



George Ayres: A 'Wonderful Man' Leaves an Extraordinary Gift



Written by: John Gladden, Communications Coordinator

If ever there was a person who exemplified the adage, "Don't judge a book by its cover," it was George Ayres.

George was a conservationist who lived a quiet life on his nine-acre wooded property in Hinckley Township. He tended his orchard and blueberry patch, made maple syrup in the spring, and took occasional fishing trips with friends.

He attended Cleveland Public Schools, served four years in the Air Force, and went on to work as a tool and die maker at the Chrysler automotive plant in Twinsburg. He was frugal and used his mechanical abilities to fix things that anyone else might simply throw away.

He shared his home with his parents and alternated his paycheck between buying groceries and applying it to the mortgage -- paying off the house in just five or six years. George took care of his mother in her later years. He did not marry or have children.

Out of this modest life, George has left an extraordinary gift to the people of Medina County. When he passed away in 2018 at age 80, George's estate made a donation of approximately \$600,000 to Friends of Medina County Parks. The gift is divided equally into two separate funds: the Michael Bennett Memorial Fund for the purpose of constructing handicap-accessible fishing facilities in the parks and the George Ayres Memorial Fund for the purpose constructing park picnic shelters. It's the largest cash bequest Friends has received in the 55-year history of the park district.



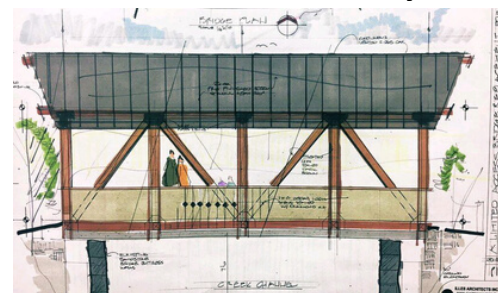
George Ayres

This is where Wadsworth's John Gillette comes in. He knew Michael through their shared love of fly fishing. Michael taught psychology at the University of Akron and had a private practice in Medina. His prowess in catching trout earned him the nickname, "Dr. Steelhead." Michael and George were neighbors, and eventually the three men, along with friend and fishing guide Jerry Darkes, became fishing partners and close mutual friends.

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Dramatic Entrance to the Wetlands Planned at the Future Granger Wetlands Wildlife Sanctuary

Granger Wetlands Wildlife Sanctuary is a 163-acre site in Granger Township that includes an expansive wetlands complex restored by the Stream + Wetlands Foundation. Site construction of a parking area and natural-surface trail is expected to begin this summer. A centerpiece of this new habitat-rich sanctuary will be a covered bridge -- partially funded by Friends of Medina County Parks -- that will connect two sections of the property and provide a dramatic entrance to the wetlands. Contributions for the covered bridge are currently being accepted. Checks can be made out to Friends of Medina County Parks with "Granger Wetlands" marked in the memo line. Please send your gift to Friends of Medina County Parks, 6364 Deerview Lane, Medina, OH 44256.



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Sadly, Michael died from stomach cancer in 2006 at age 58. Following their friend's passing, John and George met for coffee nearly every Friday. Their conversations ranged over many topics but often returned to their shared interest in mechanics. John is the former owner of Gasco Fabricated Products in Granger Township, a maker of precision die-cut parts for automotive and small engines.

"George was a student of all things mechanical," John said. "His desire to learn never weakened."

Through correspondence courses, George taught himself about steam power, electricity, and hydrology. He built his own maple syrup evaporator capable of handling 40 gallons of sap, making 20-30 gallons of syrup each year.

Once, John found George repairing a \$9 kitchen clock. He had spent almost an entire day on the project.

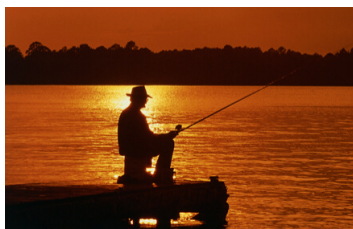
"He messed with that clock for eight hours. He had to go out to buy an electric gizmo for it," John recalled. "I said, 'George, you could just go to Walmart and buy a new one.' But he fixed everything."

The two shared a penchant for steam engines. In fact, John owns a cherry wood model of a steam engine. George made a special cylinder to give the engine the ability to run in reverse. He harvested a cherry tree, dried the lumber, and fabricated the metal. And, of course, it worked perfectly. George frequently helped friends with machining projects.

He applied his creative abilities in the kitchen, too -- cooking himself a complete meal every day, John said. He also baked pies, cakes, and Christmas cookies.

He had a small build, wore his hair crew-cut style, and possessed a gentle laugh that came out in little chuckles. When John would see George again, sometimes days after their last conversation, George's first word to John often would be, "Consequently . . ." It was as if George's mind kept right on going after they said goodbye and simply picked up the discussion exactly where they left off. To him, it was just logical, John said. His desire to solve problems and discover new things never stopped.

George's legacy won't end, either. It will always be found in the smiling faces gathered in park picnic shelters and in those able to experience the fun of casting a line into the water from an accessible fishing pier. All for generations to come.



"George was a wonderful man," John said.



New Members

Linda Bosley
Dawn Kettenbauer
Elizabeth and Lane Manning
Dolores McIlvaine
Joanne O'Malley
Anna Rickett
Brad Rickett
Richard Wertz and Dr. Martha Myers

Contributions

December

Tad and Jan Coleman
Charles and Jean Jamison
Linda Kramer
Don and Linda Warner
William and Karen Flowers



January

Monica and J.R. Russell
Susan Waszak
Kathy Willeford

February

George and Bambi Beshire
Perry and Mary Doermann
Joanne Johnson
William and Kathy Koran
John and Charlene Mozena

March

William and Nancy Elligott
Gerry and Bernice Goertzen
Laurel Gress
Thomas and Crystal James
John and Demetra Mihevic
Cheryl Riegger-Krugh
Nancy and Robert Rodman
Scott Wolff