: <http://friendsofhuntleymeadows.org>

Note From the President

Recently, I took a walk out on the boardwalk with Gary Roisum, our retiring Park Manager. I heard several stories that were new to me and had lots of memories sparked by a period when I was a staff member at Huntley Meadows Park. My intention with this article is to give you an idea of how Gary has truly “parented” Huntley Meadows Park from birth to the present day.

Gary came to work for Fairfax County Park Authority in 1977 after 3 years working for the City of Bowie, Maryland, where among other duties, he prepared the master plan for White Marsh Park. Previous to that he was an interpreter for the National Capital Park Service and led programs at Theodore Roosevelt Island, Great Falls Park and Fort Hunt Park. During his tenure with the National Park Service, he was chosen to escort President Nixon’s wife, Patricia, to the dedication ceremony for Wolf Trap Farm.

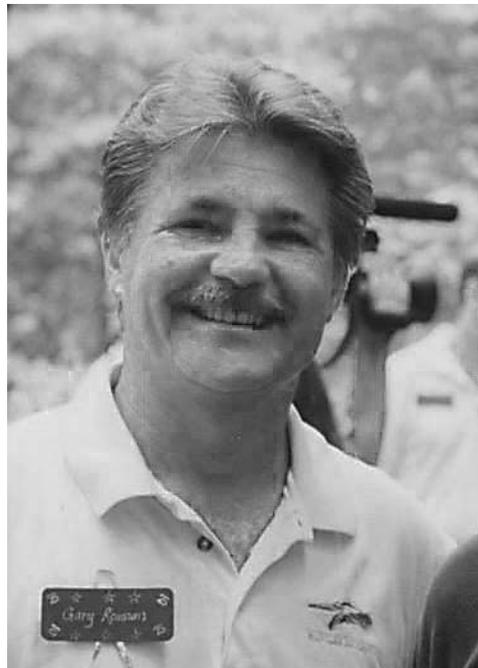
Why did Gary come to Huntley Meadows Park? He was attracted to the size and undeveloped character of the park.

Here were 1,261 acres and an opportunity to take the helm and manage a freshwater wetland, hardwood forests and meadows – a natural island in a suburban sea. Sounds like quite a challenge, and as we look back, one that he was certainly up for!

Gary was the first staff member hired at Huntley Meadows Park with a mandate to develop this piece of land into a County park open for visitors. It was an intense time and things had to be accomplished quickly!

Gary began by writing grants – several to each of YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) and YACC (Young Adult Conservation Corps). These two grants resulted in almost \$500,000 over 4 years for construction of a boardwalk, trail system, and renovation of the 1950’s buildings on the north side of the park, which was the original park entrance off South Kings Hwy. The grants allowed for construction of two amphitheatres, several wooden bridges and miles of trails in other parks throughout Fairfax County. Needless to say, Gary’s primary focus was HMP! He did the planning and technical

aspects of construction and then hired crews of teens and young adults. Construction of the origi-



Gary Roisum

nal boardwalk began in 1979 and was completed in 1982. Gary's young crew thought he was crazy building a boardwalk over what was, at that time, dry land. But Gary had vision and he noticed the signs of increased beaver activity. Gary and his crew weren't the only construction crew in the wetland!



YACC Building Boardwalk

While Gary was managing construction of the boardwalk, he was also developing plans for the new Visitor Center that would be accessible from Lockheed Blvd. Due to the process of funding construction via the County's Bond Program, planning had to be done several years ahead. In 1983 the original Visitor Center and connecting trails to the boardwalk were dedicated. Carolyn Gamble, a new staff member, and Gary designed and built the exhibits for the new visitor center. It was a very exciting, challenging, and exhausting time for them! Gary set up the first silk screen workshop for the Park Authority which enabled them to silk screen their own exhibit material. The Visitor Center was just 2,700 square feet with a wood-burning stove and no air conditioning. While visitors and school groups were attending new educational programs, Gary was already



New Boardwalk Being Build Adjacent to Old

planning for the expansion of the Visitor Center. It was doubled in size in 1990, and boasted a larger auditorium, larger exhibit hall and a new classroom with specimen lab and reference library.

Back to the wetland.... While all of this construction was going on during the early to mid-1980's, what was happening out in the wetland? The park's "Wetland Managers," the beavers, had constructed a larger dam, so there was quite a lot of water in the central wetland. It was a vibrant and healthy freshwater wetland with breeding populations of American Bittern, Yellow Crowned Night Heron, Least Bittern, Pied-billed Grebe, Common Moorhen, King Rail, River Otter, Large Mouth Bass and Chain Pickerel. The crayfish and macro-invertebrate populations were numerous and healthy. In turn, they provided a broad and available food base.

Gary remembers the exact date – August 2, 1986 – when there was a storm event that dumped hundreds of tons of silt into HMP! At the time there was major home construction occurring north of the park. This storm event brought havoc to the park's wetland. The boardwalk was covered

with silt in several places and sediment covered the aquatic vegetation. If this wasn't enough of an environmental threat, Fairfax County Transportation officials were trying to get approval to build a connecting four lane highway through the northern part of HMP from Telegraph Road to Lockheed Blvd. The natural island in the suburban sea was under a severe threat during this

period! Fortunately, in 1990, the County was denied permission to construct the highway through the park, since it was determined by the National Park Service that adverse environmental impact to

the park's ecological resources could result.

Since that time Gary has planned and overseen many public hearings, informational meetings, etc. He is always prepared to try to answer the questions brought by the public and willing to relay their concerns and questions to the Park Authority. We all know that this is not always a pleasant job! Huntley Meadows Park couldn't have asked for a better "watchdog" in protecting this unique resource from further degradation.

Gary oversaw consultant contracts that assessed the siltation in the wetland and offered methods for future management in 1992. He oversaw the construction of the second and current boardwalk in 1993 and he oversaw controversial projects such as deer population management and exotic invasive plant management, more recently. He has also overseen the acquisition and development of the Historic Huntley property, which gives us a more complete picture of how the land in the park has been used over the last 200 years. In the past year he managed the stream restoration project for the Barnyard Run tributary which significantly reduces stream erosion and subsequent sedimentation of the central wetland.

Gary Roisum has played an integral part in the preservation and management of Huntley Meadows Park over the past 30 years. Even though the wetland suffers biologically from siltation, it continues to amaze visitors on a daily basis. It also acts as a living, learning classroom for vast numbers of school aged children.

All these years Gary has played a major role,

often behind the scene, planning, studying the issues, and getting funding for park projects. Gary told me that he feels pretty lucky that he's been able to secure the funds to take care of this unique park. I say that it's a little luck and a lot of hard

work!

When asked what he will miss at Huntley Meadows Park, Gary replied that he will miss the staff, first and foremost. As he says he "has been blessed to have a knowledgeable and hardworking staff all these years in a pleasant working environment."

Gary also said that

he "will miss the wildness of the park because it is truly a large natural island in a suburban sea."

Finally, I asked Gary what he would like to see happen at the park over the next 20 years. He said that he would like to see the wetland improved in health and restored to the vitality that it once had in the 1980's, so that future generations will appreciate and benefit from it. He would like to see the construction of a "green" environmental education facility near the South Kings Hwy entrance and accelerated completion of Historic Huntley restoration.

Sounds pretty good to me! I know that you join me in thanking Gary Roisum for his dedication to this unique park that all of us love and cherish!

Kathi McNeil



Framing of the First Visitor's Center

FOHMP sponsors Photography Camp for Teens

FOHMP is joining Huntley Meadows Park in offering a photography camp for teens (ages 12-16) this summer. The dates are Monday - Thursday, July 23-26, 9-1. The camp will be based at the HMP Visitor Center. Participants will be asked to bring their own digital cameras. We will also have access to a laptop and digital projector for printing and slide shows. As a follow-up, we will encourage the photos taken to be displayed in the visitor center and entered in the annual FOHMP photography contest in October 2007. To register, please call the HMP Visitor Center at 703 780-5939. The cost will be \$90 per participant. We are looking for assistance with this program. If you have skills in digital photography and computer applications and enjoy working with this age group, please contact Kathi McNeil at krmcneil2105@aol.com or Melissa Gaulding at HMP at 703 768-2525.

Used Book Donations Needed

Before Gary sails away into the sunset, he may want to jettison some of the nature books he's accumulated over the years and replace them with books on Costa Rica and Mexico. Luckily, he can donate his books to the Friends of HMP book sale right here at the park. The book sale generates funds for the FOHMP budget which supports initiatives and programs at Huntley Meadows. It's been a successful fundraiser so far but relies on a steady stream of book donations and book buyers. So if you're winnowing down and weeding out books, please think about donating them to the sale. The book sale focus is used nature books for both children and adults. Books can be dropped off anytime during visitor center hours. Please mention that they are for the book sale.

Thank you very much for your help.

Marianne Mooney

Wetlands Awareness Day was wonderful!

Sunday, May 6th dawned cool and clear with gusty breezes: another perfect day for our annual Wetlands Awareness Day celebration. There was a steady flow of visitors, totaling 740 for the day. The afternoon was packed with enjoyable and educational activities, from music organized by Karen Nyere (who is our Café Cattail hostess!) to boardwalk interpretation of shorebirds and beavers. Our Kids' Fun Fair sold over 1100 tickets, with children winning prizes at a variety of games and vying for cakes in our Cake Walk. Kent Knowles of the Raptor Conservancy brought rehabilitated raptors, which is always a hit with visitors, and Erica Yeary of the Wildlife Rescue League enthralled people with tales of rehabilitating beavers and rescuing snakes. Thank you to FOHMP for continued support of this event, and hearty appreciation to all our super volunteers for making the day run smoothly. See you next year!

Melissa Gaulding

New Park Manager and New Administrative Assistant

Please join the FOHMP Board and HMP staff in welcoming our new Park Manager, Kevin Munroe. Kevin will be starting at HMP on Monday, May 7. He comes to us from the Northern Virginia Audubon Society where he was the Program Coordinator and Staff Naturalist. Previous to that position he was an Environmental Specialist for the Reston Association. Kevin will join us at our Annual Meeting on June 16.

Also, Nancy Pryor, long time volunteer program leader and last year's HMP Volunteer of the Year, is now a paid staff member. She was hired in April, filling the position vacated by Jenn Carlson. Please welcome Nancy.

FOHMP Annual Meeting

June 16, 2007 7-9pm

Huntley Meadows Park Visitor Center

We will begin with a short reception with refreshments recognizing our new Lifetime Members and introducing Kevin Munroe, our new Park Manager. Elections will be held and then we are off for a walk in the Park. Hope you can make it!

New Lifetime Members

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park would like to thank the following new Lifetime Members:

Julie Howard and
Howard Gubstein
Joel C. Miller
Patricia P. Salamone
Laura West



Welcome to our 2007 summer intern

FOHMP will once again be supporting an education intern for Summer 2007! Thanh Pham is a rising junior at George Mason University, studying biotechnology. She has been a teaching assistant and has tutored math on the elementary school level. Thanh tells us she loves everything about nature and enjoys sharing that love with children; her favorite class this semester at GMU is plant biology. We will be keeping her busy assisting with summer camps and developing a program for 6 to 8 year olds about animal survival strategies. Thanh will be with us from June 4th to August 10th.

Melissa Gaulding

Birdathon 2007

The May 8th Birdathon was a big success this year, with 96 species found by the 4 teams of volunteers and staff members. Among the highlights of the day were sora, common moorhen, turkey (my first here in 17 years of birding), Savannah sparrow, and twelve species of warblers. The most common species was the red-winged blackbird with 96 individuals counted, while the top warbler was again the common yellowthroat with 86 individuals.

Every year the Birdathon also gives us a chance to reflect on the lives of two volunteers, Ken Howard and Ed Weigel. The proceeds it generates go toward sponsoring a Resource Management internship at the Park in their memory.

Thanks again to everyone who contributed their time, expertise and donations to this wonderful cause.

It's not too late to help us reach our goal of \$2500. Checks can be made payable to FCPA-HMP and sent to Birdathon, HMP, 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA 22306

Andy Higgs

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

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Sarah Stromayer (Vice President)
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Norma Hoffman Chuck Studholme
Ben Jesup



Web address:
Email addresses
General Information:
Membership Info: Connie Carpender
Donations and dues: Sally Cureton
Newsletter Inquiries/submissions: Ken Larsen
Questions For Park Staff

<http://friendsofhuntleymeadows.org>

info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
membership@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
treasurer@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
newsletter@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
staff@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

Are You A Member?

Please

help support Huntley Meadows Park and join

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park!

Become a member of FRIENDS OF HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK. (FOHMP) and help to protect and preserve the park. Your annual dues (tax deductible) will keep you informed and help support the nature center's programs. Please fill out and mail this application today!

Membership Information

Note Our new dues schedule is as follows:

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| ◆ Senior | \$5.00 | ◆ Family | \$15.00 |
| ◆ Individual | \$10.00 | ◆ Lifetime Membership | \$150.00 |

_____ **Yes! I would like to join FRIENDS!**

_____ I'd like to renew my membership. Enclosed is \$____.00 annual dues for a _____ membership. (*Please make checks payable to FOHMP.*)

Additional \$____.00 donation enclosed.

_____ I have some comments and/or suggestions: _____

_____ I'm interested in learning more about volunteering at the Park.

_____ I would like to volunteer at the Park.

If you checked that you would like to volunteer, please help us by indicating your areas of knowledge and/or interest. _____

- FOHMP Volunteer Coordinator Park Watch Promoting Friends Special Events Mailing
- Phoning Members For Lectures and Special Events Letter Writing Campaign As Needed

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (h) _____ (w) _____

E-mail Address: _____

Please Mail To: FRIENDS OF HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK

c/o Huntley Meadows Park
3701 Lockheed Boulevard
Alexandria, VA 22306

E-MAIL ADDRESS: info@friendsofhuntleymeadows.org

PHONE: 703/768-2525

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Your membership expires on the date in the upper left corner..
NOTE: Please check your mailing label for accuracy & notify us of any changes .