

The Steep Rock *VISTA*

The Newsletter of the Steep Rock Association

Summer 1999

George D. Ward 1922-1999

Steep Rock lost a great leader with the death, in June, of George Ward. He was Steep Rock's president for eleven years. While he was President, he amassed a remarkable list of achievements.

One of his first big projects was the replacement of the bridge over the Shepaug River in Hidden Valley.

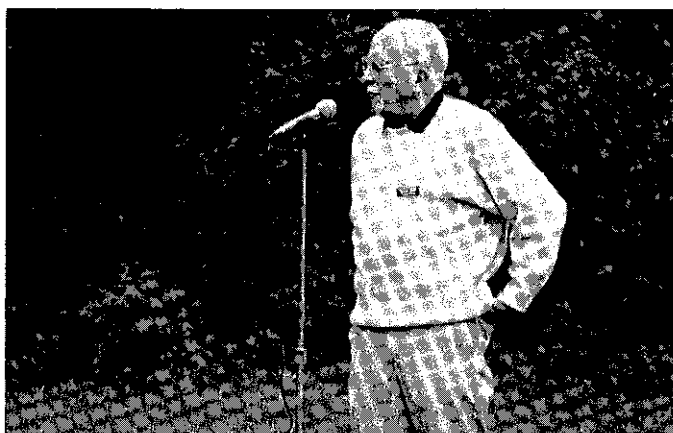
Shortly after that came the opportunity to build a bridge in Steep Rock that would make remote trails in the preserve more accessible. The Hauser Foundation agreed to fund one-half the cost of the bridge if Steep Rock could raise the rest of the money needed. The result was the beautiful Hauser Bridge, a suspension bridge that spans the Shepaug River near the tunnel and the avenue of the pines.

A third bridge was built during George's tenure as president, this time when Steep Rock replaced the foot-bridge over Bee Brook at the entrance to Hidden Valley.

Land acquisition was a top priority with George, and Steep Rock acquired several parcels of land while he was president. Here's a partial list:

- key land behind Steep Rock itself - a gift from the Daniel Carew family.
- The West Mountain area - gifts of land from donors Rita and Gus Hauser, Kenneth Grief, Jayne Bentzen, Benedict Silverman and Peter and Brooke Hayward Duchin.
- The Carter Preserve- totaling more than 160 acres, donated by Litchfield County resident Arthur Carter. It was the single largest donation of land since Adrian vanSinderen gave the 700 acres that make up most of Hidden Valley.
- The Woodruff property - a purchase of land that preserves and protects a significant part of the ridgeline southwest of the Steep Rock overlook. The ridgeline comprises more than one third of the view from the top of Steep Rock.
- Land swap with the Town of Washington - Steep Rock protected a long stretch of the Shepaug River by deeding land near the new town garage to the town in return for land and a conservation easement from the town along Bee Brook Road next to the river.

Conservation easements - agreements that preserve and protect land while it remains privately owned - are another method of protecting land. George saw to it that



George Ward at Steep Rock's 1995 picnic

George Ward, cont.

the trustees embraced this type of preservation. Steep Rock now holds over seven hundred acres of conservation easements

George Ward was a member of the state Greenways Committee, and in 1993 Steep Rock established the Shepaug Greenway Committee whose long term goal is a Greenway trail that will extend from the confluence of the Shepaug and Housatonic rivers north to Mohawk Mountain and the Appalachian Trail system.

In 1995, Steep Rock spearheaded the formation of the Shepaug River Association whose main purposes are (1) to increase the amount of water released into the Shepaug River from Waterbury Water Company's Shepaug reservoirs and (2) to obtain public access to the 4000 acres of water company land for recreation and conservation (for the Shepaug Greenway). George was the founder of the River Association and spearheaded the effort to save the Shepaug.

George also left his mark on Steep Rock's administration and day to day operation. To promote diversity and create a Board of Trustees that would represent a broad cross section of the community, George oversaw the re-writing of the Certificate of Incorporation. (Before the changes, Trustees were elected for life.) The amended document established rotating terms. Currently, Trustees serve for not more than two three year terms.

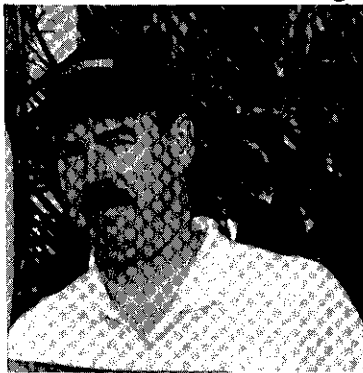
Another change to the Certificate of Incorporation made Steep Rock a membership organization. Here again, the purpose was to create a broad base of representation and support from the community and those who use the Reservations.

George was an extraordinary president, and the Steep Rock community will miss him terribly.

5 New Trustees Elected

Annual Trustee Meeting Held in May

Mark Averill was brought up on the well-known Averill Farm on Calhoun Street. He lived there until 1980, when he bought his home on Sunset Lane.



Mark Averill

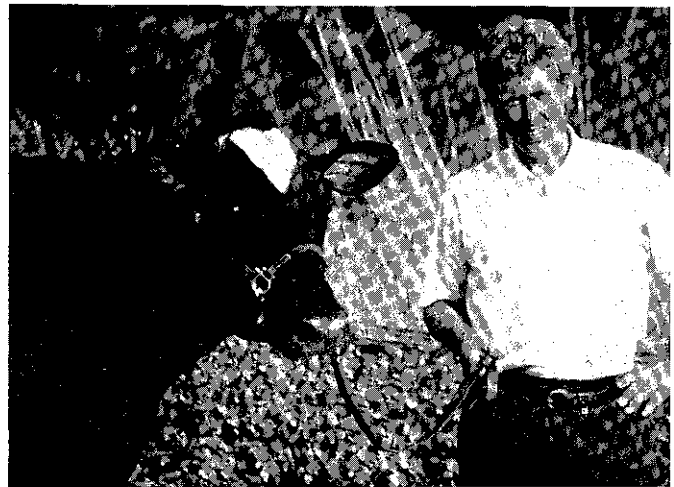
He graduated from Washington High School in 1968 and has been an active member of the fire department since 1972.

Mark has owned and operated Titus Park Garage in the Depot since 1973.

John Potter grew up in Washington, attending local schools and graduating from Washington High School. During those years he was very involved in horseback riding and spent a great deal of time riding in Steep Rock and Hidden Valley.

He graduated from Cornell University with a degree in biology and taught science in Danielson, CT for a year.

When he returned to Washington, he first farmed with his father Art. Now John and his brother Tim run the farm, milking 200 head of Holstein cattle and marketing frozen cattle embryos worldwide.



John Potter

John has served as chairman of the Zoning Commission and also as a coach and member of the Board of Directors of the Washington Youth Hockey Association.

John and his wife Anne have two grown sons, both of whom are married. They await their first grandchild.



Natalie Dyer

Natalie Dyer grew up in Washington and has spent a lifetime walking, canoeing, riding and cross country skiing in Hidden Valley and Steep Rock.

She retired from teaching at Rumsey Hall in 1993 to devote more time to her farm and her environmental interests. Last year the Natalie granted a conservation easement on a portion of her property to Steep Rock.

She and her husband, Elisha, have three grown daughters and live on Buffum Road.

Robert Mnuchin has been a homeowner in Washington since June 1979. More than 300 acres of his property on Nettleton Hollow Road have been protected by a conservation easement granted to Steep Rock.

Robert, a former senior partner at Goldman Sachs, and his wife, Adriana, are owners of the Mayflower Inn. Since the renovated Inn opened in 1992, it has earned many awards for excellence.

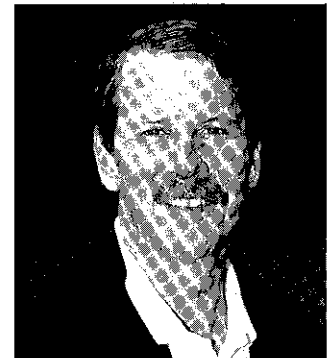


Robert Mnuchin

Stephen Solley, along with his brother Nick, owns and operates a farm in Washington. Stephen is vice president of the Litchfield County Farm Bureau and is also a member of the Sunny Valley Preserve Committee organized by the Connecticut Chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

Steve was a member of the Washington Zoning Board of Appeals for 12 years and is now a member of the Washington Wetlands Commission as well as the Ad Hoc Conservation Commission.

He lives with his wife, Beth, and their three children on Judea Cemetery Road near the original Solley Farm.



Steve Solley

“Friendly” Dogs Cause Problems

Complaints Increase – Signs Posted

Imagine this, if you will. While enjoying a walk in Steep Rock or Hidden Valley, you look up to see, several yards ahead, another walker approaching. This walker has a large dog, and when the dog sees you he charges forward toward you. The owner, calls out, “Don’t worry – he won’t bite – he’s friendly!” The dog reaches you, jumps on you, gets his dirty pawprints on your clothing, and may even lick your face leaving you wet with saliva. Another scenario, equally unpleasant, is the small dog, nipping at your heels (i.e., biting you!), while its owner says, “He doesn’t mean anything by it!”

Whether you like dogs or not, this can be an unnerving experience, and often is a frightening one. It shows the dog is either not under the owner’s control or that the owner is unaware that the dog’s behavior is unwelcome.

We’ve gotten more complaints about this kind of uncontrolled behavior this year than ever before. In fact some people have stopped walking in Hidden Valley because they fear this kind of assault.

A thoughtful dog owner should keep his pet at his side while passing other walkers, even if that means putting the dog on a leash.

Our walking trails are there for everyone. Those who use a multi-use trail system like ours must have consideration for each other. There must be cooperation among our users, so that each can enjoy the reservations in his own way.

In response to many complaints, we posted reminder notices to dog owners in both Steep Rock and Hidden Valley. Our hope is that the signs will make unwelcome encounters with dogs a thing of the past.

Shepaug Students Spruce Up Steep Rock in

Community Service Program

During the last school year, Shepaug High School instituted a new community service program. Every student is required to give a total of 30 hours of service to the community during his or her four years of high school.

Steep Rock was fortunate to have an enthusiastic group of freshmen help us with several early spring tasks. Guided by Executive Director Susan Branson and parent advisors Barbara Braverman and Mary Anne Greene, the students spent two workdays in the reservations cleaning out and resupplying the outhouses, picking up litter and clearing trails.



From left to right, Jemma Cannavaro, Nicki Carlson, Kathy Allan, Justin Cheney, Amanda Braverman, and Colin Brown at the end of a community service workday in Steep Rock. Other participants included Jon Greene, Ned Jacob, Matt Schwartz, and Tristen Gladstone.

Annual Membership Drive Ends August 31, 1999

Steep Rock’s Membership Drive corresponds to our fiscal year- September 1 to August 31. If you haven’t renewed your membership yet, or if you want to become a member, we welcome you. A contribution of any size entitles you to membership for one year. The funds raised help us to maintain the reservations. Clip and use this form to send in your donation.

Name _____

PO Box /Street _____

Town _____

State, Zip _____

Send To:
Steep Rock Association
PO Box 279
Washington Depot, CT 06794

Drought Causes Steep Rock Closures Extreme Fire Danger Exists No Significant Rain In Sight

As this issue of VISTA went to press, the Steep Rock Association had just announced that it had closed its Reservations - Steep Rock and Hidden Valley - to all users. The total ban went into effect at the end of the annual Washington Horse Show, held on the Steep Rock grounds on Sunday, August 1.

One of the driest springs in recent history has created an extreme forest fire danger. Steep Rock's large forested areas as well as its stands of hemlocks that are already weakened by the wooly adelgid infestation, are in great jeopardy.

A ban on camping has been in effect since June. All fires, including fires in the grills, fireplaces and smoking have been prohibited for more than a week.

The Town of Washington closed Tunnel Road, which runs through the Steep Rock Reservation.

The Trustees felt the closing was the most prudent action to take. The fire danger is very high and the Trustees want to do everything possible to decrease the danger. For now, that means a prohibition of all types of use. We hate to think of a fire breaking out, and we hate even more to think of anyone trapped in Hidden Valley or Steep Rock.

Rainfall has been scant since February, and the forecast is for dry weather through the middle of August, a prediction that means the reservations will not open any time soon.

All those who use Steep Rock and Hidden Valley are asked to respect the Trustees' decision and to obey the prohibition.

Steep Rock Picnic Saturday, September 11, 1999

**Noon 'til 2
Save the Date!
Everyone Welcome**

Watch for your Notice in the Mail

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