

A HISTORY OF
CONSERVATION AND
NATIONAL AFFAIRS & LEGISLATION

The Garden Club of America



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1913–2013



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Eloise Payne Luquer, 1862–1947, watercolorist and founder of the Bedford Garden Club

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INTRODUCTION

An Organization from an Idea

The history of conservation within the framework of the Garden Club of America is the history of the conservation movement in the United States. Originally the intent of the founding group was the simple conservation of what they could immediately see and touch, their gardens and their tangible surroundings. With the progression of time and increasing knowledge of the interconnectedness of the natural world, the concept grew to include forests and plains and today the entire ecosystem of the earth is seen as an object of conservation. From one's backyard to the planet: this is the history of conservation within the Garden Club of America and the history of the American conservation movement. The founding of GCA in 1913 (three years before the creation of the National Park system in 1916) was not a random occurrence. The founders of GCA, as gardeners, were in a unique position to reflect on the natural world and man's influence, for good or bad, on it. As women of intellect and education, they decided to band together, pool their knowledge and resources and act. It should be remembered that conservation as a founding idea was a novel concept and it is a credit to the imagination and sensibilities of the founding members of GCA that preservation of the natural world should be a goal.

The Industrial Revolution of the 19th century had brought prosperity to many but at a cost that was just being recognized. Manifest Destiny was the mantra of expansionists. The wilderness was "tamed", roads were built at a rapid pace to accommodate the expanding growth of the automobile and there was no end in sight. Rural landscapes were disappearing and there seemed to be no checks on development. It was into this chaos that this small group of far-sighted women gathered and decided something had to be done to preserve the natural landscape for future generations.

It was against this backdrop of unbridled change that on April 30, 1913 twelve garden clubs met to discuss their common concerns. The clubs present at the formation meeting were Amateur Gardeners; Baltimore (now Green Spring Valley); Bedford, NY; The Gardeners of Montgomery and Delaware Counties, PA; Illinois (now Lake Forest); Michigan; Orange and Dutchess Counties, NY; Philadelphia; Princeton; Short Hills, NJ; Warrenton, VA; and The Weeders, PA. On May 1, 1913 the group held their first annual meeting at which time they voted to change the name from The Garden Guild to The Garden Club of America. Mrs. J. Willis Martin¹ was elected as the group's first president. The newly elected secretary created a policy statement as follows:

"To stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs, to share the advantages of association through conference and correspondence, in this country and abroad; to aid in the protection of native plants and birds; and to encourage civic planting."



The first four presidents of The GCA, Mrs. J. Willis Martin, Philadelphia, Mrs. Samuel Sloan, Philipstown, Mrs. S. V. R. Crosby, Noth Shore, Mrs. John A. Stewart, Short Hills.

This founding statement of intent is relatively unchanged today. During the first year, five committees were created to "to act in regard to needs that appeal most urgently to the club." Subjects considered during that first year included: grass, forestry and 'The Structural use of Green in Grounds and Gardens.' By 1914 there were 14 member clubs. The creation of a "Committee on Beautifying Settlements and Highways" marked a first step toward a Conservation Committee. It should be remembered here that women did not yet have the right to vote and all this group could do was attempt to exert influence, not take direct action. In addition, "highways" were two lane roads paved and unpaved. Until the Interstate Highway system was created in the 1950s, today's viewer of a 1913 highway would find it quaint and probably charming.

After the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, the GCA asked the Department of Agriculture to issue a bulletin requesting that domestic seeds be preserved in the event that foreign seed sources are interrupted. By the time of the fourth Annual Meeting in June 1916, the Wild Flower Preservation Committee had been formed. The National Parks Committee was also established at that time. Thirty-three clubs were now represented and each club was asked to appoint a member to serve on that committee. This is the first time the word "conservation" was used in a meeting.



On April 6, 1917, America formally declared war against Germany and entered the European conflict. "America is at war, and The GCA must assume what responsibility its name implies....we stand or fall by our food supply," stated Lake Forest Garden Club member Mrs. Walter S. Brewster. The President Woodrow Wilson called upon GCA to encourage everyone to organize and plant vegetable gardens. The Executive Committee passed the following resolution:

"That the Garden Club of America recommends to member clubs that the growing of vegetables...be encouraged in every way'; that the children of the towns and villages be stimulated to plant home gardens with vegetables as well as flowers, and that canning and storing of vegetables be urged as a means of reducing the cost of living as...preparedness in case of emergency."

The war was over by late 1918 and in the spring of 1919 GCA has resumed its annual meetings and the consideration of its mission in a post war world. The answer came in the form of billboards erected by the Society of America Florists. These roadside advertisements with "Say it With Flowers" on 20' x 7' boards began to pop up along the roadways. The introduction of the Model T in 1908 had brought the American public to the roads and presented a new advertising venue to companies.

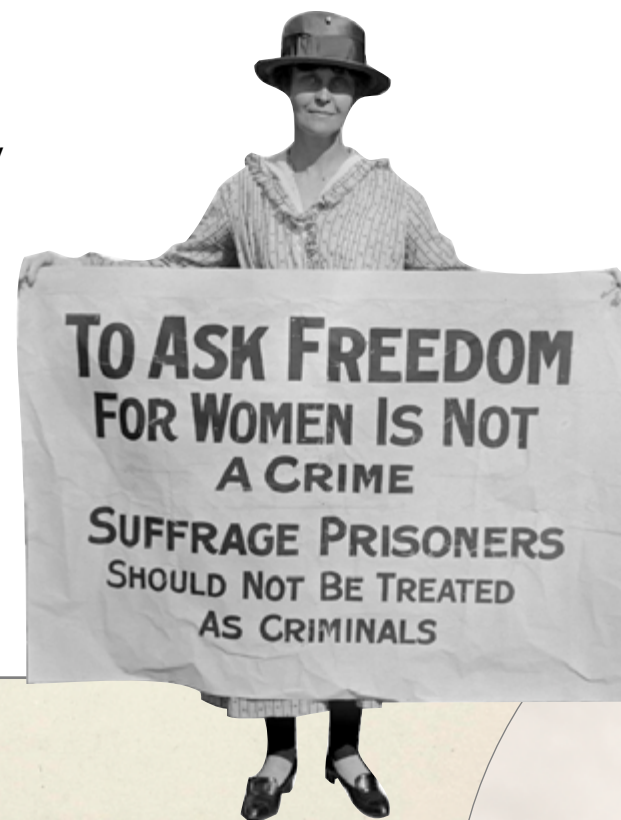


WW I had a significant impact on the direction of the new organization.



Outdoor advertising did not begin with the invention of the automobile but has a history stretching back to the invention of the printing press in the 18th century. Not until the early 20th century however, were these advertisements brought to the countryside. The GCA forwarded a "Resolution of Protest" to the secretary of the Society of American Florists against the erection of the signs. However, it appears that this protest was not representative of the entire GCA membership and did not have much impact.

In 1920 women were granted the vote with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. It was also the year that members voted to incorporate The Garden Club of America. "The period of organization was over and the period of expansion will begin" asserted the new president, Mrs. S.V.R. Crosby of the North Shore Garden Club. ■



THE 1920s

The Birth of the Conservation Committee

One of the first issues taken on by the newly incorporated GCA was the issue of plant quarantine. In 1912, Congress enacted the first law in the United States that restricted the importation of certain plants and animals from abroad. America was the last of the industrialized countries to adopt such legislation. European countries long ago had enacted similar laws spurred on by phylloxera² crisis in the wine industry. However it was not the original legislation that was problematic but a modification to it called Quarantine Order Number 37 issued by the Federal Horticulture Board.³

As with most legislation, first comes the law and then come the regulations and procedures which detail how the law is to be enforced. In the case of the 1912 Quarantine Act, the regulations came in the form of Quarantine Order 37 and it was, by today's standards, draconian in its details. Under these regulations all importations of plant material, whether received at Boston or New Orleans or New York or San Francisco, must first go to Washington for examination and fumigation, being then forwarded to the consignee at his expense; and the delays incident to this procedure and the treatment to which the plants are subjected, have in some cases injured them and in some cases completely killed them. Because of the slowness in processing applications for importation, this Order effectively terminated all ornamental horticulture from entering the United States. The Garden Club of America joined with the Horticultural Society of New York, Massachusetts Horticultural Society and Pennsylvania Horticulture Society and a number of other significant horticulture organizations to protest the enforcement of Quarantine Order 37. In 1921, Mrs. Harold I. Pratt (North Country GC of L.I.) testified at a hearing in Washington called by the Department of Agriculture in favor of a more reasonable plant quarantine law. This battle continued for the next 20 years, ending only when war broke out in Europe making the importation of plants such as Dutch bulbs a moot question.

By 1921, there were 17 GCA committees including Billboards, Legislation, Special Plant Societies and the Wild Flower Preservation Committee. At the January 1922 Annual Meeting, GCA announced that the Committee on Billboard Menace had been renamed the Committee on Roadsides. The early 1920s were marked by the creation of a number of committees reflecting the concerns of garden club members. In addition to the work to improve road-

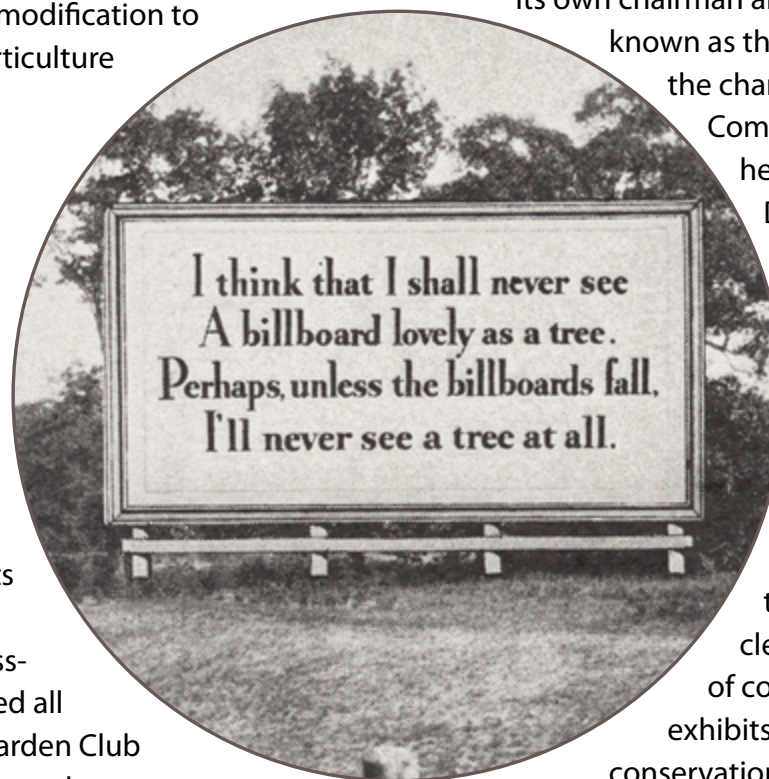
sides, concern about the future of the west coast redwood forests resulted in the establishment of the Forestry Committee.

Mrs. Francis C. Farwell (Lake Forest GC), Chairman of the Wildflower Preservation Committee, worked tirelessly for a National Conservation Day that was adopted by the State Park Conference in 1921, a significant event at the time. The Conference was the first interstate gathering in support of the preservation of natural areas for the enjoyment of the people. On January 14, 1924 in her reply to a letter regarding the formation of a Forestry Committee, Mrs. Farwell wrote, "It has seemed to me that the work that we are actually doing on our committee should have the larger title of Conservation Committee rather than the Wildflower Preservation Committee." She suggested that a Conservation Committee should be divided into three sub committees: forestry, native plants and bird protection each with its own chairman and an overall chairman forming a national committee of four, to be

known as the National Conservation Committee. The Board of Directors approved the changing of the Wild Flower Preservation Committee to the Conservation Committee. Mrs. Farwell continued as chairman until fall 1924 when her health forced her to resign and handed her gavel to Mrs. Thomas W. Donnelley (Lake Forest GC). When Mrs. Farwell died in 1927, Mrs. Harold I. Pratt praised her leadership for the development of the conservation movement in the Garden Club of America. Mrs. Farwell urged the organization toward a united effort to preserve the natural heritage of the nation.

It was in 1924 that the Roadside and Billboard Committees were combined to "urge restriction of all outdoor advertising to commercial districts where it will not injure scenery, civic beauty or residential values, and to educate the public so far as possible, in roadside cleanliness and beautification." This decade also saw the expansion of conservation education in the Garden Club of America. Educational exhibits were added to the International Flower Show in New York City. A conservation department was added to the Bulletin. A "Nature Library", consisting of 13 books and 8 leaflets which could be used by libraries and schools, was developed through the Conservation Office. And GCA gave scholarships to "Nature Camps" to train teachers to educate students about conservation.

However, during this period the records reflect that there was still debate as to whether The GCA should continue to pursue horticulture "as a fine art" or to "step out into the realm of civic achievement." The final consensus was that clubs should be at liberty to determine the needs of their own "backyards" and act accordingly. However, Mrs. William A. Hutcheson (Short Hills GC) rhetorically asked "whether in finding billboards to suppress, rubbish to pick up, national parks to protect, Congress to influence, nurserymen to endorse, wild flowers to save, school children to inspire and towns to plant, we are not in danger of losing sight of our original object, to set a standard (for) 'the finest gardens America can produce.'"



THE 1930s

The Redwoods and The Expansion of the Conservation Committee

The 1930s appear to have been a positive decade for conservation in the GCA. At the Annual Meeting in Seattle in July 1930, Miss Eloise P. Luquer (Bedford GC), Chairman of the Conservation Committee, stated that the conservation program was a constructive one, rather than a list of "Don'ts". Suggestions included growing wild flowers and trees, planting and encouraging the cultivation of Christmas greens rather than wild collection, cooperating with other conservation organizations, planting trees for the George Washington bi-centennial celebration, reforesting burnt-over areas and working for conservation legislation. At the 1931 annual meeting, attendees were encouraged to widen their view and realize that "each and every one of our ninety-four clubs finds that it has become a part of a great national organization... You have become a member of this group not for profit, not for selfish ambition, and if you will think for just one moment you will realize that you have joined The Garden Club of America because have wished to look beyond your own garden gates, beyond the highly localized garden club, you have wished to enter a wider sphere and to establish contacts of keener interest." The drive to establish a GCA redwood grove is probably most symbolic of this effort to reach out beyond the local realm.

In 1930 the GCA raised \$91,634.13 from its own membership that it contributed to the State of California to assist in purchasing a grove on the South Fork of the Eel River in Humboldt County, California. This grove is now known as the "Garden Club of America Grove." The original grove was 2567.72 acres. In 1933, the Redwoods Committee of GCA with the approval of California government authorities contributed \$1500 toward a survey of the redwoods by the firm of Frederick Law Olmsted, one of the most renowned authorities in this field and in 1934 the Grove was dedicated.

Women from all parts of the country contributed to this project, many of them with no hope of themselves seeing the grove.

The history of GCA and the ongoing campaign to save the redwoods stretches from the inception of the Save the Redwoods League in 1918 to the present. At the GCA Annual Meeting in Zone XII in 1935 (sponsored jointly by the Hillsborough, Piedmont and Woodside Atherton Garden Clubs of Northern California the program given to each delegate stated:

"From earliest times men have found it to their advantage to enter into alliances for both work and play; guilds, order of knighthood, Olympian Games. Woman, out of age-old instinct to nurture growing things, has organized a new fellowship, the Garden Club of America. Across our continent is a band of enthusiasts able to share each other's triumphs and failures, to work together for the beauty of our land. It stands today for something unique in our aesthetic life; and on the practical side, it is an association able to carry out its plans, to move collectively and purposefully to accomplishment. One unforgettable proof of this is that group of the noblest trees in the entire world, the California Redwood Grove. Women from all parts of the country contributed to this project, many of them with no hope of



themselves seeing the grove. No medal or monument could more fittingly bear testimony to the generosity and imagination of the members of the Garden Club of America, and California does not forget."

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt recommended to Congress and obtained legislation setting up a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was designed to provide employment for young men in relief families who had difficulty finding jobs during the Great Depression while at the same time implementing a natural resource conservation program in every state and territory. Over its 10-year history the agency employed more than 3 million men. But, importantly for conservation interests over 3 billion trees were planted, forests were improved, good agricultural land was preserved, floods and fires were controlled,

natural habitat for wildlife was protected and recreational facilities in federal, state and local parks were developed. Even today, CCC infrastructure projects remain an important component of recreational lands in the United States. It was a boon for conservation across the country.⁷

During this same decade, garden clubs and their members became active and vocal participants in their communities, often following legislation at the state and local levels. Laws protecting wild flowers, restricting advertising along roadways, and protecting trees were among those of interest to clubs. More and more states designated Conservation Week as a way to stimulate interest in conservation activities. In 1934, the Directors of the Garden Club of America voted to support legislation for the development of the National Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C. GCA members were appointed to the congressional planning committee for the new botanic garden. Another issue of the decade also drew GCA action. In 1936, a report was read at a Conservation Committee meeting about the effects of the drought on agriculture that stated, "A problem of Government is in water improvement." As a result the Conservation Committee sent a telegram to the President of the United States and the Secretary of Agriculture urging them to declare a closed season for migratory waterfowl because of the drought.

In February, 1936, with the deletion of the word "Roadside", the Conservation and Roadside Committee officially became known as the simply the Conservation Committee. The 1936 recipient of The Garden Club of America Achievement Medal underscored the important role of conservation in the GCA. This award is given in recognition of outstanding achievement and creative vision and ability in the interpretation and furtherance of the aims of The Garden Club of America. Mrs. S.V.R. Crosby, a past chairman of the Conservation Committee and vice-chairman for Preservation, was the first woman to receive this award for her work in wild flower education and conservation. Mrs. Crosby had been a leader in the effort to

develop and provide educational materials to other organizations and even to government agencies on the protection and preservation of wild flowers.

As the decade of the thirties ended and GCA celebrated its 25th anniversary, conservation efforts had come a long way. The GCA and its member clubs were involved in scores of conservation activities. Education efforts spread conservation information across the country using exhibits for flower shows and fairs, radio talks, newspaper articles, traveling nature exhibits and a traveling library. Clubs concentrated on providing training to teachers and children in nature camps and many established conservation weeks to highlight these efforts. Preservation of wild flowers, wildlife and natural resources had great interest in the clubs. Working with state parks and national parks and forests, GCA members helped foster a strong conservation ethic. And, last but certainly not least, GCA clubs remained steadfastly involved in state and regional planning including planting along highways, protection of the landscape from the intrusion of billboards and the beautification of necessary service stations and wayside rest areas. ■

Pasadena Garden Club members, 1932.

Education efforts spread conservation information across the country using exhibits for flower shows and fairs, radio talks, newspaper articles, traveling nature exhibits and a traveling library. Exhibits included a Conservation exhibit at the IFS in 1931 and a 'Perfectly Designed Gas Station' in 1933.



THE 1940s

The War Years and Aftermath

The world was at war during half of the decade of the forties but that did not slow down the conservation effort in the GCA. In 1943, the GCA Founder's Fund Award made possible the preservation of an additional 15 acres of the Avenue of the Giants in the Redwood Grove. The use of public lands became an increasing concern particularly in the west. The Diggers GC of Pasadena passed a resolution opposing the "live-stock industry of the West to transfer millions of acres of public range lands...from federal administration to private ownership and exploitation, because these range lands contained many valuable natural resources such as timber, breeding grounds of some animals and nesting places for birds, as well as scenic and recreational attractions essential to the enjoyment of our citizens." As post war development moved west, this tension between public and private use of public lands increased and attracted the interest of garden club members. The realization that man is dependent on plant life and therefore the need to conserve it rather than abuse it was increasingly a topic of concern for the Conservation Committee.

Another new focus of interest arrived on the scene in the mid-1940s – WATER. In 1944, it was proposed that the committee take on a project concerning "Planning and Stream or River Restoration and Development", including restoration of the fertility of the land, reforestation of slopes and flood control. GCA clubs began to study the construction of dams and to question their use for flood control. The Conservation Committee felt that it should oppose construction of dams allegedly for flood control when actually they were for power production. In addition, water pollution, particularly industrial pollution, became a cause for concern. A fish kill at the Boca Grande beaches alarmed Florida clubs. It was the beginning of what would become a decades long issue of importance for GCA. ■

SEQUOIA SEMPERVIRENS

a Biological Treasure

The *Sequoia sempervirens* ("always green" in Latin) is also known as the coast redwood to differentiate it from *Sequoia gigantea*. Giant Sequoias and Coast Redwood Trees are closely related and they are both in the redwood family, *Taxodiaceae*. However, they are different species. Giant Sequoias (scientific name *Sequoiadendron gigantea*) are considered the largest trees in the world as measured by the volume of their trunk. The biggest Giant Sequoias can be 40 feet wide at their bases and 275 feet high for a total trunk volume of up to 52,500 cubic feet. Giant Sequoias grow naturally only on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in California. Coast Redwoods (scientific name *Sequoia sempervirens*) are considered to be the world's tallest trees and they can get as tall as 365 feet. Coast Redwoods grow naturally only along the Pacific coast of northern California and into southern Oregon.⁴ The original redwood tree was first observed by European explorers northwest of the Pajaro River just west of Watsonville, California near the Santa Cruz Mountains in October of 1769. This discovery was described in the writings of Father Juan Crespi, a Franciscan missionary. The tree takes its name from its reddish bark and the reddish hue of its heartwood. The tree can develop from seeds or sprouts and can live from 1000 to 1500 years.

Redwood has the unique quality of resisting insects and decay and was highly valued for these properties. In 1850, old-growth redwood forest covered more than 2,000,000 acres (8,100 km²) of the California coast. The northern portion of that area, originally inhabited by Native Americans, attracted many lumbermen and others turned gold miners when a minor gold rush brought them to the region. Failing in efforts to strike it rich in gold, these men turned toward harvesting the giant trees for booming development in San Francisco and other places on the West Coast. By 1850 widespread logging of the trees was well underway. After many decades of unobstructed clear-cut logging, serious efforts toward conservation began. By the 1920s the work of the Save-the-Redwoods League, founded in 1918 to preserve remaining old-growth redwoods, resulted in the establishment of Prairie Creek, Del Norte Coast, and Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Parks among others.⁵ While there had been alarm and warnings from some individual members, The Garden Club of America did not become formally involved in the fight to save the redwoods until 1930.⁶

THE 1950s

Education, Association and Advocacy

Although it was published in 1962, Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring* had its origins in the decade of the 1950s. Trained as a marine biologist, her book *The Sea Around Us* focused on the oceans but it was *Silent Spring* that focused on pesticides and the damage they have on the environment. Many credit Carson's works with the creation of the EPA in the 1970s. The conservation movement was moving beyond roadside clutter to science and this change was reflected in the growing awareness within GCA of the conservation movement.

By 1950, the GCA Conservation Committee had a long list of accomplishments and areas of concern. At a December, 1954 meeting, a new purpose and a reorganization of the Conservation Committee were announced. The purpose read, "The Purpose of the Conservation Committee is to translate the principles of conservation into personal action, and thus encourage others to recognize our responsibility for our natural resources." The committee was reorganized from state representation to zone representation in order to better coordinate the program for the 154 GCA clubs. The activities of the Committee included 1) distribute conservation information, 2) further conservation education, 3) encourage civic planning and planting, 4) cooperate with local, state and national organizations and 5) encourage protection of native plants and wildlife.



An important educational topic that seemed to resonate with many clubs in the 1950s was the problem of litter

A *Bulletin* article from the '50s seems to echo the unique role of women in the conservation effort. "GCA members, as women, have reason to know the lasting value of harmony in the home. Nature is the home of humanity; it is therefore the responsibility of women to do all in their power to instill, enhance and perpetuate harmony in this greatest of homes and families."

The GCA's growing interest in legislation and support for protection of natural resources seems to have spurred much correspondence with government officials. In 1950, Mrs. LeRoy Clark (Englewood GC Chairman) wrote a letter to President Truman commending "his exec-

utive order establishing an airspace reservation over certain areas of the Superior National Forest in Minnesota, thus creating a precedent for preservation of wilderness areas." Several years later the Conservation Committee sent a letter to the president regarding federal watershed policy. The letter read: We propose wise land use and the management of water run-off upstream to prevent erosion, diminish the danger of floods, and to facilitate the highest possible productivity of the land...we feel further that the building of large dams downstream, flooding valuable land, and the Federal operation of power plants are unnecessary and encourage government extravagance, the growth of bureaucracy and socialism. They hoped the President of the United States would send this idea—flood prevention before flood control—to the Department of Agriculture with his "blessing". At the same time the St. Louis GC took a stand against large dams, which were to be used for flood control on the Missouri River. Sometimes the government officials listened. Mrs. Halfdan Lee, formerly Mrs. William K. Jackson, was appointed to a committee of 18 by President Eisenhower called The National Advisory Committee to Secretary Ezra Taft Benson on Soil and Water Conservation.

Not all advocacy communication was directed to the president. Local issues were also addressed by letter writing campaigns. The Peachtree GC suggested plantings at railroad stations along the Central Georgia Railroad. This created such interest that an official contacted one of its members. "If you will call the Garden Club women off of me, the Central Georgia Road will plan and plant anything you want."

Of continuing importance was the effort to make conservation educational materials readily available. A study guide, entitled "The World Around You", was the brainchild of Mrs. Malcolm J. Edgerton (Stamford GC) and Mrs. Avery Rockefeller (Hortulus). It was a collection of carefully prepared educational booklets, informative, concise and easy to follow source material designed to help classroom teachers. It included six articles on our national resources and 12 leaflets on vital conservation issues, some from government agencies and some prepared by the Conservation Committee. The packet proved to be very popular. Ten years later the Committee received nearly 7000 requests per year from all 50 states and many foreign countries, including India, Poland, Malaysia, Canada and even from the USSR. It was one of three exhibits from the GCA chosen for the Rotterdam Fair in Holland. Mental health institutions also sent requests. A letter from the Western State Hospital in the state of Washington read, "In order to assist us in the recovery of our mentally ill patients, we are doing 'Re-motivation'. It is for this project we would like your 'The World Around You' packet." Mrs. Rockefeller kept the packet up to date and continued the mailings. For this work she was awarded the Margaret Douglas Medal, given for notable service to the cause of conservation education. "The World Around You" was produced and distributed until 1992.

One advantage of GCA's national network was the distribution of educational materials around the country. When water conservation was a topic of concern, it was enlightening for those from the eastern U.S. to realize the problems facing western states regarding water

availability. A letter was sent to the Conservation Committee about Monterrey County, CA motel rooms being supplied with conservation literature, litter bags and stickers.

An important educational topic that seemed to resonate with many clubs in the 1950s was the problem of litter. The development of the Interstate Highway System and the increasing number of automobiles on the roads had made the tossing of trash a new nationwide problem. Piedmont GC helped develop a poster contest for students from elementary school to high school with slogans such as “Don’t throw it out – Throw it in” to promote the use of litter-bags in family cars. The Cohasset GC wrote automobile companies asking for their help in stopping “litter bugs”. The GC of Michigan went one step further working with the auto industry to either build trash containers into their cars or place litter bags in each car. The Kenilworth GC campaigned with local schools and worked with Boy and Girl Scouts. Once a day,



the ladies would meet commuter trains with banners and drum and bugle corps to discourage littering. The GCA became one of more than 40 national organizations represented on the Advisory Council of Keep America Beautiful, Inc. that was established in 1953 to promote a national anti-litter campaign.

Many clubs also were interested in protection of wildlife areas and green space. In 1957, Liz C. Titus (Bennington GC) founded the Student Conservation Association in an effort to show the need for and to provide volunteer help from high school and college students in national parks. The formulation of this idea was her undergraduate honors thesis project while she was a student at Vassar in 1955. The GCA was one of SCA’s earliest sponsors and many clubs provided continuing support to it for the next 50 years.

Elizabeth (Liz) Cushman Titus Putnam has since become a pioneering force in the world of conservation and public service. It has been suggested that “If, as writer Wallace Stegner contended, our national parks are America’s best idea, then Liz Titus Putnam surely must be credited with the next-best innovation . . . the impact of the Student Conservation Association over the past 50 years amounts to a tsunami of stewardship.” Liz Cushman envisioned national service before there was a Peace Corps, VISTA or City Year. Her call to environmental stewardship preceded Earth Day, the EPA and Silent Spring. In 1982 President Reagan presented her with the Presidential Award for Civic Action for her work with SCA and again in 2010 President Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Citizens Medal.⁸

Other GCA members left an indelible mark on the on conservation activities in GCA. In 1956, Mrs. Thomas M. Waller, affectionately known as Willie, (Bedford GC) became the Chairman of the Conservation Committee. She provided significant leadership for three years. In one article attributed to Mrs. Waller, entitled “Republican Conservation Pledge”, she voiced her concern over the rapid growth of suburban sprawl in open spaces. Land should be set aside for “parks, refuges, sanctuaries or natural areas wherein the requirements of wildlife...receive

top priority. Such areas are also essential for the ecological studies of scientists and conservationists, and to the end that future generations may learn of our natural history heritage.”

Mrs. Waller testified at a Senate hearing in support of a bill favoring federal legislation to prohibit billboards on new federal highways (the Neuberger Bill S. 963). GCA members and clubs seconded her position with letters. This might have been one of the first GCA- wide letter writing campaigns that was used later to great effect on subsequent critical issues. Sixty-nine thousand leaflets were distributed around the country. With the passage of the Billboard Control Amendment to the Federal Highway Act of 1956, states were urged to control billboards on the parts of interstate highways within their own boundaries. When the media announced passage of the bill, they opened their reports with “Garden Club Gals Out-lobby the Billboard Lobby.”

During Mrs. Waller’s tenure another important issue came to the forefront. She presented a paper on “Problems Encountered by the Massive Broadcasting of Highly Toxic Pesticides.” Spurred on by the extraordinary success of Rachel Carson’s landmark book, this was an issue whose time had arrived.

Mrs. Waller’s paper included the following statements. “The majority of insecticides often used as massive sprays from planes, kill birds, fish, animal and insects of all kinds – good as well as bad...What can we do?” She then went on to answer her own question, “We should make our voices heard in Washington.” Apparently other clubs began to study this issue. The following year, Mrs. Waller reported that for the second consecutive year, the greatest volume of mail received showed concern about damage wildlife resulting from use of highly toxic chemicals in spray programs. State billboard legislation was a close second.

Willie Waller was an active Conservation Chairman. During her tenure she presented her talk “Conservation is Everybody’s Business” to 21 clubs in all nine zones. The speech was published in the GCA Bulletin, May, 1959, in its entirety. In 1971, Mrs. Waller was awarded the Francis K. Hutchinson Medal (an award given for distinguished service to conservation). The inscription read: “...dedicated crusader in the ceaseless struggle to improve our environment, whose vision, wisdom and administrative talent have effectively awakened public concern and won her national distinction.”

As the decade of the ‘50s drew to a close, Mrs. Rowland Robinson (South County GC of Rhode Island) became chairman of the Conservation Committee. Her focus was to be education for as she said, “...wise choices can only come from informed deliberations.” ■



THE 1960s

Environmental Awakening & Landmark Legislation

The GCA Conservation Committee of 1959-62 led by Mrs. Rowland Robinson listed the most important legislation requiring action:

1. Regulating of Federal Pesticides Coordination Act
2. Wilderness Bill
3. Improving and strengthening Water Pollution Control Act
4. Saving seashore areas
5. Oil pollution of the high seas

In dealing with legislation, she reported three phases:

- a. Rouse the public
- b. Educate and
- c. Take adequate action

As one member reported, *"This we must do, or our grandchildren will spend their lives regretting our apathy."*

By the early sixties, there were 170 clubs in The GCA with a wide-ranging array of conservation interests.

- 128 clubs reported action in legislative matters at federal, state & local levels.
- 122 clubs reported civic planting projects in operation.
- 105 clubs supported at least one scholarship for conservation education, the National Audubon camps or state university workshops.
- 100 clubs actively supported other conservation groups besides making membership and monetary donations
- 73 clubs helped maintain sanctuaries and nature trails that were open to the public

GCA clubs across the country were already primed for the environmental movement that was to follow in the coming decades.

In honor of the 50th anniversary of The Garden Club of America, Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall spoke at the annual meeting in Philadelphia. He was emphatic about the need for preservation of open space for all, with the resulting protection of wildlife. Conservation easements were considered an ideal way to preserve land. Garden clubs joined together in this effort. All the garden clubs of Long Island worked for the establishment of a National Seashore on Fire Island as the best way of combining use and preservation of the island. On April 8, 1963, the Suffolk County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution favoring the establishment of a National Seashore and asked local congressmen and senators to push for its passage. California became the most populous state and with it came many problems over land use, pointing up the need for conservation. The GC of



Lighthouse at Fire Island National Seashore

Princeton proposed an "Open Space" plan for its township and proposed parks, etc. for areas unfit for building development. Essex County Adirondack GC helped put 5000 acres of land under the New York State Tree Farm Program.

In her report of 1963, Mrs. Alexander Saunders (Philipstown GC), Conservation Chairman from 1962-65 spoke of the loss of President John F. Kennedy. She said, *"The Seashore projects, the Wilderness Bill and the whole philosophy of Conservation received a new impetus under his leadership. While one may not agree in all respects, none the less, under his sponsorship Conservation in its best sense became of national importance. From the policy of land distribution and exploitation, we have changed to a policy of holding the best of nature in trust for future genera-*

tions.” “Where does *The GCA* fit (into) this picture?,” she asked. “*The GCA* is looked to for leadership on Conservation matters. Teachers all over the world look to *The GCA* for basic conservation information. It was through these educators, through lectures and participation in conservation problems that *The GCA* had the chance to lead...this is our obligation.”

Through the early ‘60s, the Conservation Committee and the GCA Executive Committee closely followed legislation to protect the landscape heritage of the country and to ensure that the new threats from pesticide and other pollution was addressed in law.

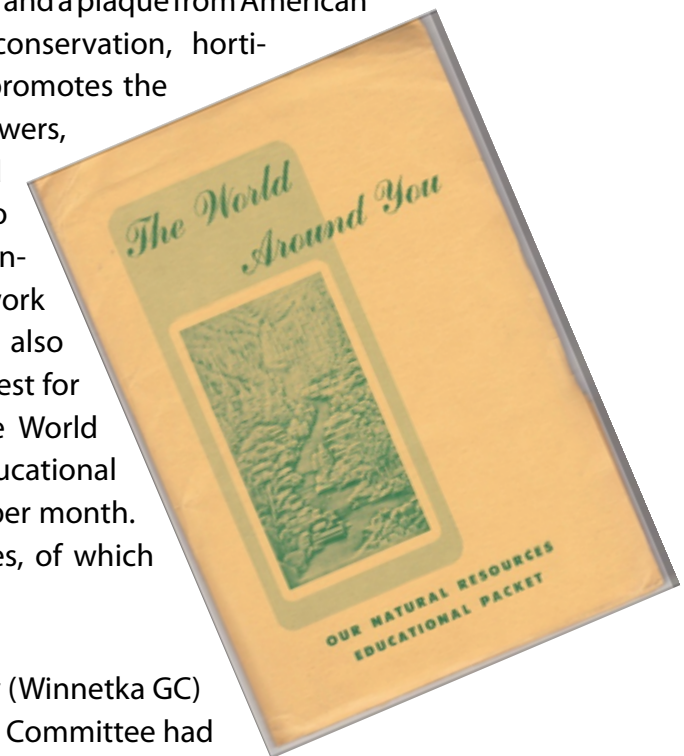
On the issue of pollution, the Conservation Committee followed two important pieces of legislation also passed in the 88th Congress. The Pesticide Control Bill of 1965 closed loopholes that permitted pesticides to be sold before they were fully tested. This bill was expected to safeguard the health and lives of the American people.¹³ The other legislation was the Water Quality Act of 1965 that directed states to develop water quality standards establishing water quality goals for interstate waters. It was a precursor to more definitive bills in the early ‘70s.¹⁴

While the GCA Conservation Committee studied these issues carefully and promoted national educational programs, the local clubs created projects and programs addressing similar issues on the local level. The North Suffolk GC prepared a 40-page book entitled “Conservation Programs for Public Elementary Schools” which was exhibited at the annual conference of the National Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. In response to concerns over pesticide use, the Noanett GC distributed literature, “To Spray or Not to Spray” to neighboring towns and garden clubs. The Sasqua GC organized a radio program, a series of eight talks covering the meaning of conservation, the importance of



protecting marshlands, the issues of insecticides, and soil and water conservation. Flower shows included exhibits displaying the beauty of unpolluted streams with native plant materials in New York and the mistakes of man – littering, erosion and pollution – in Philadelphia. By 1966, 175 clubs were actively engaging in projects on air and water pollution, open spaces and eliminating urban sprawl, civic planting and proper location of highways, classroom education, reclamation of strip mining areas, eliminating the use of DDT, studying nuclear power as a source of pollution and still pursuing billboard control. As Mrs. Daniel M. McKeon (Ridgefield GC and Southampton GC), Conservation Chairman, 1965-68, said, “Our members show by their efforts that they care about the quality of the environment and they know the wisdom of the Chinese proverb, ‘It’s better to light one candle than curse the darkness.’”

GCA was known throughout the country for its educational efforts in many disciplines. GCA was presented with an award of \$500 and a plaque from American Motors “...because, through its conservation, horticulture and national parks committees, it promotes the preservation of all native plants, wildflowers, trees, wildlife, marine life, forests, parks and all natural resources.” American Motors also recognized Mrs. Avery Rockefeller for her conservation achievements, particularly her work on “The World Around You”. The GCA was also awarded a grant of \$1500 from Readers Digest for the development and distribution of “The World Around You.” Continued requests for the educational packet were received, approximately 1500 per month. In 1968, the packet contained 11 brochures, of which GCA members wrote over half of them.



By 1968, when Mrs. Joseph M. Greeley (Winnetka GC) became Chairman, the Conservation Committee had come a long way. In addition to having a Chairman and First Vice Chairman, there were now seven Vice Chairmen, each in charge of one of the following areas of interest: Land Use, National Parks¹⁵, Open Space, Wildlife Sanctuaries and Wilderness; Planning and Zoning; Air, Water and Soil Pollution; Roadsides and Billboards; Education and the Educational Packet; Legislation, and Historic Preservation; and lastly, The Redwoods. There were Conservation representatives from each of the now 12 zones, forming a committee of 21. The zone representatives would be the connection between the issues needing action and the member clubs. A two-way system for both conveying and receiving information would be maintained.■

THE BIRTH OF THE NATIONAL AFFAIRS & LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Conservation Moves to the Legislature

As the decade of the sixties drew to a close, GCA continued to speak on out on a variety of environmental issues. Willie Waller, who had served as Conservation Chair from 1956-59 often took the lead on legislative issues. She represented GCA at a meeting at the White House to discuss the Highway Beautification Act. Her statement to the House Subcommittee on Roads of the Committee on Public Works read: "The Garden Club of America has never been particularly enthusiastic about the Highway Beautification Act of 1965, as we feel it is an exceedingly difficult piece of legislation to administer and deplore the mandatory compensation payments. We believe, however, that enactment of H.R. 4137, introduced by Congressman Pelly, which would delete Section 131(g) of the Highway Beautification Act (Public Law 89-285) would greatly strengthen and improve the Act. Bringing it more in line with the original intent of this legislation and making it less costly and far simpler for states to administer. We feel that at this stage nothing would be gained by having the Highway Beautification Act repealed and urge your support of it with the Pelly Amendment."



Mrs. Thomas M. Waller

Mrs. Waller's statement on Redwood legislation, read before the Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, said in part: "We consider the establishment of a Redwoods National Park to be the most important conservation issue before the Congress. We endorse the 90,000-acre plan...which we believe to be superior in terms of both ecological and park values. This site contains approximately 40,000 acres of virgin trees...With some 12,000 to 15,000 acres of the Redwoods being logged each year, it is the understatement of the century to say that time is of the essence."

The GCA also went on record in favor of Senate Bill 7, The Water Quality Improvement Act of 1969. The committee vigorously opposed the use of pesticides such as DDT, Endrin, Aldrin and Toxophene, chlorinated hydrocarbons which were persistent in the environment. Most were banned from agricultural use by the mid-'80s.¹⁶

The committee also supported the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 that established The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The intent of the law was to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the

enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act is notable for safeguarding the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries and promotes public participation in developing goals for river protection.¹⁷

Considering the active profile of the Legislation Sub-committee, in 1968, the GCA Policy Committee recommended that it become a separate committee to be called the National Affairs and Legislation Committee (NAL). The executive committee led by GCA President Mrs. Thomas M. Waller and her First Vice President, Mrs. Jerome K. Doolan, voted unanimously in support of the new committee. NAL would keep the Conservation Committee well informed on national and state legislation. In June, with Mrs. Doolan the new GCA President, Mrs. Waller, following her Presidency, became the first chairman of that Committee and set ambitious goals for its members. They were to educate the membership on legislative issues, to have a presence in Washington and to have the ability to testify before Congress. The committee was to limit its activities in support of, or opposition to, pending legislation that the executive committee considers consistent ...with the objectives of The Garden Club of America. In 1968, those categories included protection of endangered species of flora and fauna, preservation and improvement of areas of horticultural, historic, scenic or ecological value, prevention of air, water and soil pollution, and elimination of billboards in the interests of beauty and safety. New policy recommended that no bill should be supported or opposed by unless approved by the executive committee. In the event that legislation required immediate action and does not permit consultation with the executive committee, the NAL and Conservation Committees could use their own judgment consistent with the previously mentioned issues of importance.

Following the executive committee decision, Mrs. Waller stated that she felt the NAL Chairman should have the authority to speak before a Congressional Committee if the occasion arose, that the NAL Committee be increased to five, or preferably seven members, and that GCA should consider hiring a Washington consultant to provide current legislative information to the committee. Mrs. Waller would have to wait almost twenty years to see her dream of a GCA Washington consultant come true. ■





DDT

During World War II, DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane) was developed as the first of the modern synthetic insecticides. It was initially used to combat malaria, typhus, and the other insect-borne human diseases encountered by both military and civilian populations. It was considered the answer for insect control in crop and livestock production, institutions, homes, and gardens. However, DDT's quick success as a pesticide and broad use in the United States and elsewhere quickly led to the development of resistance by many insect pest species and detrimental side effects to beneficial insects as well as other wildlife species.⁹

RACHEL CARSON

In 1962, Rachel Carson, a renowned nature author and former marine biologist with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a startling and inflammatory book. *Silent Spring* carefully described how DDT entered the food chain and accumulated in the fatty tissues of animals, including human beings, and caused cancer and genetic damage. A single application on a crop, she wrote, killed insects for weeks and months, and not only the targeted insects but countless more, and remained toxic in the environment even after it was diluted by rainwater. Carson concluded that DDT and other pesticides had irrevocably harmed birds and animals and had contaminated the entire world food supply.

The chemical industry viciously attacked her writing and her credentials. However, she had carefully documented *Silent Spring*, and eminent scientists leapt to her defense. Her careful preparation had paid off. When President John F. Kennedy ordered the President's Science Advisory Committee to examine the issues the book raised, its report thoroughly vindicated both *Silent Spring* and its author. As a result, DDT came under much closer government supervision and was eventually banned. The public debate moved quickly from whether pesticides were dangerous to which pesticides were dangerous, and the burden of proof shifted from the opponents of unrestrained pesticide use to the chemicals' manufacturers.

The most important legacy of *Silent Spring*, though, was a new public awareness that nature was vulnerable to human intervention. Rachel Carson had made a radical proposal: that, at times, technological progress is so fundamentally at odds with natural processes that it must be curtailed. Conservation had never raised much broad public interest, except for few people really worried about the disappearance of wilderness. But the threats Carson had outlined — the contamination of the food chain, cancer, genetic damage, the deaths of entire species — were too frightening to ignore. For the first time, the need to regulate industry in order to protect the environment became widely accepted, and environmentalism was born.¹⁰

As previously noted, the publication of *Silent Spring* had a profound effect on the public consciousness.. Her seminal book was important because not just aesthetics but science was the authority for her analysis. Her training as a biologist lent authority to her conclusion that products previously regarded as benign were poisoning the environment. The DDT flit gun sat on the kitchen counter and no one gave it any thought. In 1963, Rachel Carson received the GCA Special Citation.

THE 1970s

The Advance of the Environmental Movement

The GCA, through its Conservation Committee, found a common interest in this movement. Mrs. Richard B. Koss (Des Moines Founders GC), a Vice Chairman of the Conservation Committee expressed the new environmental urgency well when she reported: "There is at last, a long overdue awakening to the fact that our way of life is threatened by pollution... We, in the United States, the most affluent people in the world, consume the largest share of natural resources and cause the greatest pollution. We must be informed and exert more pressure. Only education can stop this dilemma of our own making."

Once again the GCA tackled the issues as they had for 56 years, educating its members and the public about environmental threats through its national network. GCA clubs contributed to or had memberships in 307 different conservation, horticultural, and preservation organizations around the country. One hundred forty scholarships were awarded and traveling exhibits and conservation publications were available through the GCA office. In 5 issues of the Bulletin, 32 articles on conservation were published. The pressing need for conservation was spread through lectures, open meetings, and zone meeting with speakers who were experts in their fields. Over 3000 papers and brochures were distributed to the public on subjects of biological pest control, channelization, endangered species, conservation options and energy and successful methods of recycling. Protection of open space and wilderness areas was at the top of the list of club civic projects. Mrs. James R. Miller (The Planters), a Vice Chairman for Conservation spoke on land use: "The environmental decade is here... the big offensive is now to clean up and conserve, to know and better understand the ecological system, to acquire, retain, and appreciate open space, not despoil it, and to alert youth to the problems of survival in an overpopulated world..."

A major goal was reached: 100% of then established 178 clubs supported the CGA Redwood Grove through the Save-the-Redwoods League in an effort to help purchase the last 400 acres to complete the grove. The GCA Redwood Grove achieved its ultimate goal that of being the first complete ecological unit in the grove system, with watershed land, redwood trees, and native undercover.

The new national focus on the environment stimulated more interest in a host of issues and continuing focus on historical concerns, including billboards, native plants and national parks and public lands. The new National Affairs and Legislation Committee worked with the Conservation Committee in response to requests for comments from the GCA.

In 1971, when Mrs. W.L. Lyons Brown (Glenview GC of Louisville and GC of Palm Beach) became Chairman, she reported that most clubs were involved in three new national projects. These were: 1) Urge immediate conservation of the use of energy by individuals, industry and government in an effort to stretch available fossil fuel resources while searching for new sources of energy and to develop clean energy technologies, 2) Help in the restoration of clean water by demanding high water quality criteria, and 3) Promote the use of recycled paper in order to help save trees and reduce the use of energy and to reduce the burden of solid waste. As a result of members' concerns and involvement in these issues, the Conservation Committee voted unanimously to mount a substantial drive to encourage the use of recycled paper.

The fire on the Cuyahoga River had triggered a national interest in restoring water quality in the United States through new legislation at the federal level. The Water Pollution Control Act of 1948 clearly had not prevented the devastating pollution that the government had to confront. In 1972, as a result of a broadly based, bi-partisan effort, Congress passed a set of amendments to the 24-year old water pollution control act. The intent of the legislation was to reduce the pollution in the nation's waters through the regulation of discharges by businesses and industry. Later these amendments became known as the Clean Water Act. Mrs. W. Boulton Kelly (St. George's Garden Club), testified before Congress in support of these amendments.

The Conservation and NAL Committees also urged President Nixon to take a firm stand on the use of poisons for predator control on public lands. Members also were asked to write the president, as well as their own congressmen, asking them to enact strict regulations for off-road vehicles, snowmobiles and dune buggies which had virtually free access to national parks, wildlife refuges, forests and lands belonging to the Bureau of Land Management. The Department of the Interior did initiate a study of this use. In 1972, the National Park Service celebrated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the nation's first national park, Yellowstone. On this occasion it was agreed "*a nation should withhold its national grandeur from exploitation in favor of ownership and enjoyment by the entire people.*"



PRESERVATION LEGISLATION

Several important pieces of land preservation legislation were passed by the 88th Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. They included the Wilderness Act of 1964 “which sought to “assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition...”¹¹ Another landmark piece of legislation was the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) established by Act of Congress in 1964 to provide funds and matching grants to federal, state and local governments for the acquisition of land and water, and easements on land and water, for the benefit of all Americans. The main emphases of the fund are recreation and the protection of national natural treasures in the forms of parks and protected forest and wildlife areas. The primary source of income to the fund is fees paid by companies drilling offshore for oil and gas. Though LWCF is authorized with a budget cap of \$900 million annually, this cap has been met only twice during the program’s nearly four decades of existence.¹² LWCF has had mixed history of success and neglect and is scheduled to expire September 30, 2015.



The Cuyahoga River in Ohio, on fire in 1969.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

In June 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Ohio caught on fire. The Cuyahoga River at one time was one of the most polluted rivers in the United States. The reach from Akron to Cleveland was devoid of fish. A Kent State University symposium, convened one year before the infamous 1969 fire, described one section of the river:

“From 1,000 feet below Lower Harvard Bridge to Newburgh and South Shore Railroad Bridge, the channel becomes wider and deeper and the level is controlled by Lake Erie. Downstream of the railroad bridge to the harbor, the depth is held constant by dredging, and the width is maintained by piling along both banks. The surface is covered with the brown oily film observed upstream as far as the Southerly Plant effluent. In addition, large quantities of black heavy oil floating in slicks, sometimes several inches thick, are observed frequently. Debris and trash are commonly caught up in these slicks forming an unsightly floating mess. Anaerobic action is common as the dissolved oxygen is seldom above a fraction of a part per million. The discharge of cooling water increases the temperature by 10 °F (5.56 °C) to 15 °F (8.33 °C). The velocity is negligible, and sludge accumulates on the bottom. Animal life does not exist. Only the algae *Oscillatoria* grows along the piers above the water line. The color changes from gray-brown to rusty brown as the river proceeds downstream. Transparency is less than 0.5 feet in this reach. This entire reach is grossly polluted.”

For the first time, the legacy of two hundred years of unbridled industrial development became apparent to the public at large and GCA clubs in particular. Environmental issues and new federal legislation would loom large in the decade to come.

The decade of the 1960s ended in 1969 with the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Called by some, the Magna Carta of the environmental movement, it is one of the most emulated pieces of legislation worldwide. NEPA created the President’s Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) and established set procedures for environmental review. NEPA also gave the environmental movement their first real tool in confronting the approval process (or lack thereof) for any construction projects. Although a federal piece of legislation, it was soon copied and emulated on the state and local level (and by many nations). NEPA introduced environmental review as a matter of law whereas previously, in many cases, no environmental review existed. Now all federal agencies were required to provide environmental statements as to the impact on the environment of proposed changes.

The future of land use became one of the top issues for discussion in 1972-73. Members were concerned that since there was no national master plan for land use in the country, there would have to be some integral planning for its use with transportation, housing, utilities, farm policies, open space, recreational areas, or historic areas. Questions arose and were discussed by the committees. How could we create a rational, rather than impulsive, approach to America's dwindling land assets? Should land be regulated nationally, controlled by states or should local governments assume most of the responsibility. It was a discussion with no solution but does reflect the concerns of members during the early '70s.

A recurring issue became the subject of controversy when the Outdoor Advertising Section of the Highway Beautification Act was brought up for discussion in Congress. The GCA Conservation Committee informed Congress of its strong objection to the weakened amendments. Mrs. Brooks Brown, Jr. (Piscataqua GC) sent written statements and club members sent letters and telegrams to the Senate and House hearings and all members of the Public Works Committee. Mrs. W. L. Lyons Brown also testified at a Public Works Committee hearing in March, 1973. All 50 states finally passed laws intended to bring a halt to the erection of more billboards in illegal areas.

In 1974, Mrs. Joseph V. Reed (Jupiter Island GC) Vice Chairman remarked that the "spectre of Watergate made 1974 a lean year for conservation causes because Congress did not get around to considering many environmental issues." One important proposal that was introduced that year was for the preservation of 80 million acres of public lands in Alaska. The proposal came in the form of several different bills and it would be 6 years before an Alaska land protection bill was finally passed.

At mid-decade, the NAL Committee policy, established by the Policy Committee of GCA, was reaffirmed. Under the guidance of Mrs. W.L. Lyons Brown, the committee studied legislation within the following categories:

1. Protection of endangered species of flora and fauna
2. Preservation and improvement of areas of horticultural, historic, scenic and ecological value
3. Prevention of air, water and soil pollution
4. Elimination of billboards in the interests of beauty and safety

All information on legislation was presented to the Conservation Committee.



GCA ANNUAL MEETING, 1976

Mrs. Clifford C. Fifield (Buzzards Bay GC), Chairman of the Conservation Committee, gave the following speech:

"Since the founding of the GCA in 1913, we have been pioneers in restoration and preservation. We have aided in the restoration of buildings of local and national historic interest. We have restored and replanted gardens in many areas, researching and recreating the original plans. With equal importance we have replanted much of the original type plant material. This year has found our clubs continuing that work, aiding local, state, and national agencies in their collective endeavors to celebrate the Bicentennial in a fitting manner.

Although the nation's birthday has been paramount, we have not lost sight of the GCA's initial purpose, "to preserve our national resources and the quality of our environment." There are now 181 clubs busy on their home fronts.

There are three types of conservationists: Those who are passive, those who are objective and those who are over-eager. The passive conservationist listens, makes up her own mind and she votes. The objective conservationist is well-informed; she acts when situations need action; she talks; she works and she votes. The over-eager conservationist is well-informed, outspoken and 'like a puppy to a root', she drives her subject. She tells it as it is to all who will listen and urges all to vote her way. All three types made up that composite conservationist under fire by so many in the world today. Why?

Conservation means change—change in our style of living. We are known in all the world as a push-button throw-it-away society. To change is not the end. Change means only moderation and the will to care about the future on the part of all citizens. Although the members of the GCA represent only a small fraction of the United States, they are an active segment well-versed in the need to preserve our heritage.

Upon entering the third century of progress in America, we see before us the word 'energy.' Garden Club of America members must be well-informed and be willing to explore each avenue open for only with abundant knowledge can we be of service in the future of this country. Change is our emphasis, from the Bicentennial and its attendant projects in historic preservation to energy, its use, its misuse and its future ■.

By the second half of the decade, the topics of concern to the Conservation Committee and the NAL Committee included emphasis on energy conservation, the preservation of wilderness areas, the protection of endangered species, land use and the cleaning up of the nation's waters. Mrs. Kip Robinson (Westport GC), Chairman reminded her committee that "compromise and reasonable solutions" were often necessary for economic purposes. Preservation played an important part when it came to saving much of the national heritage for future generations. Gaining more support were such programs as the protection of entire areas from demolition, the preservation of neighborhoods and the restoration of buildings to be used as museums and private homes for offices. Reflecting the old dictum that all issues are local, conservation and preservation issues at the local or "grass roots" level had more appeal to members than issues at the national level, but information on national issues was considered important, too.

Recognizing the intersection of horticulture and conservation, the Horticulture and Conservation Committees frequently worked together. Open meetings were jointly sponsored. For the first time, a combined folder containing material from both committees was used at the Annual Meeting in Milwaukee in June, 1979.

Mrs. Brooks Brown, Jr., First Vice Chairman, Conservation, offered a report on events that were affecting the energy situation in the United States. The seventies saw the first lines at gas stations with the interruption of oil supply. Although the United States was a net importer of fuel since 1949, only the threat of a reduced energy supply by foreign events focused the public conscience on our energy vulnerability. In response, Congress passed the National Energy Act on October 15, 1978 after the increase in the OPEC price for oil, the fall of Iran and the effects of the reduction in oil production on the United States, the closing of five nuclear plants, including the catastrophe at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Plant, the President's Decontrol Proposal and the Windfall Profits Tax before Congress. Efforts were made to inform garden club members of serious energy problems, and clubs were urged to inform themselves by having speakers on energy and alternative energy sources.

Mrs. Brown went on to say, "The era of cheap and abundant energy is over. Recent events at nuclear plants have brought into sharp focus the problems and will have a profound impact on the future of nuclear power in this country and on the nation's overall energy policy. Energy conservation practiced by all Americans is an indisputable ingredient in our national energy policy."



Protection of land in Alaska returned to the forefront late in the 1970s. The Conservation Committee had followed the legislation initially introduced in 1974 that included several different bills, each outlining a single proposed park, monument, or other area. With no interest expressed by Congress by 1975, the National Park Service (NPS) and conservationists decided to create a single bill that would cover several separate areas. The election in 1976 of Jimmy Carter buoyed hopes that Alaskan conservation would finally get a fair hearing. There was strong opposition from the Alaskan delegation because of the absorption of such a large amount of land by NPS.

As 1978 dragged on, the Interior Department and NPS feared that no action would be taken at all on the "national interest lands" included in the proposals. They noted that mining and forestry claims, were beginning to be made against the lands and time was running out. As a result, President Carter used the Antiquities Act to designate the proposed lands as National Monuments by executive order on December 1, 1978.

His actions caused wide protest across Alaska. However, the environmental community renewed its efforts to get a bill passed. The GCA formally joined the Alaska Coalition. It was the first time that the GCA had joined a coalition of any kind, especially one devoted to passing a piece of legislation. Mrs. W. Boulton Kelly (Ellie), Mrs. Michael McIntosh, (Winsome) and others in the GCA worked with NRDC (National Resources Defense Council) and Lawrence Rockefeller to build massive grassroots support for the protection from development of extraordinary wild lands in Alaska. GCA members all over the country got involved, calling and writing letters to pressure Congress to pass the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). In November 1980, President Carter lost re-election to Ronald Reagan, and the Republican Party won a majority of seats in the Senate. Conservationists and other proponents of the legislation recognized that if they did not accept the compromise then on the table, they would be forced to begin again in the next Congress with decidedly less support. With much effort, ANILCA passed in late November. It was the last piece of legislation signed by President Carter before he left office. When Ellie Kelly ran into Senator John Breaux of Louisiana on the Capitol steps following the vote, he congratulated her and told her that Congress had received more letters from GCA members than they had from the NRA!¹⁹ The NAL Committee received congratulations in the Congressional Handbook, and were asked to attend a White House ceremony, where they received maps signed by President Carter. Though considered a compromise, the bill protected 104 million acres in a variety of conservation units, 56 million of them as wilderness and created 10 new national parks. It was the most significant land conservation measure in the history of the nation.²⁰



Ellie Kelly



Since 1980, the Conservation and NAL Committees have consistently followed legislation that posed any threat to Alaskan lands. ANILCA designated the Arctic Range as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This area of Alaska is the only place remaining on our continent where all arctic ecosystems are protected in an undisturbed condition. Most of the refuge was to be managed as wilderness but not the coastal plain. Under provisions of ANILCA, oil and gas development in the coastal plain is prohibited unless authorized by Congress. Since then the coastal plain has been a ping-pong ball tossed between industry eager to develop its oil and gas and environmentalists anxious to protect the rich wildlife habitat unique to the area. The GCA has continued to support protection of the coastal plain whenever threatening legislation is proposed. In 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prepared a Comprehensive Conservation Plan that recommended the coastal plain be managed as a wilderness. The GCA is still watching.

The NAL Committee continued to study those areas of national legislation that best represented the general conservation interests of the GCA. The criteria for selection of legislation on which the committee could take a position and what position the GCA would take were clear. In 1978, Mrs. W. Boulton Kelly, Jr. (St. George's GC), Chairman, NAL Committee explained the criteria and steps of consideration by the committees. *"The Legislation Committee proposes a bill that seems important; the Conservation Committee approves or disapproves. A position is agreed on; then these deliberations are sent to the Executive Committee for approval, disapproval, or revision. The bills are picked to reflect geographical diversity, universality of impact, and historical garden club interests...As often as possible, the GCA joins efforts by other organizations who have similar positions on bills we are tracking."* She went on to say, *"We hope to use legislation as a way to educate today's members to be stewards of the past conservation concerns of the Garden Club of America and to help protect America's future. It is then the responsibility of the members to relay these concerns to their government representatives."* ■

The combination of gas shortages and landmark legislation made the '70s a decade of enormous change in the environmental awareness of Americans. The transformative legislation passed during those ten years would guarantee that treatment of the country's natural resources would always be part of the national discussion. The creation of the National Affairs and Legislation Committee was a product of the recognition that at the heart of environmental changes was a change in the legal structure surrounding these events. Many activist garden club members realized that as voters and community leaders, they could influence legislation relevant to the environment. ■



All photos of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

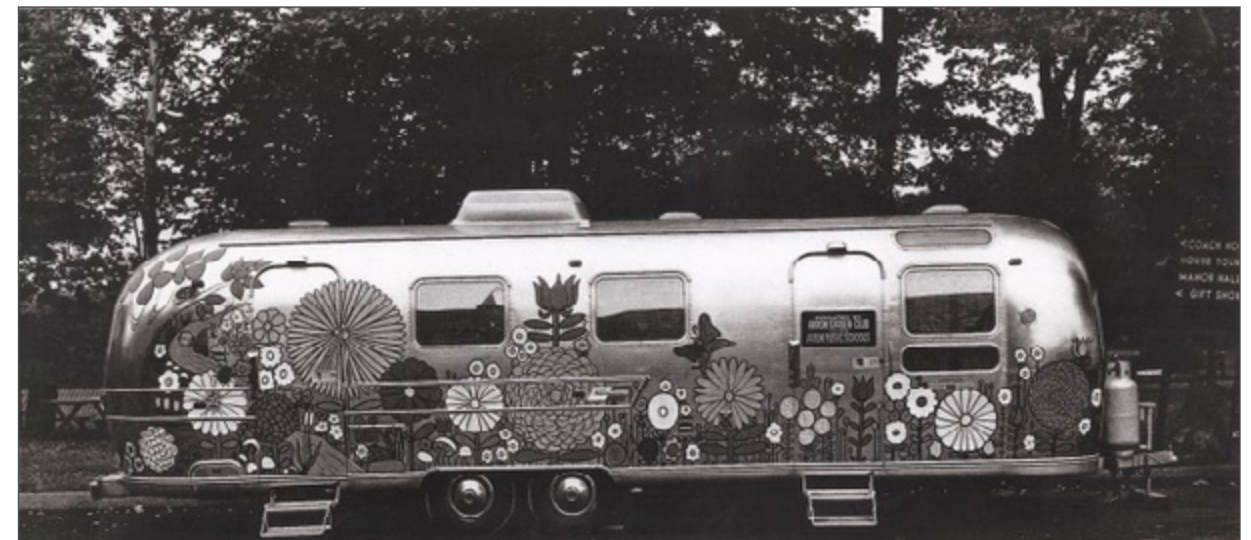


EARTH DAY

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans took to the streets, parks, and auditoriums to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment in massive coast-to-coast rallies.

The idea came to Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson, then a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin, after witnessing the ravages of the 1969 massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. Inspired by the student anti-war movement, he realized that if he could infuse that energy with an emerging public consciousness about air and water pollution, it would force environmental protection onto the national political agenda. Senator Nelson announced the idea for a “national teach-in on the environment” to the national media; persuaded Pete McCloskey, a conservation-minded Republican Congressman, to serve as his co-chair; and recruited Denis Hayes as national coordinator... Thousands of colleges and universities organized protests against the deterioration of the environment. Groups that had been fighting against oil spills, polluting factories and power plants, raw sewage, toxic dumps, pesticides, freeways, the loss of wilderness, and the extinction of wildlife suddenly realized they shared common values.

Earth Day 1970 achieved a rare political alignment, enlisting support from Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city slickers and farmers, tycoons and labor leaders. The first Earth Day led to the creation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts. ‘It was a gamble,’ Gaylord recalled, ‘but it worked.’¹⁸



Akron GC Educational Trailer,
circa 1970



THE 1980s

Innovation: New Views on Old Problems

The 1980s marked the transition from just cleaning up the water, air and saving endangered species to changing the conditions that created these environmental problems. So in saving endangered flora and fauna, the environmental experts looked not just to declining species but to the underlying reasons for the decline, habitat loss for example. In cleaning the water and air, the direct polluters were being legally sanctioned but it was quickly becoming apparent that most pollution was from undefined sources and not readily remedied. With an awareness of the complexity of the problems, came an awareness of the difficulty of finding equitable solutions. For example, most endangered species live on privately held land and a viable solution needed to include all parties. With the complexity of the problems and their solutions, came a public polarization of opinion on the solutions. In the early days of the 1970s all parties were agreed on the need for change. In the 1980s the debate moved into gray areas of public versus private property and need for environmental action; and for the GCA, this debate was echoed at the national and club level. In response to the change in tone, GCA increasingly came to see their role as that of an environmental educator, both of their members and of the greater public.

The GCA Conservation Committee and its legislative counterpart, the National Affairs and Legislation Committee, continued to broaden their spheres of interest to many new topics in the early '80s. Reports featured information on solar heating systems and solar energy, nuclear fusion and an in-depth look at gasohol and other synthetic fuels including those derived from coal, shale oil and tar sands. Topics focused on toxic wastes, barrier islands, bottle bills, the loss of farmland, historic restoration, planting trees, national parks, air pollution and acid rain. Interests ranged far and wide. However, the three areas receiving the most emphasis continued to be water, endangered species and national parks and public lands. The GCA Executive Committee approved making the study of "water" a national project. Zone representative reports indicate that many clubs were studying water projects and problems of their local areas.

There appeared to be a greater emphasis on sharing conservation information. Zone Conservation meetings were opened to the public, and more clubs were holding "open" meetings in an attempt to spread the word to other citizens of their towns who might not be thinking much about the environment. The Board of Directors of GCA was invited to attend meetings with after-dinner speakers, usually of a national caliber, when the Conservation Committee met in New York. The committee also created a film showing the work of the

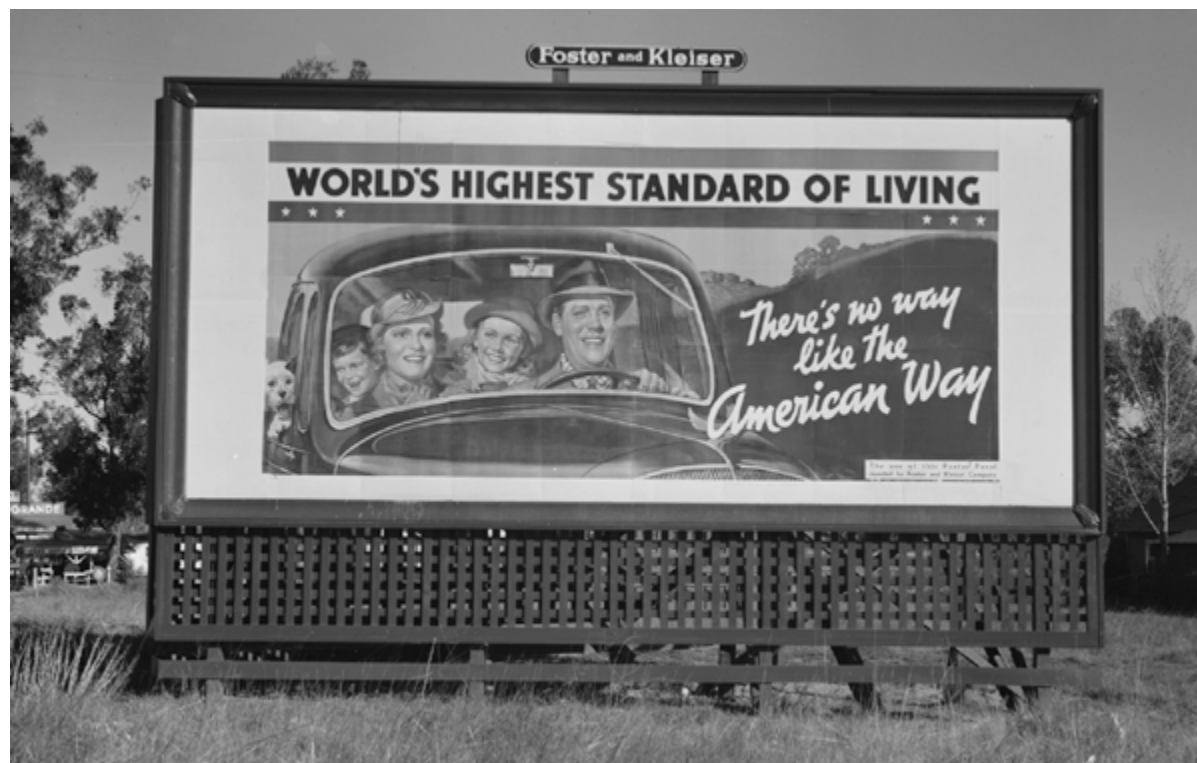
Conservation Committee and hoped that other national committees would do the same, thus enabling all club members to gain a better understanding of the national work done by the GCA. The committee also presented a movie projector to national headquarters for its use at open meetings, feeling that it would "capture the imagination of the minds of today and tomorrow that are not attuned so much to reading as to television."

In December 1980, at the request of President Carter, the vice chairman for energy resources sent a year-end report to him about GCA energy conservation efforts. Feedback from the clubs indicated that a shift had taken place in the lifestyles of many members, and they were "thinking energy conservation."

There appears to have been three broad trends in the approach to conservation in the country that had an effect on the GCA:

1. A shift to more visual communication, as well as verbal communication. Slide shows were taking the place of written reports. GCA began working with the National Parks and Conservation Association (now NPCA) to show the history, use, abuse and proper management procedures in national parks
2. Taking a public stance rather than a passive one. The threat to the environment, whether air, water, land, plant and animal, "so vividly enacted by James Watt, Secretary of the Interior under Reagan, and his dismantling of EPA controls, proved to be the best environmental education this nation could have had. People began to speak up when threatened with smog, polluted water supplies, dying trees and lakes, disappearing species and the epidemic growth of cancer in this country." They began to vote, write to their representatives in congress, join environmental organizations and read more about their environment.
3. Moving from local to global thinking. Networking of information through the GCA headquarters and its committees became a valuable tool.

As The GCA grew more confident and aware of its political clout and ability, it began to see its role as an environmental educator, not just sharing information with garden club members, or school children or other organizations, but sharing it with members of Congress or with state and local government officials. Trips to Washington DC and congressional visits became a regular part of issue advocacy beyond just writing letters. The focus on environmental education became a responsibility to future generations. Considerable attention was paid to new areas of growing environmental abuse: tropical deforestation, endangered species extinction, acid rain and the insidious threat of household toxic wastes.



The Summit GC held an open conservation meeting on the subject of acid rain and announced the results of an 18-month study monitoring the acidity levels of rainfall in the town by two members, done as a part of a research project by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions. The results indicated an acidity level in their town of 50 times normal, while overall, the New Jersey study showed that the acidity readings in their zone were at least 30 times greater than normal.

Mrs. Kevin R. Cook (Mr. Desert GC), Conservation Chairman 1983-85, pointed out that, *"Our world is an ever changing planet, each change having an impact, sometimes beneficial, but most often detrimental, on our fragile ecosystem. Urbanization is demanding more of our natural resources and at the same time failing to recognize the importance of treating the soil, air and water with consideration."*

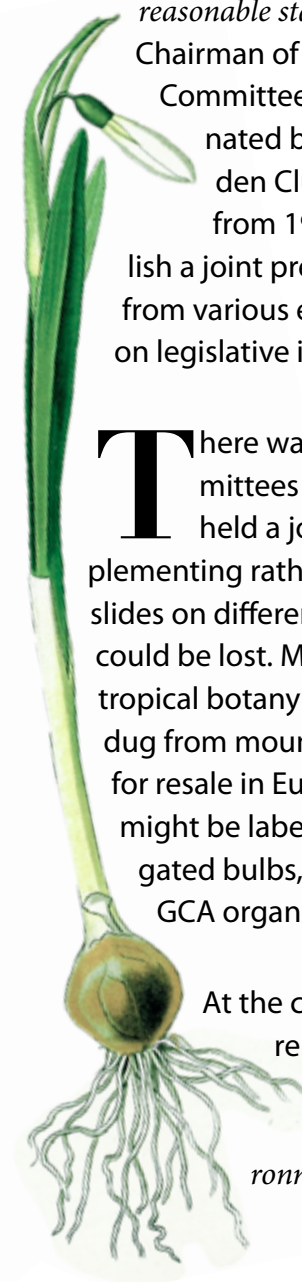
The Conservation Committee also continued to follow historical issues of concern. Billboards had been a top priority since the very start of the GCA. The Highway Beautification Act (HBA) was the subject of significant controversy after it passed in 1965. The HBA was intended to protect natural and scenic beauty along federal-aid highways by, among other things, controlling billboards in rural, scenic and agricultural areas. In fact, it was never very successful at doing so. In the late 70s and early 80s, proposed amendments to the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 and the Surface Transportation Act of 1982 energized Conservation Committee members to testify before hearings at both the

state and federal level. Several members of the committee were instrumental in helping to organize a National Coalition to Preserve Scenic Beauty. They included Marion Brown (Mrs. Brooks, Jr.), Sally Brown (Mrs. W.L. Lyons) and Ellie Kelly (Mrs. W. Boulton, Jr.). These women and others felt that as a national coalition on this subject, *"our voices can be heard as a much stronger force."* This coalition was the forerunner of the extremely successful highway beautification organization, Scenic America. Ultimately, the Conservation Committee decided that the billboard cause-and-effect was really not a conservation issue, but rather a legislative one, and it was recommended that the billboard issue be followed under the banner of the NAL Committee where that committee's contact with Washington legislators was more in keeping.

The GCA was invited to participate in several major environmental conferences. *"Our input is being increasingly sought as our organization becomes better recognized as having a strong, reasonable stand on conservation,"* said Mrs. Michael A. McIntosh (GC of Palm Beach), Chairman of the NAL Committee 1985-87. In 1983, the National Affairs and Legislation Committee met in Washington for the first time. The meeting was hosted and coordinated by Ellie Kelly, with assistance from Mrs. Edward Eilliman(Ann) Hortulus Garden Club. Following the meeting, the committee decided to "work" in Washington from 1984 on, in cooperation with the Conservation Committee in order to establish a joint presence in the nation's capital. A format was developed including speakers from various environmental organizations, experts in their fields, providing information on legislative issues that would be coming up at the next session of Congress.

There was also growing cooperation within GCA. To show how well different committees could work together, the Horticulture, Conservation and NAL Committees held a joint meeting illustrating how many issues of GCA interest overlapped, complementing rather than duplicating each other's work. The Horticulture Committee showed slides on different species of wild bulbs, which through irresponsible digging in the wild, could be lost. Mrs. Russell Arundel, the member who truly introduced the importance of tropical botany to the GCA, spoke of her concern for wild bulb trading. Millions were being dug from mountain fields in Turkey and trucked to Holland and other European countries for resale in Europe and the United States. By the time they reached the consumer, they might be labeled *"product of Holland."* She recommended that members buy only propagated bulbs, not ones that are illegally dug. It became an issue of concern for the entire GCA organization.

At the conclusion of her term as Conservation Committee Chairman, Mrs. Cook reported optimistically, *"We see emerging an era where cooperation replaces confrontation and old problems are finally reduced to manageable proportions. America is becoming convinced that a healthy economy and a productive environment need no longer be adversaries."*



During the mid-'80s, important topics discussed included threats to our national forests (excessive road building and be-low-cost timber sales), ground water contamination and toxic and hazardous waste, recycling and waste reduction, and the loss of genetic and species diversity resulting from tropical rain forest destruction. As Harvard professor, E.O. Wilson said when he spoke on the loss of genetic and species diversity by the destruction of natural habitats, it is a *"folly our descendants are least likely to forgive us. Maintaining species diversity and a large gene pool are necessary to progress in medicine and agriculture and to life itself."* The loss of native plant diversity never dropped from view in the GCA. In 1985, GCA members helped in the formation of The Center For Plant Conservation (CPC), based in St. Louis. In 1988, GCA and the Center co-sponsored a slide show, The Garland of Generations, forming traveling teams in six bio-regions, each having its localized version of the presentation. Since then clubs of GCA have helped sponsor more than 150 endangered plants in the CPC National Collection.



In 1985, President Reagan created a Commission on Americans Outdoors. Its purpose was *"to review public and private outdoor recreation opportunities, policies, and programs and to make recommendations for the future."*²¹ Members of The GCA testified before that commission. After the commission's report was published in 1987, GCA President Mrs. Frank M. Donahue (Little GC of Rye) and Conservation Chair Mrs. George W. Edwards (The Gardeners) were asked to attend a meeting of a group of prominent environmentalists in planning how to implement the report of the President's commission. It was decided to develop a week for celebration; the week chosen was April 22 (the 20th anniversary of Earth Day) to April 29, 1989. GCA members were asked to spread the word throughout their communities and encourage celebrations. A joint venture among the Horticulture, Conservation and NAL Committees became a three-year involvement by GCA with the National Celebration Committee. Popular projects consisted of planting trees, working with nature centers and botanical gardens, heightening conservation awareness, working with communities to improve the landscape and forming and carrying out recycling programs. The focus was to bring attention to America's outdoor heritage. When Lamar Alexander spoke to a zone meeting regarding this celebration, he stated, *"We can no longer sit and wait for the federal government to do it. We must look to our needs 15, 20, and 25 years from now, and see where our houses and roads should be built, and then plan for greenways and hiking trails and other open spaces to accommodate our population growth."*

The Garden Club of America celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1988. Conservation Committee Chairman, Mrs. Robert W. Freitag told her committee, "Today, the biggest priority for conservation should be long-range planning. Planning is the most efficient and cost effective way to deal with our future." She believed that through effective leadership, the protection of the redwoods, endangered plants and public lands could be accomplished. She went on question our long-term energy needs.

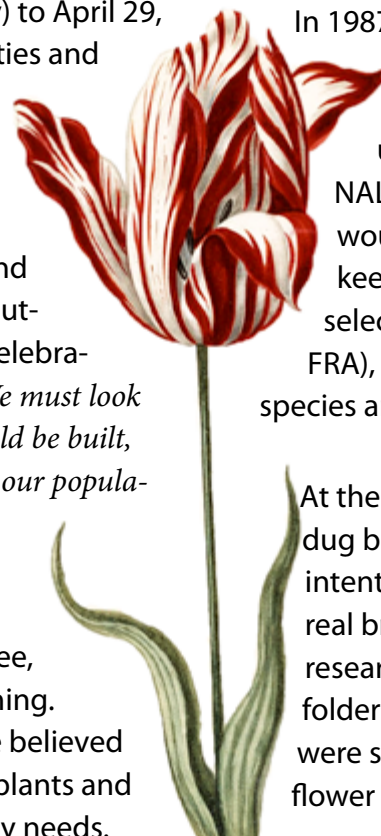
"The thoughtless, unplanned land use and uncontrolled destruction of our resources is the biggest threat we must face today."

In that anniversary year, the Executive Committee announced the approval of the Marion Thompson Fuller Brown Conservation Award for Small Flower Shows. The children of Mrs. Brown established this award in honor of her 70th birthday, acknowledging her leadership in conservation, not only to her own Piscataqua GC and The Garden Club of America but to the beautification of her state of Maine and the nation as well. This has become a prized award to the many clubs that have received it and encouraged countless educational conservation exhibits at flower shows across the country.

As NAL developed its efforts to follow legislation, communications among interested GCA members became increasingly important. Early on a telephone hotline was developed whereby "just a call away" would keep that person informed. Mrs. Nancy Kuhn (Indianapolis GC) came up with the idea and was considered the "mother of the HOTLINE." After Nancy Kuhn's death to cancer, Winsome McIntosh, NAL Chairman, started the innovative project. An answering machine was purchased and a recorded message was written by the chairman and recorded by an office staff member. It was updated twice monthly. The purpose was to inform the caller of the current status of environmental issues and legislation of interest to the GCA. The members would then be able to contact their representatives in Congress armed with correct information. It was a cumbersome process by 21st century standards but was very effective.

In 1987, Winsome McIntosh, chairman of the NAL Committee, brought to the attention of the Executive Committee the idea of hiring a consultant in Washington, DC, to help the committees keep up to date on legislative issues. However, it was not until the following year, when Mrs. Russell Schilling Wehrle (Kanawha GC) became NAL Chairman that The GCA take a major step forward in hiring a consultant who would be GCA's *"eyes and ears but not our mouth"* in Washington. The consultant would keep track of legislative issues followed by the two committees. Loretta Neumann was selected as the first Washington consultant. Issues for that year included pesticides (FIFRA), solid waste, acid rain, historic preservation, national parks, wilderness, endangered species and clean water.

At the close of the decade GCA continued to pursue the effort to stop the trade in wild-dug bulbs. Mrs. Arundel reported that the Netherlands bulb dealers announced their intent to cooperate with conservationists to discourage the digging of wild bulbs...a real breakthrough. Mrs. Arundel was also the catalyst behind a monumental amount of research, compilation and distribution of information on this issue. Thirty-six thousand folders (one-half on "Wildflowers in the Garden" and one-half on "Wild Collected Bulbs") were sent to GCA members. Many hundreds more were mailed to zone meetings, club flower shows, and other GCA gatherings.



One hundred six letters were mailed under GCA signatures to nurserymen in the United States and Canada, and an American catalogue review and a survey of 1990 British bulb catalogs were completed by Mrs. Arundel. She received the American Horticultural Society Communications Award for her excellence in horticulture. The award “recognizes her proactive horticultural communications with regard to the preservation of native bulbs.” She was also the recipient of both the GCA Achievement Medal (1986) and the GCA Medal of Honor (1996).

The Conservation Committee always sought new opportunities for collaborative actions among clubs. Several efforts at the end of the 80s should be highlighted. The first was a request to the GCA Executive Committee to permit the establishment of a northeastern regional approach for the restoration and preservation of Long Island Sound. All the zones in that region approved. The second was to establish a GCA policy promoting the ecological integrity of the Mississippi River system. This program would involve clubs from zones V, VII, IX, X and XI. Establishing these policies gave those clubs that wanted to be involved permission to use the name of The Garden Club of America when working within their communities and states to promote a healthy environment.

The 1980s had been a decade of real growth and expansion for the conservation efforts of the GCA. Reaching out to clubs across the country and encouraging the GCA voices to be heard in Washington drew greater attention to the conservation issues that had become so important to garden club enthusiasts. In the 1980s, the GCA moved from the simple business of promoting clean air, water and saving endangered species to the difficult task of addressing the complexity of the underlying causes of these environmental crises. GCA, with the advent of the position papers and help of the Washington consultant, spoke with a unified voice and as such, greatly expanded their influence both locally and nationally. ■



POSITION PAPERS

With all the enthusiasm for reaching out to the public and to members of Congress, it became apparent that members of GCA all needed to be certain when they were expressing the “opinion of the Garden Club of America.” Initially, the Executive Committee reviewed NAL’s requests regarding legislation activities, but it soon became apparent that there was no way for Exec to continue in this role with the flood of environmental legislation that was being considered. Thus, in 1989, the vehicle of position papers was created

The position papers represent, rather broadly, the tenets within each issue that GCA supports. For example, the Clean Water position paper notes support of the 1972 Clean Water Act and then indicates a whole list of efforts it supports to reduce water pollution and protect aquatic ecosystems. The papers are written with great care and research by the NAL and Conservation Committees and are then submitted to the Executive Committee for final approval. Once approved by Exec, they become the official position of GCA. In the years that followed often there were short response times needed. The position papers made it possible for the committees to respond in accordance with an approved GCA position. The position papers created a single, coherent voice for GCA. Members could visit their congressmen and hand them the papers and be assured that the previously agreed upon position of the organization would be completely explained and understood.

[Position papers can be found on the GCA website.](#)

Clean Air

Clean Water

Climate Change Action

National Parks

National Public Lands

Native Plants

Sustainable Agricultural, Seed Diversity, and Food Security

Waste Management

THE 1990s

A Cohesive Movement to Protect Our Nation's Lands and their Biological Integrity

The 1990s marked for GCA a “coming of age” in the conservation movement. The “low fruit” had been picked. The air and water of America were significantly cleaner, major species were being removed from the endangered list and the public celebrated Earth Day every year. However, much remained to be done. With better science and more funding, the complexity and depth of the threats to the environment became clearer. Understanding environmental problems was no longer a matter of noting sewage discharge into a river but of knowing the complex web of factors that went into producing these conditions.

Passage of the Endangered Species Act in 1973 and public focus on the act in the 1980s led Conservation and NAL Committee members to have increased interest in the environmental quality of the nation's public lands, specifically the plant life on those lands. Committee members contacted public land managers in different parts of the country in an effort to find out more about the plight of threatened and endangered plants under their management. Much of the national dialogue of the early '90s focused on “charismatic mega fauna,” a term coined in the mid-'80s referring to large mammals or vertebrates...polar bears, wolves, bison, or bald eagles—animals known and loved by all. Little conversation at the time centered on threatened flora of the nation. It was very difficult for the endangered orchids or the Texas trailing phlox to compete for the public conscience with baby wolves. When committee members went to Washington, they contacted members of Congress about the need for increased funding for plant management and called attention to the increased public interest in the welfare of plant communities. The GCA was finding a specific issue that meshed with both the interests of its member clubs and a national, unmet need.

Mrs. Edward A. Blackburn, Jr. (Sadie Gwin, River Oaks GC), GCA President, 1989-91, and Mrs. Clyde Shorey (Georgetown GC), Vice Chairman for Endangered Species, presented testimony before relevant Congressional sub-committees dealing with public lands, bringing attention to the fact that very few botanists were employed by the government to locate and study those threatened plants. Two years later, Mrs. Sellers J. Thomas, Jr. (Nancy, GC of Houston), GCA President, 1991-93, and Mrs. Frank N. Magid (Marilyn, Cedar Rapids GC) again testified before Congress in an effort to bring more attention to the problem. This clearly was an issue that motivated not just conservation activists but all of the GCA leadership as well.



NAL Legislative meeting in Washington, D.C.

The year 1991 brought a big change to the Washington meeting of the Conservation and NAL Committees. Under the leadership of Mrs. Driscoll, club conservation chairmen were invited to join the two committees for the meeting. She believed that all would benefit from being together. The issues discussed in 1991 included endangered species and ancient forests, public land management, scenic highways and historic preservation plus the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and 1991 amendments to the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act, which is the principal federal law governing the disposal of solid and hazardous waste. This meeting was so successful that a decision was made to invite club conservation chairmen to return the following year. The annual NAL Legislative Meeting in Washington, DC has become a very important GCA event. Each year approximately 300 members from all 12 zones come together for two days of education and information from experts in their fields as well as leaders of federal agencies, U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators. On the third day, club members head off to Capitol Hill to meet with the Representatives from their home districts and Senators from their states to discuss issues of interest to the Garden Club of America and to make them aware of the positions held by the organization.



Lyle Cherry Orchard, Columbia River Gorge

In 1989, the Conservation and NAL Committees traveled to Portland, Oregon, to hold their June meeting. This trip was planned to enable them to visit the Columbia River Gorge and to learn more about the issues surrounding it. Earlier in the decade the committees had voted to support the Columbia River Gorge Preservation Act, which proposed to preserve the Columbia River Gorge in the state of Oregon as an "area of national significance and a natural resource to be protected." This was the first time the two committees traveled across the country to study environmental problems and the annual trip was to become an important educational activity for the committees in the future.

The study field trip became an important part of the Conservation and NAL schedule in the 1990s. In 1991, the groups traveled to Jackson Hole, Wyoming to learn about Yellowstone National Park and problems facing it regarding proposed wolf recovery programs. They also visited Teton National Park to study the threats to the native plant populations. In 1992, they traveled to the Pacific Northwest to examine first hand the forestry issues that were so controversial at the time. They viewed old growth forests, second growth and clean cuts and could thus develop educated positions on this issue. They also visited the Elwha Dam that was being considered for demolition in the hope of restoring the native salmon runs that were destroyed when it was built. Dam removal finally began in mid-September, 2011 and was completed in late spring of 2012.^{xxiv}

At the suggestion of Mrs. Hunter White (Lynne)(New Orleans?) the Conservation Committee established the Eco-Exchange, a photo exhibition featuring important club conservation projects from around the country for display at Annual Meetings. It was designed to be the conservation complement to the very popular Plant Exchange, sponsored by the Horticulture Committee. It was an ideal way for clubs to showcase their conservation activities. Some of those projects included the first annual Knoxville Area High School Environmental Conference Organized by The Knoxville GC, working with two other groups. The event was held on a riverboat on the Tennessee River with principal topic of water quality and what

the participants could do to improve it. Another club near Long Island Sound began a project stenciling sewer manhole covers with slogans to educate the public to prevent pollutants and trash in the sewers from reaching Long Island Sound.

The Eco-Exchange became a regular component of GCA annual meetings and was an important way for clubs to share their conservation activities. In 2006, project photos were transferred to boards representing each zone to create an attractive zone display which could then be used for local meetings. The name of the exhibit was changed in 2008 to the Conservation Showcase to be more descriptive of the actual project – to display the breadth and depth of club conservation activities across the country. In a continuing effort to communicate more effectively and efficiently, at the Annual Meeting in 2012, each club president was given a flash drive showing conservation projects that have been both successful and easily replicable, along with contact names and emails for more information. This eliminated unnecessary busy work for zone representatives and guaranteed that each club in GCA would gain the knowledge of valuable tools from conservation efforts elsewhere.

In 1992, the Conservation Committee adopted the theme "Protecting Biological Diversity: Our Greatest Chance." The question was asked, "Why should we, as GCA members, be concerned?" Mrs. Frank N. Magid (Cedar Rapids GC), Conservation Chairman 1991-93 said, "The creation of diversity has been a long, slow process over billions of years. Over this time the evolution of species, each adapted to the specific needs of its niche in the habitat, has produced a diversity of life far greater than it was, say, 500 million years ago. This is the result even though 99% of all species that ever lived are now extinct." She continued, "We, as gardeners, must be informed; we must care. If we allow diverse life forms to be lost, potential new sources of scientific information will be lost. We must not overlook the fact that ecosystems enrich the soil, the air that we breathe, and purify the water that we drink. We must remember that human beings co-evolved with the rest of life on this planet. Humanity itself will be threatened by diminishing biological diversity."

In 1993, the fall meeting visited the redwoods in Eureka, California, where members participated in the 75th Anniversary of the Save-the-Redwoods League. During the visit, Mrs. Magid, NAL Chair 1993-95 and Mrs. Arthur L. Coburn III (Village GC of Sewickley), Conservation Chairman 1993-95, had the privilege of assisting in the dedication of the new Elvira Broome Doolan Grove, which is adjacent to the Garden Club of America Grove. This grove honored one of GCA's most distinguished members. Attendees were reminded of the determination of the conservation-minded members who fought for the preservation of those magnificent trees so many years ago.

In 1995, the fall meeting moved to Florida and the Everglades where, in Ann Coburn's words, "the inextricable link between habitat and flora and fauna-biodiversity—was vividly demonstrated over and over again." The two committees reaffirmed their commitment to biological diversity as a central focus for the year. Ann Coburn continued, "*There is so much*



that we don't understand about the relationship of living things that we must move very, very carefully as we blunder through and seriously affect the ecosystem surrounding and supporting us.” She went on to say that we are a key part of that ecosystem. We can't afford to make any mistakes. She spoke about the rosy periwinkle plant found in Madagascar, which has proven to be a potent weapon against some forms of cancer; it was almost lost. The Pacific yew, considered a “trash tree” in the Pacific Northwest, was found to be another source for a cancer-fighting drug. She asserted that we need to support The Endangered Species Act so there is time for similar plants to be discovered and their possible medicinal properties revealed.

At another meeting, Ann Coburn reminded the committees of a book written by Dr. Seuss entitled The Lorax. The central character, the Lorax, spoke up for the one remaining Truffula tree. All others had been cut down, ruining the environment in the process. She remarked that “the Conservation Committee is one way in which the GCA can speak for the trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses and other growing things which are so crucial to life on this earth.”

The Clean Water Act was up for renewal but under heavy attack by property rights groups because of the provisions to protect wetlands on private property included in the original bill. Ann Coburn addressed the issue of wetlands protection in the following manner: “Wetlands, long considered waste land, were being recognized as nurseries for

young creatures and water storage and filtration areas which needed to be preserved. Unfortunately, often the farmer or rancher considered wetland protection a threat to the management of his land. Water protection, while regarded as crucial to clean water and survival of species, was seen as an invasion of private rights, a conflict in philosophy which persists today.”

As concerns about clean water grew, the Conservation and NAL Committees investigated methods of sewage treatment, improving the coastal water quality and helping companies reduce the use of toxins in manufacturing. In the mid-'90s non-point source pollution, or storm water runoff, was viewed as the greatest water quality problem facing everyone. Again Ann Coburn spoke about the need to be very conscious of clean water and of clean air for ourselves and our children. “None of these basics can be taken for granted...in our increasingly crowded and complicated world.”

In the early '90s discussions began about the possibility of the Conservation Committee publishing its own individual newsletter. The GCA Conservation Watch would contain condensed versions of vice chairman's reports, news on legislative issues and news that might contribute to the understanding of those issues. It would be sent to each club president and club conservation chairman. The newsletter began under the very able direction of Mrs. George Birkheimer(Nantucket GC). Two years later, Mrs. David C. Pinkerton(Tacoma GC) became editor. In the spring of 1995, Mrs. Pinkerton put together a sample copy of GCA Conservation Watch newsletter for distribution at the Annual Meeting in Boston. It was received with such enthusiasm that the Conservation Committee decided to publish it for those who would like to receive it. Members who subscribed paid a fee, and four issues per year arrived in their mailboxes. The Conservation Committee was blessed with a number of excellent editors including

- Mrs. George Birkheimer, Nantucket GC
- Mrs. David C. Pinkerton, Tacoma GC
- Diane Stoner(Mrs. David), Litchfield GC
- Penny Marshall, (Mrs. Jay Howard, Jr.) Piscataqua GC
- Sarah Swinerton, Woodside-Atherton GC
- Elva Busch, (Mrs. Robert), Santa Fe GC
- Candace Lyche, (Mrs. Iver), Hillsborough GC
- Marsha Merrell (Mrs. Ronald) James River GC
- Molly Jones, Portland GC.

In the winter of 2006, the publication was taken online. When the new website was created in 2012, Conservation Watch, now called, [ConWatch](#) became accessible to the interested public. Many issues have followed a specific theme, such as Below the Surface—Our Endangered Oceans or The Dinner Table: A New Battleground for Conservation; others have focused on information gleaned from the annual field trip studies, the Washington meeting or conservation projects of GCA clubs around the country. Conservation Watch has become an effective educational tool for the conservation efforts of the Garden Club of America.



Traditionally, the Conservation Committee Chairman gave a brief presentation at each annual meeting. In 1997, Mrs. Edward Ambrecht, Jr., (Calvert Jones), Kanawha GC, spoke to the delegation. She said that since the founding of the Garden Club of America, *“we have learned that it takes more than a concern for aesthetics to conserve the plants and landscapes we cherish. Our statement of purpose now includes the charge ‘to restore, improve and protect the quality of the environment through programs and action in the fields of conservation, civic improvement and education.’* The task of the Conservation Committee is to educate the membership so that member clubs and individuals can make informed decisions about environmental matters.

“What has all this to do with gardening? In a word, everything! Who better than a gardener is sensitive to what it takes to make a healthy planet...” She continued Peter Forbes, New England Director of the Trust for Public Land, *“The garden offers for the majority of us, our most direct and intimate relationship to nature...The garden is impossible without two things: nature and humans working together. From this we get the most important definition of a garden, as a place where nature and culture are blended.”* He went on to express his hope that the environmental movement would also be defined by this relationship between nature and culture.

Calvert Ambrecht concluded her address, *“We are privileged to live our lives isolated from the most direct experience of environmental degradation... We still have the luxury of making choices which are denied to most of the world’s population, but our privilege carries with it an obligation, if we are to pass on our resources undiminished to our children and their children:*

- We must learn to pay attention to how we live and the decisions we make in our daily lives.
- We must recognize ways in which we can make changes, so that we live more lightly on the planet.
- We must learn that even that is not enough. That we must learn to look at things differently.

There is a Chinese proverb which states, ‘Unless we change our direction, we will wind up where we are headed.’ So let us seek a new direction to a sustainable future, beginning in our own backyards.”

From 1997–1999, Mrs. William P. Boggess II (Judy Norton) Lake Forest GC, served as Conservation Committee Chairman. As the decade of the ‘90s drew to a close, it is interesting to examine the breadth and depth of topics that the Conservation Committee chose to explore. There was a growing awareness that what happens in one place does not stay there. Nowhere was that more noticeable than in issues dealing with air quality. Air pollution, once confined to urban areas was now detectable in once pristine forests of Colorado, as the committees learned on the fall field trip to Colorado. Pesticides like DDT, long banned in the U.S., drifted into this country from Mexico and Central America where DDT was still used in the 1990s. Increasing days of ozone alerts and rising rates of asthma made committee members aware of the multitude of emissions coming from transporta-

tion, industry and personal vehicles, like lawn mowers and snowmobiles. Air quality issues also included studying the new worldwide concern about global warming.

The multitude of committee interests also included the visual effects of ever-increasing cell tower construction and other issues regarding land use, from urban sprawl to land preservation to watershed protection. Transportation problems including pollution and the omnipresent regulation of billboards were still on the list of conservation topics. Many clubs expressed interest in working on land use issues so to assist them, the NAL Committee, chaired by Ann Coburn, created a publication titled, *A Toolbox of Resources for Responsible Land Use*. The publication included guidelines for responsible land use, information about how to get involved in one’s community, suggestions for creating a successful land use strategy and a list of resources that were available.

Other conservation topics continued to be of great interest, especially the protection of endangered species and the use of native plants, rather than exotic imports, in gardening. The deforestation and the maintenance and protection of National Parks and public lands was an area of concern as it had been since 1916. Mrs. Boggess introduced the topic of environmental economics, as it had become apparent that economics would be part of the environmental challenges of the future. There was a growing awareness that consumption levels in wealthy nations are unsustainable in a developing world.

During the late ‘90s, education was still the central mission of the Conservation Committee and the best practice at the time was the publication of educational brochures for distribution. At the 1996 Annual Meeting, medalist Dr. William Niering challenged the GCA to change the way Americans view and maintain their yards, the most significant part of which is normally the monoculture that is called the “lawn.” The Conservation Committee’s response was the brochure, [*The New American Lawn*](#), a guide on “how to have a healthy lawn friendly to people and the environment”, written by Mary Lou Livingood and Leslie Pierpont. Members across the country dispensed over 500,000 copies of the new publication. In 1999, Leslie Pierpont produced [*The New American Golf Course*](#) brochure. Committee members hoped nationwide distribution would reduce pesticide use on every golf course.



In the fall of 1999, Drinking Water Safety was produced to help GCA members and other consumers understand the water quality reports which utilities were required to issue because of the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. A fourth pamphlet entitled Good Gardening Practices, released the following year, was a joint project of the Conservation and Horticulture Committees. All of these brochures can be found on the Garden Club of America website.

Over the years, the NAL and Conservation Committees have developed a wonderful symbiotic relationship. NAL was established as a separate entity but they work extremely closely together. A few differences in the Vice-Chair positions exist, but basically the Conservation Chairs report on the environmental background of a subject such as the intricacies of wetlands and their critical importance to maintaining a healthy ecological system. The NAL counterpart will report on proposed or pending legislation, such as the Clean Water Restoration Act, and discuss how to effectively support or oppose such legislation. The two committees hold all their meetings together (a total of four a year), including the yearly conservation (hands on) field trip and the annual legislative conference, in February, in DC.

The committees also share Zone Representatives who are critical to the extended education and communication within the vast GCA network of 199 clubs and almost 18,000 members. They gather the information from our meetings, send it to the conservation chairs in their zones, and also facilitate the transfer of information the other way too. These Representatives also play a significant part in helping with the coordination of the Washington meeting.

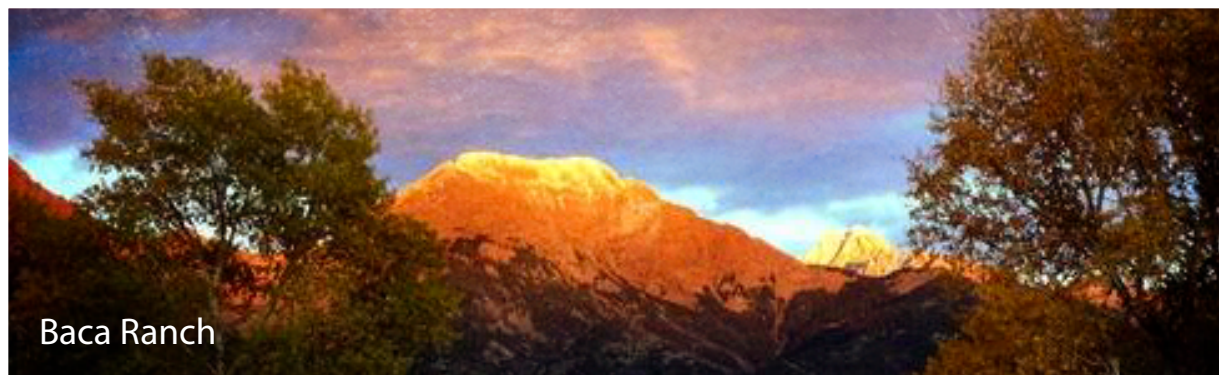
The continued GCA interest in the management of public lands, led to testimony by Jane Henley before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations for Interior and Related Agencies. As in the past, GCA was one of the few conservation organizations with a major focus on the health and preservation of plant communities. Jane's remarks included a request for a 25% increase in the number botanists or plant specialists in public land agencies, specifically the goal of having one botanist for each national forest, and additional funding for plant related natural resource stewardship particularly on public lands. She also noted the GCA supported the Invasive Species Initiative. This was an early recognition of the dangers of invasive infestation on public lands. In 1999, 10% of federal land was significantly infested.

Another important plant-related issue came to the forefront late in the decade – genetic engineering. The topic can be described simply: "The companies involved in the development of GMO's (genetically modified organisms)...see technology as a means of greater economic benefit for the farmer and a means to 'help feed the world'. On the other hand,...there is concern about the health effects, the escape of these modified plant properties to the wild populations and organic fields, and also the effect on small farmers dependent on saving seed for the following year's planting."²⁵ The subject is extraordinarily complex. To shine

some light on the matter, NAL established a seed issues task force with representatives from Conservation, NAL and Horticulture Committees and chaired by JoAnn Meyer (Mrs. Alex A.) Club?. They were charged with studying and clarifying the issue. The Task Force produced a thorough and remarkable notebook which delved into the topics of USDA's National Plant Germplasm System, seed diversity, genetic engineering of seeds and patent technology to produce plants which produced non-germinating seeds, and escape of altered seeds into the wild. A copy of the notebook was sent to every GCA club with the goal of generating interest and enthusiasm throughout the national organization. GCA members were given the tools to understand the changes in agriculture that would change the world forever.



At the National Affairs and Legislation Meeting in February, 1999, the Conservation Committee celebrated its 75th Anniversary. For the occasion Betty Pinkerton created The Conservation Committee History 1924-1999 and a copy was given to every attendee. It was exhilarating to read the stories of the early pioneers who led the conservation effort for the Garden Club of America and to see how much the topics of concern had changed and how very much they had stayed the same.■



Baca Ranch

THE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The end of the decade also brought new responsibility to the NAL Committee. For years the NAL Chair had worked with the Washington consultant to prepare the weekly communication to interested club members about legislative issues. Originally called the Hotline, it became the Legislative Update. In January, 1999, the NAL Committee completely took over the preparation and production of the update. The first editor was Carol Stoddard. The first edition was a focus statement for the 106th Congress and included the GCA concerns about water issues, public lands, endangered species legislation and billboards and scenic quality. Several years later under the direction of Martha Phillips (Mrs. Kevin, Litchfield GC), the [Legislative Status Chart](#) was added. It provides a comprehensive look at all relevant conservation legislation and where it is in the legislative process.

The [Legislative Update](#) had become an important tool for gathering support for issues that were important to the GCA. In the summer of 1998, the Santa Fe Garden Club had enlisted the assistance of the NAL Committee in an effort to bring about the purchase of the Baca Ranch by the U. S. Forest Service. The ranch is located in the caldera of an ancient volcano, encompassing vast open grasslands and forested mountains and is home to 7,000 elk and 17 plant and animal species considered to be threatened or endangered. The owners wanted to sell it for development if the government did not step in. Santa Fe club members hoped to get Congress to appropriate funds for the purchase from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. NAL used the Legislative Update to alert the membership about this project, and they responded with faxes and phone calls to Congress and other federal officials. The Santa Fe Garden Club and NAL worked tirelessly and ultimately, they were successful in getting the funding authorized. As Jane Henley, NAL Chairman 1997–99, said, “It was a great experience for NAL to work with a local club that needed federal action to complete an important local project.”

PARTNERS FOR PLANTS

During the 1991 Washington Conservation and NAL Committee meeting, several members gathered informally at the home of Mrs. Clyde Shorey to discuss how the GCA could best respond to the issue of endangered plants on public lands. Mrs. Lee F. Driscoll, Jr. (The Weeders), Mrs. Bernard L. McMahon (The Trowel Club), Loretta Neuman, GCA Washington consultant, and Mrs. Shorey developed a plan to meld grassroots interests with private and public resources to improve the management and protection of plants on public lands. The new project, called “Partners for Plants” was launched in 1992, originally designed as a conservation project to pair local GCA clubs with managers of national parks and other federal lands to monitor endangered and rare plants. Mrs. Shorey became its first chairman, followed shortly by Mrs. William H. Warrick, Jr. (Piscataqua GC). Since the early 90s Partners for Plants has expanded into all GCA zones. It has become a joint initiative of the both the Horticulture and Conservation Committees. Projects pair local GCA clubs with managers of state and federal lands and other significant public lands to monitor rare, endangered, medicinal, or invasive plants.

Coordinated by a GCA member, each Partners for Plants project is as unique as the group undertaking the task. Volunteers work with professional botanists and land managers who supervise the work and share their knowledge and expertise. Work can be inventorying, mapping, monitoring, propagating, and transplanting endangered plants. Requiring a time commitment ranging from days to weeks, each project serves as a catalyst for accomplishing important endangered plant work that in many cases could not have been accomplished otherwise. As of September, 2012, there were 32 projects in eleven of the twelve GC zones.²²



Eloise Payne Luquer, 1862–1947, watercolorist and founder of the Bedford Garden Club

THE 21ST CENTURY

Globalization of the Environment and The Challenge of Climate Change

As the 20th century ended and the 21st began, technology became a tool of GCA conservation. The goal of the committees had always been to educate the thousands of garden club members across the country but often getting the information to those members had been clumsy, time-consuming and expensive. Thousands of educational brochures were printed but distribution lagged. When NAL needed to direct members to contact Congress, an elaborate telephone tree was instituted because a letter mailed suggesting urgent action would arrive too late for the member to contact Congress before a vote was taken. The FAX machine was a great advancement but not everyone had access to one. Committee members were diligent in preparing well-researched reports but then mailed them to the GCA office where all the reports were copied, collated and then mailed back to committee members. Thirty or more several-page reports sent to thirty or more committee members made a hefty load for the postman. There still had been no mechanism for getting the carefully crafted reports out to the membership at large, and vital information seldom spread much beyond the committee members.

But then the Internet revolution arrived. By 2000, reports were sent electronically among committee members. Within a few years, all reports were posted on the website and available to any member of a GCA club. The ability to spread the wealth of information about conservation issues and the background for pending legislation became limitless. The Legislative Update, the Current Status Chart and Conservation Watch could also reach everyone with a click on the website.

Education had been made easy and not too soon because the world had become far more complex. In her annual report of 2001, Judy Boggess (Mrs. William P. II, Lake Forest Garden Club), NAL Chairman 1999-2001, urged everyone to consider the impact of a globalized world.

“Globalization of commerce has internationalized the environment. Think about the teak coffee table in your house or the shrimp on your dinner plate. Have you ever considered that these have an impact halfway around the world?”



Judy continued, “Colombia provides two-thirds of all flowers sold in the USA and Colombian plantations use approximately 127 pesticides on their plants. Twenty percent of those are either banned or unregistered in the USA or the UK...Natural boundaries, such as mountains and oceans, no longer contain ecosystems as people, winds, and water move species around...Invasive species are a major threat to life on earth.”

Recognition of the growing threat from non-native invasive plants prompted many horticulture groups to seek workable remedies. In October, 2001, experts from around the country were invited to the Missouri Botanic Gardens to develop practical voluntary approaches to reduce the introduction and spread of non-native invasive plants. GCA was honored to be included. Subsequent to that meeting Voluntary Codes of Conduct were adopted, and the GCA Executive Committee endorsed the codes for the gardening public. The Conservation Committee worked with the Horticulture Committee to support these codes and educate the clubs about the need to promote the use of native plants and eradicate invasives.

Another cooperative opportunity brought together the GCA mission to protect native plants with its long-standing support of parks and public open space. The GCA joined with the National Park Service, the Lady Bird John Wildflower Center, National Invasive Species Council, and the Student Conservation Association to create an educational program for the urban/wild land interface called PlantWise. Scientists estimate that invasive plants are spreading over approximately 1,729,730 acres per year of U.S. wildlife habitat. This joint program would seek to educate the public, homeowners and landowners about best management practices to prevent harmful invasive plants from invading park lands and natural areas. ²⁶This project complements the ongoing Conservation and Horticulture Committee project, Partners for Plants, which had paired GCA clubs with public land managers since 1992.

Annual field trips that began in 1989 remained a critically important part of the Conservation Committee education effort. In the early part of the new century The GCA was not immune from the divergent opinions of the business and other communities on the best way forward in protecting the environment. Some club members voiced the view that the effect of conservation legislation on business interests should be more carefully considered. In addition to implementing a more thorough process in crafting position papers and reports, the committees realized that there was no substitute for “on the ground” visits to critical areas of concern.



From Portland, Oregon to Florida's Everglades, from the boundary waters of Minnesota to the bayous of Texas and from the mountains of West Virginia to a ranch in Arizona and the beaches of Hawaii, the Conservation and National Affairs Committees (at their own expense) visited critical areas of environmental concern all across the country. Field trips became the best mechanism for understanding all sides to important issues. Two visits to Arizona explored the management of public lands where forests, refuges, and grazing lands are managed by overlapping responsibilities of four federal agencies with hundreds of laws and regulations creating confusion and sometimes hostility between government and farmers and ranchers. Implementation of the Endangered Species Act had been a flash point of this controversy. Members also viewed the devastation that accompanies resource extraction at a gigantic copper mine but understood how essential those resources are to the American lifestyle. The balance between the damage caused by coal mining mountaintop removal and the need for energy was also on display in West Virginia. Members of the Kanawha Garden Club made it possible for the committee to tour a mountaintop mine and view first hand the process of strip mining the coal. Provisions of the Clean Water Act were under litigation at the time to protect headwater streams affected by coal mining. Coal is the principal industry in West Virginia and over 50% of the nation's energy is produced by coal.²⁷ It is a controversial issue but no one on the tour will ever forget the environmental consequences of providing that coal to fuel the energy dependent lifestyle of the United States.

Protection of wetlands under the Clean Water Act also had been a source of controversy. In Texas, committee members learned about the importance of isolated wetlands but also about creating wetland banks as a method of mitigating the loss of critical wetlands to development. In Savannah, Georgia, post-Katrina New Orleans, and Pasadena, CA, the committee learned about the critical importance of protecting coastal wetlands. As the country learned in 2005, the costs of destroying coastal wetlands to provide for industry or development can far exceed the benefits. In the late 1990s, the EPA began implementing the sections of the Clean Water Act dealing with non-point source pollution, or storm water runoff. In West Virginia, Tidewater Virginia, Florida and Chicago, the effects of urban

or agricultural runoff on critical bodies of water were abundant and clear. The costs of clean up to local governments and farmers create the age old dilemma – how much is clean water worth? And what are the costs of dirty water to public health, wildlife and fisheries, and water-based business and recreation?

Unfortunately during the early 2000s, the NAL Committee spent much of its time opposing legislation that violated conservation principles which the GCA had supported for decades. There were proposed changes to the National Parks Service which would have favored recreation and public use over conservation and preservation. There were continued efforts to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling and proposals to sell public lands to mining companies in an ill-conceived effort to balance the federal budget. Other efforts attempted to weaken the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act which required the federal government to follow its own environmental rules on federal projects. There was a proposal that would have weakened billboard regulations in 13 southern states. And, even following the disastrous effects of Hurricane Katrina on Louisiana wetlands, there were companies eager to harvest cypress trees in the damaged areas further exposing sensitive wetlands to degradation.

On the 35th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act, Derry MacBride (Mrs. Thomas) was invited by Representative James Oberstar of Minnesota to speak to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure about the Garden Club of America's longtime commitment to clean water. Rep. Oberstar had been a congressional aide when the act was passed and had remembered the support of GCA in getting the legislation enacted. Derry spoke about the long history of GCA's involvement in educating the public about the need for clean water and the regulations required to ensure that it would be available for future generations. She also affirmed GCA support for the Clean Water Restoration Act of 2007, under consideration at the time, which was needed to clarify the original intended scope of the Clean Water Act to protect wetlands and the critical role that they play in removing pollutants and impurities from vital water sources. The legislation has not passed to date.



There were, however, a few bright spots. The committees wrote to the Bush Administration in support of the proclamation of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument, or Papahānaumokuākea for short. On June 15, 2006, President Bush created the U.S. National Monument encompassing 140,000 square miles (360,000 km²) of ocean waters, including ten islands and atolls of the Northeastern Hawaiian Islands. In addition, the committees wrote to support legislation that would create the Captain John Smith National Water Trail, which had been a topic discussed at the fall field trip to Tidewater Virginia. Everyone was excited when, just before the final session of the 109th Congress, both houses approved funding for the first water trail sponsored by the National Park Service.

The first decade of the 21st century saw the first Conservation and NAL Committee interest in the global threat of climate change. The summer 2002 issue of Conservation Watch was entitled “Is it Hot Enough for You?” In a description of the recent weather, the author writes, **“Heat waves were earlier, oftener, hotter, longer and felt like a disturbing indication that global warming may be galloping at us.”** In a 2006 paper by Maureen Ogden (Mrs. Robert M. III, Short Hills GC), NAL Vice Chair for Energy Sources, documented changes of species responding to climate change in the United States and the Northern Hemisphere were cited:

- Lilacs and honeysuckle are blooming 6 days earlier
- Tree swallows are laying their eggs 9 days earlier
- Frogs are starting their mating season 12 days earlier
- Lakes and rivers are thawing 6 days earlier
- Growing season in the upper latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere is 12 days longer
- The marine food chain is disrupted as plankton blooms arrive earlier.



In 2006, the Conservation Committee, First Vice Chairman Audrey Platt (Mrs. Richard, Jr., Trustees’ GC) began writing reports on Climate Change for the Conservation Committee. The following year Claire Caudill (Mrs. John W., Garden Club of Houston) added the position of Vice Chairman for Climate Change to the roster of the Conservation Committee. In the fall of 2006, the Executive Committee of GCA approved a new position paper on global warming, calling for strategies to slow climate change. In response to an increase in published but not scientifically documented claims in opposition to the science of climate change, the Conservation and NAL Committees decided to add the following phrase to all position papers: The Garden Club of America supports independent, academic, peer-reviewed scientific research as the basis for formulation of responsible public policy and legislation, as well as appropriate funding to ensure quality results. The NAL Washington meeting in February, 2007 was the first legislative meeting to be Carbon Free. Carbonfund.org, a non-profit organization, calculated the amount of carbon dioxide that would be used for the meeting (impacts of transportation, meals, hotels and others) at \$2.46 per person. That amount was then donated for investments in clean technology and to plant trees to offset the carbon used. The 2007 meeting and others that followed devoted significant time to understanding the causes and effects of global warming. The Winter 2007-2008 edition of Conservation Watch was devoted entirely to global warming and how climate change affects all the other issues to which GCA has been devoted for almost 100 years.



GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Although research had been conducted on the possibility of human-induced global warming for years, the scientific community began to reach consensus in the 1990s. In 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) to provide the governments of the world with a clear scientific view of what is happening to the world’s climate. The scientific evidence published in the first IPCC report in 1990 unveiled climate change as a topic of critical importance among nations of the world and led to the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the key international treaty to reduce global warming and cope with the consequences of climate change. Subsequent reports were published in 1995, which led to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, in 2001 and finally in 2007. The IPCC reports provide the world with a clear scientific view on the current state of knowledge in climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts. From James Hanson’s first warnings about the warming of the planet to the present day, acceptance of global climate warming has not been without controversy.



In 2007, the National Wildlife Federation published *The Gardener's Guide to Global Warming, Challenges and Solutions*. The Foreword, written by Marian Hill, a GCA Vice President and Susan Rieff, Executive Director, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, spoke of recognizing the serious reality of global warming and expressing the commitment of GCA and the Lady Bird Center to preserving plant diversity worldwide. "As the earth's climate changes, the habitats of many species will move poleward from their current locations. The most rapid changes are expected to occur in areas where natural ecosystems are already under stress from land development and other natural and anthropogenic disturbances... This will disrupt established ecosystems and create new assemblages of species that may be less diverse, and include more invasive species. This will, in turn, increase the vulnerability of existing ecosystems." *"The science of climate warming is clear; we must act now, and we also must be prepared for a sustained intense effort over many future decades."*



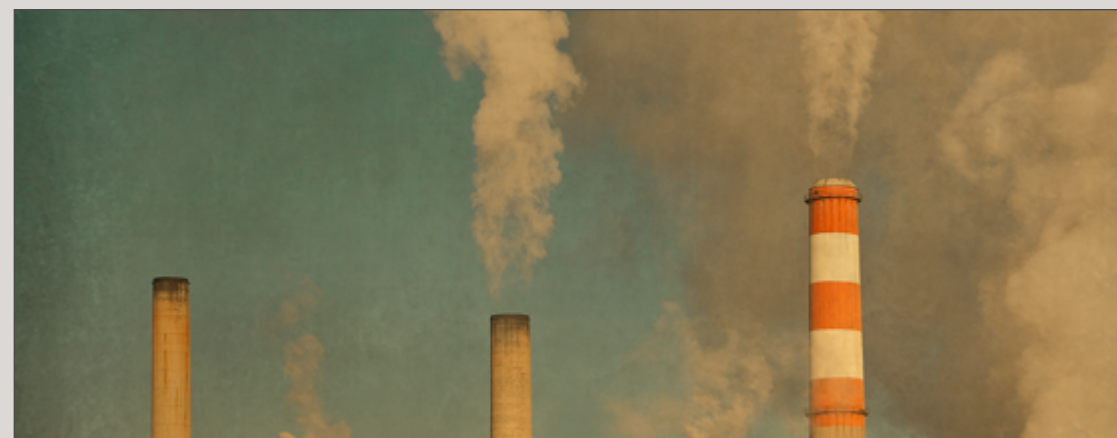
GCA clubs were often quite involved in the emerging issues of the day at the local level. This was certainly true in the case of climate change. The Chicago Council of the Garden Club of America presented *Children, Heal Me. I am the Earth* on April 24, 2006. An international panel of leaders in the field of climate change presented the latest information about global warming and what can be done to combat it. The conference addressed climate change as it relates to business, globalization, politics, science, oceans, health and education. In November, 2007, the 12 garden clubs of Zone IV, in partnership with Environmental Defense and the Princeton Environmental Institute, produced a major conference entitled *Hotter Times Ahead: A Conference on Climate Change*. A host of illustrious speakers impressed attendees with the facts and figures of climate change and encouraged urgent action. The message of the conference was clear. *"To save our planet for future generations, it is urgent to start now to reduce our impact on the earth and all its systems that are delicately balanced to sustain the remaining species, including ours."*

In January, 2009 the Bedford (NY) Garden Club co-sponsored The Bedford Environmental Summit, a meeting to educate and create a community of advocates. The Summit was an extraordinary grassroots movement to change behavior on environmental issues—greenhouse gas emissions, climate change, diminishing natural resources, and the health and safety of our food and water supplies. Over 1000 persons attended and 120 partnering organizations were involved. Two years later, in January, 2011, the Bedford Garden Club followed up with a "Call to Action", a program focused on the specific ways Bedford is working to reach the goals of the Climate Action Plan. The Town of Bedford unanimously passed the Plan in 2010. It calls for a reduction of community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020.

CLIMATE CHANGE LEGISLATION

In Washington, DC, global warming was under scrutiny in the both the executive and legislative branches. In 2002, the George W. Bush administration created a Climate Change Science Program to assess the issue of global warming. At the beginning of May, 2006, the first of 21 studies was released. All the authors, who had previously held differing views, agreed that there was *"clear evidence of human influence on the climate system."* While the administration conceded the importance of scientific unanimity, it stated that it would advocate for voluntary means to slow the growth of greenhouse gases.

The United States Senate began serious work on climate change legislation in the 108th Congress (2003-2004) under the leadership of John McCain (R-AZ) and Joseph Lieberman (D-CT) with the Climate Stewardship Act. The act would have capped carbon dioxide emissions at the 2000 limit. The bill was defeated but the vote was close enough to get the attention of legislators. It was reintroduced in 2005 as the Climate Stewardship and Innovation Act. Again the bill would have capped CO2 emissions and included the trading of emission allowances as climate change credits and reductions. This "cap and trade" provision had been used earlier with great success to reduce the sulfur dioxide emissions responsible for acid rain. Although in early discussions the Senators had agreed that the concept of global warming was no longer refutable, but a reality that must be addressed, this bill also failed to pass. A third "cap and trade" bill, known as the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act was introduced in the 110th Congress. It too did not pass. In 2008, Barack Obama campaigned on the issue of proposing legislation to cap greenhouse emissions and create a carbon market. Despite President Obama's election, the U.S. Congress failed to address the issue in his first term in office. Later efforts would be directed toward energy efficiency and decreasing carbon emissions through regulatory procedures.



If government has sometimes failed to act with regard to the conservation of America's natural resources, it is clear that the women of the Garden Club of America have not suffered the same failing. In 2013, The Garden Club of America will celebrate 100 years as an organization. From its inception, the organization has been at the forefront of many conservation issues and doggedly held on to those core passions. It is worth noting that the first committees of GCA—forestry, wild flowers, national parks, and billboards—are all still represented and researched by the Conservation and NAL Committees in 2013. While GCA has been advocating action on these issues, dedicated club members have dug deep into the earth to actually restore the damage to the environment. From propagating endangered wild flowers, to planting seedlings to reforest the national parks, to removing exotic, invasive species preventing the growth of the native flora, club members have put their sweat equity into the issues. They have also learned to garden without toxic chemicals, use water efficiently, reduce energy use, recycle everything and worked tirelessly to teach others how to do so. Club members have learned how to live more responsibly as individuals and grown to expect the organization to do so collectively. In 2012, the Executive Committee of the Garden Club of America passed a recommendation that when garden clubs gather together they do so in a manner that promotes sustainability, a state in which humans and nature can exist in harmony. The past 100 years have been fraught with challenges to the environment met by the dedicated members of garden clubs who educated, communicated and advocated for the issues they believe in. If past is prologue to the future, the GCA will continue its great tradition of being one of America's premier conservation organizations. ■



THE HARLAN T. PIERPONT MEN'S AUXILIARY

In 1993, the committees met on the Big Island of Hawaii prior to the Annual Meeting in Honolulu. This time husbands had been invited to join the group. Everyone had a wonderful time. It occurred to the husbands present that their wives could be rotated off the committees, and that, if they wished to continue attending, it would be necessary to form a permanent male association to meet concurrently and indefinitely! There seemed to be no suitable acronym for Men's Auxiliary of the Conservation and National Affairs Committees of the Garden Club of America (MAOCNALCOGCA?!). The founding members—Ted Armbrecht, Tui Coburn, Frank Magid and Cameron Wolfe—therefore approached Georgie Pierpont, a longtime committee member whose husband had often attended but had suffered a debilitating accident, to ask if they might name the group in his honor, and to give the group some class. Georgie assented and thus the Harlan T. Pierpont Men's Auxiliary was formed. A suitable dues structure was determined (to be used for cocktail parties only) and after he had returned from Hawaii, Ted Armbrecht received a message that, at a meeting of the Auxiliary in the Men's Room, he had been elected president – and fined \$100 for missing the meeting!

Over the years the Auxiliary not only continued to meet with wives in many wonderful places for wonderful purposes, but also organized special group trips. While husbands continue to attend the committees' fall meeting, the HTPMA has folded away as a formal body, but remains hallowed in memory at annual cocktail parties.²⁵



SOURCES

The Conservation and National Affairs and Legislation Committees of the Garden Club of America are extremely grateful to Betty Pinkerton, Mrs. David C. (Tacoma Garden Club) for researching, writing and editing *The Conservation Committee History: 75 YEARS, 1924–1999*. That publication was used extensively as the basis for the first nine decades of this history of the committees. Mrs. Pinkerton's sources for that publication included:

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- *The Garden Club of America, 1913–1923*; Joanne Lenden, GCA Historian (Booklet Presented to GCA Board of Directors, December 10, 1997)
- *Fifty Blooming Years, 1913–1963*, The Garden Club of America (50th Anniversary), Marjorie gibbon Battles and Catherine Cold Dickey
- *Winds of Change, 1963–1988*, (75th Anniversary), Compiled by Diana Morgan Olcott
- *Minutes of Conservation and Roadside Committee and Minutes of Conservation Executive Committee, 1926–1965*;
- *Annual Reports of Conservation Committee, 1951–1979*
- *Biennial Reports of Conservation Chairmen, 1980–1998*

Sources for the years 2000–2013 included:

- *Annual Reports of both Conservation and National Affairs and Legislation Committees, 1999–2012*,
- *The text of testimony presented to Congress*
- *Personal interviews.*



Eloise Payne Luquer, 1862–1947, watercolorist and founder of the Bedford Garden Club

ENDNOTES

1. All available records list member's names by the then accepted husband's name. In some cases, where a member was unmarried, her first name was used.
2. In the late 19th century the phylloxera epidemic destroyed most of the vineyards for wine grapes in Europe, most notably in France. Phylloxera was introduced to Europe when avid botanists in Victorian England collected specimens of American vines in the 1850s. Because phylloxera is native to North America, the native grape species there are at least partially resistant. By contrast, the European wine grape *Vitis vinifera* is very susceptible to the insect. The epidemic devastated vineyards in Britain and then moved to the mainland, destroying most of the European wine growing industry. In 1863, the first vines began to deteriorate inexplicably in the southern Rhône region of France. The problem spread rapidly across the continent. In France alone, total wine production fell from 84.5 million hectolitres in 1875 to only 23.4 million hectolitres in 1889. Some estimates hold that between two-thirds and nine-tenths of all European vineyards were destroyed.
3. "TO EVERY FRIEND OF AMERICAN HORTICULTURE" A Preliminary Report by the Executive Committee Appointed at a Conference of Representatives of Horticultural and Other Societies, Held June 15, 1920, in the American Museum of Natural History, New York City as reported in The Garden Magazine, Volume XXXII September 1920 to February 1921, Garden City, New York, Doubleday, Page & Co. 1921
4. There is another redwood tree that was once thought to be extinct. It is the Dawn Redwood and it grows naturally only in central China. Its scientific name is *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* and does not grow to any great size and it is deciduous, meaning it loses its needles in the fall. Other trees in the family Taxodiaceae include the bald cypress and Japanese cedar.
5. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Redwood_National_and_State_Parks
6. This information is from The History of the GCA Redwood Grove, a work compiled by Fran Wolfe (Piedmont GC) from notes from former GCA Historian Joanne Lenden (Ft. Orange GC) in 2007. Peggy Stewart and Kathy Gillespie of the Pasadena GC were instrumental in helping to gather this information.
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17. www.rivers.gov/rivers/wsr-act.php. "About the WSR Act"
18. www.earthday.org/earth-day-history-movement/ "Earth Day: The History of a Movement"
19. Per conversation with Ellie Kelly, August 6, 2012.
20. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alaska_National_Interest_Lands_Conservation_Act "Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act"
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26. The Garden Club of America Seed Task Force Report. September, 1999.
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COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN THROUGH THE YEARS

Wild Flower Preservation Committee Chairmen

1916	Miss Mary Haldane	Phillipstown GC
1916–1920	Miss Delia West Marble	Bedford GC
1920	Mrs. H. W. Hack	Short Hills GC
1920–24	Mrs. Francis C. Farwell (Fanny Nichole Day)	Lake Forest GC

Conservation Committee Chairmen

1924	Mrs. Francis C. Farwell (Fanny Nichole Day)	Lake Forest GC
1924–27	Mrs. Thomas E. Donnelly (Susan Gaylord)	Lake Forest GC
1927–29	Mrs. S. V. R. Crosby (Henrietta Marie)	North Shore GC
1929–32	Miss Eloise Paine Luquer	Bedford GC
1933–38	Mrs. Robert C. Wright	The Gardeners
1938–41	Mrs. Andrew Murray Williams	Piscataqua GC
1941–42	Mrs. John Y. G. Walker	GC of The Oranges
1942–44	Mrs. Luis J. Francke (Jane)	North Country GC
1944–46	Mrs. John W. Donaldson	Millbrook GC
1946–47	Mrs. Marvin Pierce	RyeGC
1947–48	Mrs. Montgomery Hare (Constance P.)	North Suffolk GC
1948–50	Mrs. LeRoy Clark	Englewood GC
1950–53	Mrs. Malcolm J. Edgerton	StamfordGC
1953–56	Mrs. Roland C. Bergh	LawrenceGC
1956–59	Mrs. Thomas M. Waller (Willie)	BedfordGC
1959–62	Mrs. Rowland Robinson	South County GC
1962–65	Mrs. Alexander Saunders	Phillipstown GC
1965–68	Mrs. Daniel M. McKeon	Ridgefield GC
1968–71	Mrs. Joseph M. Greeley	WinnetkaGC
1971–73	Mrs. W. L. Lyons Brown (Sally)	Glenview GC & Palm Beach
1973–75	Mrs. Mart W. Reeves (Maxey Carter)	GC Founders GC of Dallas
1975–77	Mrs. Clifford C. Fifield (Julia)	Buzzards Bay GC
1977–79	Mrs. Kip Robinson	WestportGC
1979–81	Mrs. Bruce C. Gunnell	GC of Alexandria
1981–83	Mrs. Edward S. Elliman (Ann)	Hortulus GC
1983–85	Mrs. Kevin R. Cook (Gail)	Noanett GC & Mt. Desert GC
1985–87	Mrs. George W. Edwards (Helen)	The Gardeners

1987–98	Mrs. Robert W. Freitag (Christine)	AkronGC
1989–91	Mrs. Donald H. McGraw (Nancie)	PortlandGC
1981–93	Mrs. Frank N. Magid (Marilyn)	Cedar Rapids GC
1993–95	Mrs. Arthur L. Coburn III (Ann)	Village GC of Sewickley
1995–97	Mrs. Edward C. Armbrrecht, Jr. (Calvert)	Kanawha GC
1997–99	Mrs. William P. Boggess, II (Judy Norton)	Lake Forest GC
1999–2001	Mrs. George Davis (Irene)	Liittle Rock GC
2001–03	Mrs. Peter Goedecke (Jane)	Cohasset GC
2003–05	Mrs. Benjamin A. Hill (Marian)	Peachtree GC
2005–07	Mrs. Stephen L. Gordon (Susan)	GC of Englewood
2007–09	Mrs. John W. Caudill, Jr. (Claire)	GC of Houston
2009–11	Mrs. Peter Wilmerding (Susie)	GC of Philadelphia
2011–13	Mrs. Edgar N. Weaver, Jr. (Fayetta)	Mill Mountain GC
2013–15	Mrs. William H. Fain, Jr. (Jennifer)	Hancock Park GC
2015–17	Mrs. J. D. Jensen (Missy)	Carmel-by-the-Sea GC

National Affairs and Legislation Committee Chairmen

1968–73	Mrs. Thomas M. Waller (Willie)	Bedford GC
1973–77	Mrs. W. L. Lyons Brown (Sally)	Glenview GC
1977–81	Mrs. W. Boulton Kelly, Jr. (Ellie)	St. George's GC
1981–83	Mrs. Robert H. Glore (Elizabeth Brundrud)	Lake Forest GC
1983–87	Mrs. Michael A. McIntosh (Winsome D.)	GC of Palm Beach
1987–89	Mrs. Russell Schilling Wehrle (Martha)	Kanawha GC
1989–91	Mrs. Lee F. Driscoll, Jr. (Phoebe)	The Weeders
1993–95	Mrs. Frank N. Magid (Marilyn)	Cedar Rapids GC
1995–97	Mrs. Arthur L. Coburn III (Ann)	Village GC of Sewickley
1997–99	Mrs. R. Page Henley, Jr. (Jane)	The Gardeners
1999–2001	Mrs. William P. Boggess II (Judy)	Lake Forest GC
2001–03	Mrs. John A. Murphy, Jr. (Joan)	Columbine GC
2003–05	Mrs. William B. Stoddard, Jr. (Carol)	Ridgefield GC
2005–07	Mrs. James E. Hughes (Sheila)	Perennial Planters GC
2007–09	Mrs. Thomas J. MacBride, Jr. (Derry)	Piedmont GC
2009–11	Mrs. Thomas G. McKlveen (Nancy)	Des Moines Founders GC
2011–13	Mrs. Thomas N. McAdams (Melissa)	Knoxville GC
2013–15	Ms. Lindsay Marshall	Cherokee GC
2015–17	Mrs. Arthur W. L. Fraser (Linda)	Southampton GC