



# EEAC

OCTOBER 1, 1999

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

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## EEAC 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL ISSUE

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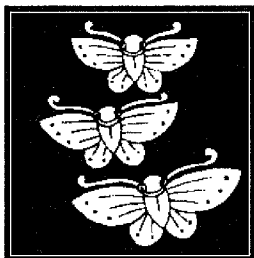
**W**e are pleased to present the reflections of those former EEAC Chairs and members who responded to our recent Newsletter requests to share their memories from the last 25 years. The Chairs are presented in the order they appeared on the scene, beginning with Dr. Eugene Ezersky and ending with the current Chair, Dr. Mary Leou. Rose Blaustein and Joan and Hy Rosner, three stars in the environmental firmament, add their remembrances to this rich retrospective.

*Joy Garland, editor*

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### EXCERPTS FROM MOHONK REVISITED

*By Joan and Hy Rosner*

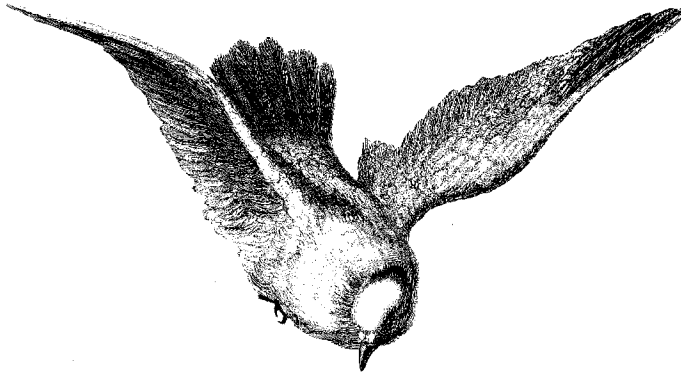


As we all know, EEAC was conceived at the October 30-November 1, 1974 Mohonk Conference. The search for a mechanism to coordinate objectives and efforts of agencies, institutions, schools, community groups and individuals dedicated to promoting environmental education was not new. Gene Ezersky provided the answer to this search when he conceptualized and organized the Mohonk Conference. Gene invited Sam Holmes, Norman Skliar, Bernie Kirschenbaum and us to serve as the Conference Planning Committee. The Conference was designed as a "working, goal-oriented meeting utilizing the acknowledged expertise of the participants grouped into six Task Forces."

Under Gene's creative and expert leadership, the post-conference committee developed an approach to the formation of a Council. The first membership meeting was held in the fall of 1975 at Gateway, setting the precedent followed to this day of meeting at the various interesting facilities Council members operate. By early 1976, EEAC activities were well underway.

The Steering Committee convened a Mohonk Revisited Conference on November 18, 1976 at the Greenwich Audubon Center. The Future Directions Task Force recommended Formation of a more structured operation, annual membership dues, organizational and commercial memberships, a newsletter, and a five year plan. One important advance following the Mohonk Revisited Conference was development of a Statement of Purpose prepared by George Tokieda's Special Committee of Future Direction.

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*Continued from page 1*

#### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Environmental Education Advisory Council (EEAC) is a group of volunteer professionals in active support of environmental education in New York City with the following goals:

1. To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and methods among professionals in the environmental field;
2. To bring together and support existing programs for cooperative and complementary efforts;
3. To undertake, encourage and/or facilitate further study of environmental education;
4. To advise the New York City Board of Education and other educational institutions in matters of environmental education;
5. To act as an advocate for the establishment of environmental education programs;
6. To disseminate environmental education information; and,
7. To be a catalyst for positive change in environmental education and environmental management.

On April 4, 1978, at the EEAC annual meeting in the NY Botanical Gardens, the by-laws and certificate of incorporation were passed. EEAC had just made its transition from adolescence to adulthood. The way was now prepared for giving full attention to the many excellent programs which have made the organization such an effective and long lasting force in New York's environmental education world.

## MY EXPERIENCES WITH EEAC

*By Rose Blaustein*

**M**y involvement over twenty-five years ago with a group of warm, friendly people who were devoted to studying the environment and helping to protect it, was an enriching part of my life. Their goals were to encourage education and the development of programs concerned with the environment.

One of our meetings was held at Mohonk, a beautiful natural setting. Several of us made presentations concerning work we were doing in environmental education, including ideas, projects, and methods for achieving our goals. Some of the activities discussed were school camping programs, the Jamaica Bay Park Council program, and urban environmental activities. It was such an exhilarating experience to be with people who were so interested, knowledgeable, and caring. A result of this meeting was the founding of the Environmental Education Advisory Council. The projects and activities that followed stimulated interest and led to many other meetings, among which was an outdoor conference where participants met with presenters who gave hands-on activities involving "do-able" projects. I will always remember that stimulating day.

EEAC has continued to grow and has become a leading organization in environmental education. What stands out in my mind is the graciousness, interest, and willingness to help that the members of EEAC have demonstrated. It has been a privilege and honor to be associated with the officers and members of EEAC. May you continue your valuable work for many more years. Your efforts will certainly help to improve our world.





## BEGINNINGS

*By Dr. Eugene Ezersky*

**I**n the early days when Bernie Kirschenbaum and I were working in the Central Board of Education as Assistant Directors of Health Education, I got the idea of organizing a conference with like minded colleagues to address issues of environmental education.

At the time, there was no Director of Environmental Education at the Board, but after the Assistant Superintendent gave her enthusiastic approval to go ahead on the Conference as part of my regular work, I gave myself the additional title.

I was not trained as a biologist or an environmentalist. I was a city boy who enjoyed hiking and camping in the great outdoors. With many people assisting, and with funding from the Educational Facility Laboratory (EFL) an autonomous foundation, we organized and held the conference at the beautiful Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, New York. Ken Kowald was very helpful. In addition to his own personal interest and enthusiasm, he obtained the "imprimatur" of Con Edison, which gave the project the corporate community's stamp of approval.

One of the recommendations of the conference was to address certain environmental education issues and to form an organization. Thus the Environmental Education Advisory Council was formed, and I was its first Chair. I think my main contribution was just to keep the organization going, to increase its membership, to work a little with the Board of Education and to produce a few pamphlets. In looking back at that first Mohonk Conference, I had more pleasure in putting it together than in anything I've done since. It was not only a good conference professionally, but socially as well, because of the wonderful people who helped to make it happen and who have continued these 25 years to bring environmental education to our schools.

## THE EARLY DAYS

*By Ray Pfortner*

**I** followed Eugene Ezersky as the second Chair of EEAC from 1976 until 1980. At the time I was with the United States Environmental Protection Agency working on an environmental impact review of a sewer system being designed for Brooklyn and Staten Island. Before that, I had been Sam Holmes' first assistant for a program in beach ecology at Gateway. One of the initiatives EEAC undertook during my time as Chair, was to research and publish two publications. The one with the orange cover listed residential camping programs and the other with the tan cover listed environmental education programs around New York City. These booklets were the only ones of their kind, and they filled a previously unmet need. Steering Committee member Joan Edwards, who headed the Magnolia Tree Earth Center, spearheaded the project with a team of EEACers. The booklets were distributed free of charge to teachers.

In the mid seventies, Talbert Spence and I, plus many EEAC members, took part in the United Nation's World Environment Day. EEAC brokered a fair within a fair. There were many environmental groups represented, each with a table, and Talbert and I did much of the physical moving, working all night for four or five nights. As the organizers, Talbert and I were invited to a celebration and we were told that the dress was casual. We arrived directly from the fair, much the worse for wear, only to see Margaret Mead dressed in a gown leaving the event. Once we were inside, we saw that the men were in black ties and everyone was dressed to the nines except us. After shaking the hand of Jacques Cousteau, who looked at us rather oddly, we made a hasty exit.

In looking back to the early days, it was Sam Holmes who was a real mentor to me along with Joan and Hy Rosner. They gave me my wings when I was yet untried. They organized the Watson Ecology Workshop in upstate New York, which attracted many teachers who were allowed to bring their entire family with them. The alums of this program asked that it be extended to an additional site on Cape Cod. This experience changed my life and gave me much joy.

Besides Talbert, my other co-conspirator and partner in crime was Dick Buegler from Staten Island. Dick was an inspiration and a half. Yes, Mohonk was a magical time. To be surrounded by the greats of environmental education was a humbling, unforgettable experience.

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## MY TIME AS EEAC CHAIR

*By Bernard Kirschenbaum*



**I**t was Gene Ezersky who brought me into EEAC. Gene was the Director of the Cornell Cooperative Extension at that time, and Sam Holmes was with the National Park Service. Both Gene and Sam worked along with Ruth Eilenberg, who was the first Coordinator of the Gateway Environ-

mental Study Center for the NYC Board of Education at Floyd Bennett Field. Gene had originally initiated the overnight camping program there. I helped to expand the introductory course for teachers who wished to take students camping, but who needed exposure to outdoor education, group games, and camp fire activities before they could bring a class.

We were involved with New York State from the beginning. Claire Beckhardt, the New York City Director of the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, had some surplus funds left over from a summer busing program. She asked me to tell her how we could use those funds. With the help of Sam Holmes, we used the funds to launch "Operation Explore". New York City students, who never got out of their neighborhoods much less out of their city, now got to spend three days and two nights at the YMCA Camp outside of Port Jervis, New York. This program was successful for a number of years and is still going strong.

At a certain point, when the seasonal camping slacked off, we felt we had to justify our being at Gateway and that's how the program "Winter Wonders" began. Ruth made mulled apple cider, Gateway's equivalent of "hot toddies", and we got munchies from Dunkin Donuts to supplement the teachers' brown bag lunches. It was a pleasurable time, blazing new trails and new directions.

As EEAC chair, I greatly relied on Ruth and Ken Kowald for the environmental focus of our program. Ruth set up a library at Gateway, and I contributed 20 years of National Geographics to it. I worked on making a video of the Gateway program and instituted the possibility of EEAC life membership. It was a wonderful time with many happy memories.

## GATEWAY REMEMBERS

### JOHN KOMINSKI

*By Regina McCarthy*

**J**ohn Kominski was one of EEAC's illustrious Chairs. Walking through the Gateway Environmental Study Center, Floyd Bennett Field, there is always some of John Kominski to be remembered. His influence on Ruth Eilenberg, my predecessor, and myself, the current coordinator, was so enormous. Today, the most visible sign is the Kominski Wildlife Garden that honors him. I sometimes think that those pesky squirrels, that outsmart us and cause such mischief and mayhem, are some spirit reminder of the more playful side of John.

John Kominski, the Renaissance Man, who could lariat a lasso around the campfire and the next moment seriously represent the Office of Instructional Support for the New York City Board of Education. Go figure! As we put together this new revised Operation Explore manual, I often thought how his teaching has influenced me and guided my decisions about what is important for children to learn. Maps! We need to know where we are in order to know where we are going. There is hardly a workshop I do that if I have an opportunity, I teach map reading skills. Recently, I came across a lesson in the files that John had done, and smiled to remember all that I had learned. Today there are those that I taught doing the same thing, probably not even knowing of his influence.

On our annual Full Moon at Plumb Beach walk with Alan Ascher, a contingent of 20 or so students made the long trek by subway from the High School for Environmental Studies. I became a little overwhelmed with this, and whispered to a person who may have known him, "John Kominski would have been proud." Plum Beach, to John, had been a really special place. He worked very hard in his capacity as Project Director and Acting Principal to create the High School for Environmental Studies.

Recently, in a discussion with a new creator of environmental education for children, I noted some tension in her voice about finishing the job she was doing. I offered her John Kominski's advice to calm her, as he had once done for me. It was probably one of the most valuable lessons he taught me, "It doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to get done."

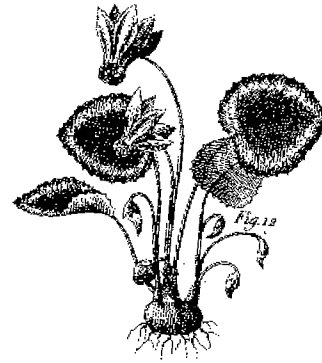
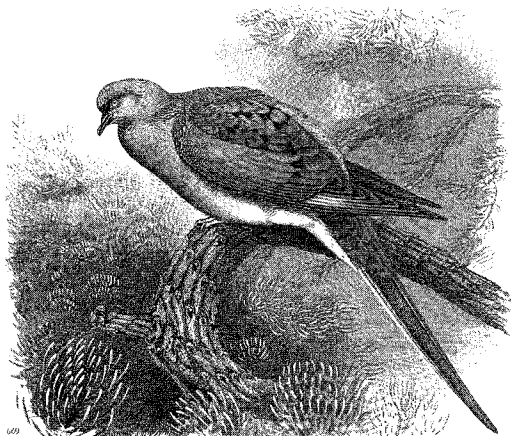
## A THOUGHT FOR THE MILLENNIUM

*By Nancy Wolf*

One of EEAC's best efforts was to put together environmental conferences like the Youth Conferences at Gateway and "New York Naturally." It was my intention, as EEAC Chair, to build on these previous conferences and to seek to marry our concerns as environmental educators with broad-based agencies that have the power to effect change to our mutual benefit. Thus was "Blueprint For Action" born. This conference was co-sponsored with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and Harvey Schultz was then the Commissioner. It took place at the Vista Hotel with a huge crowd in attendance.

Bobby Wagner, the President of the New York City Board of Education at the time, was invited to give the keynote address at the luncheon. He went on public record promising to create the position at the Central Board for a Coordinator of Environmental Education. Unfortunately, this promise has yet to be realized, as we all know. Yet having a direct liaison with the New York City Board of Education is still at the top of our priorities list.

"Blueprint for Action" was an incredibly wonderful happening. It was the fruit of many individual efforts, was done professionally, and heightened our relationship as partners with public sector agencies. I strongly believe, that as we approach the Millennium, if we can, we should return to the Conference model as the best and surest way to have an impact as environmental educators to meet the challenges that lie ahead.



## RECOLLECTIONS

*By John C. Muir*

In 1978, after attending just two meetings of EEAC, I was elected to the Steering Committee. I had been doing environmental education for about 10 years prior, but I only learned about the environmental education network in New York City when I joined EEAC. I also discovered that it was the not-for-profit organizations that were leading the way in promoting environmental education. To a significant degree, my EEAC experiences influenced my decision to initially give up paid, respectable employment to found the Committee for a Prospect Park Environmental Center, which is now the Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment. So I owe my transformation to E.E. Guerilla to EEAC.

One of the initiatives undertaken during my time as EEAC Chair, was to seek with the NYSDEC to establish a structure in the state government for funding to promote environmental education field trips across the state. The Commissioner of NYSDEC was planning to support us, but was soon replaced by someone else who was not so enthusiastic. The second initiative was to urge the then State Assembly Speaker, Mel Miller, to pass legislation to secure the direct payment for field trips to individual agencies. The bill died in Committee.

Despite these less than hoped for outcomes, EEAC later had great success putting on one of the "New York Naturally" conferences in partnership with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. Remember the Conference dinner at the World Trade Center?

## A WISH FOR EEAC

By Sam Holmes



I can't use names in what I have to say about the EEAC because here in my dotage I might leave someone out, and I'd feel very bad when I realized that.

I loved being in EEAC. We members were, despite occasional slights and spats, a community. The organization we represented had agendas that were sometimes different – some issue oriented, some experience oriented, or some computer oriented. All of us though, cared about New York City school children and wanted to make their lives better. We believed we could, and we kept on trying and trying. I know there's still much to be done for environmental education, and I wish today's members stamina. Also it is wonderfully easy to suggest that other people do things, so here I go.

I hope that someday EEAC may look into the use of NYC school buses for field or camping trips beyond the city limits so that city students could get more experience of the wider world. I know – insurance problems, union problems. But I believe out-of-city schools are bused into the city, and the reverse should be possible. I also hope that EEAC will continue to support school gardening and will take a look at supporting community gardening, which also helps kids (and Mayor Giuliani has so unreasonably failed to support).

## A SPECIAL EVENT

By Talbert Spence

When asked to name what I considered a highlight of my time as EEAC Chair, I believe it was the Youth Congress, certainly a group effort, with Ruth Eilenberg at the Gateway Environmental Study Center. Students came from the Tri-state area and the focus was on environmental issues. A resource manual, developed by the students, was produced by EEAC.

## REMEMBRANCES

By Michael Mann

During my term on the executive committee of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater (Pete Seeger's boat), I discovered a dire need for a coalition of marine/environmental organizations. Unaware of EEAC's existence, on September 22, 1979, I founded a group comprised of Clearwater, Wave Hill, Prospect Park Environmental Center (BCUE), Magnolia Tree Earth Center, Audubon, Environmental Action Coalition, Sierra, Sea Grant, Green Peace, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the National Maritime Historic Society.

Just as the group (Marine Quest) was moving forward, I received a letter from EEAC's Chairperson, Bernie Kirschenbaum, inquiring, "What have I been doing wrong to cause you to start yet another coalition?". Since I was not trying to reinvent the wheel (rudder), I happily merged our group with EEAC. After the merger, I was able to nominate John Muir of PPEC to the Steering Committee and later, to nominate him again as Chair of EEAC.

I was honored to be elected as EEAC's Chairperson some years after that. During my term I was able to resurrect EEAC's almost nonexistent newsletter with a great deal of help, and saw it evolve into the fantastic publication it is today. With the guidance of Nancy Wolf, we established that EEAC could not be a funding source for our members or other organizations. We also initiated our first liaisons with the United Nations environmental community. I felt our members' programs had to be of the highest level possible, and I persuaded Mike Zamm to lead that committee.

My greatest accomplishment as EEAC's Chair was to spearhead the defense of two fantastic local camping programs from being gobbled up by larger groups. The first action was to halt the Defenders of the White Pine Oak Woods plan to take over William H. Pouch Boy Scout Camp and its programs which give Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4 H members, handicapped children, and inner city school children a chance to experience camping in New York City. The second action was to stop the Board of Education from changing the administration of the Gateway Environmental Study Center's citywide camping program from Floyd Bennett Field. My time as the Environmental Education Advisory Council's Chairperson was another link in EEAC's development as a major force in environmental education.

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## TIME TO CELEBRATE AND REDEDICATE

*By Mike Zamm*

I served as EEAC Chair from 1993 to 1998. My memories reflect back to our two environmental education conferences of the early 1980's, to the two "New York Naturallys" of the mid/late 1980's, to the bunch of us filling up that van in 1983 and heading to Albany to meet with our upstate colleagues under the auspices of the New York State Education Department (a mixed blessing), to map out a plan to garner formal statewide support for environmental education. We didn't get everything we wanted, but the infusion of environmental education into the state syllabus did open up some doors. I remember hitting the streets with Educators for Gateway to protest the Board of Education's intended decentralization of the Gateway Environmental Study Center, and I recall the letter writing campaign we launched on another occasion to help save the study center program.

I remember with a mixture of awe and humor, the conference we sponsored with the NYC Department of Environmental Protection – Robert Wagner Jr. promising us an environmental education coordinator at that lavish (for us) dinner at the Vista, and all the effort that went into the establishment of the Chancellor's Environmental Education Task Force that really emerged from Wagner's speech and that glittering conference. While the Task Force didn't exactly go where we wanted it to, it helped locally to galvanize environmental education as a movement.

In the 1990's, EEAC has been either the prime mover, or one of the main movers behind so many important efforts – the Youth Environmental Congress, the Nature in the City Conference, the Green Horizons Conferences, the creation of the Elizabeth Guthrie Memorial Fund at Christadora, the development of the John Kominski Committee to memorialize the life and work of our comrade who was tragically struck down in an accident, the celebration of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in a manner that will hopefully spur more change

Still, confidence in our past is fine, but overconfidence in the future would be folly. Much still needs to be done despite the preservation of Gateway, the creation of the High School for Environmental Studies, and the postulating of standards that contain significant environmental content. So let's celebrate this 25<sup>th</sup> year, but rededicate ourselves to making the next 25 even better for EEAC and environmental education in general.

## EEAC's NEXT CHAPTER – DON'T MISS IT!

*By Dr. Mary J. Leou*

My own involvement with EEAC began in 1991 when I was invited by Regina McCarthy to join the EEAC Steering Committee. This gave me the opportunity to work with some remarkable people. For seven years I served on the EEAC newsletter committee with Therese Braddick, who, in her eight years as editor, developed the newsletter into a high quality publication.

In 1992, I helped to organize the "Nature in The City" conference which was held at the American Museum of Natural History. A week before the conference, we had an unexpected snowstorm, and we were concerned about the workshops which were all going to take place outside in Central Park. On the day of the event, the sun was shining bright and spring was in the air - over 300 teachers poured into the museum and later participated in all kinds of wonderful outdoor workshops. To this day, it remains as one of the most memorable conferences of the decade.

Later, I became the Vice-Chair of Programs and enjoyed bringing EEAC members together for various events. We visited the National Audubon Headquarters, attended an EPA grant-writing workshop with Terry Ippolito, took a crash internet course at Bank Street with Don Cook, visited the Hall of Biodiversity, and much more. Three years ago, I introduced Mike Muller to our organization, who encouraged us to develop the EEAC listserv. We also enlisted the help of William Leou, who created our Web site. Thus the Technology Committee was born and is aptly chaired by Carol Franken who guides us through adventures in cyberspace!

As we continue to grow as a leading organization of environmental education, we can feel confident that we stand on a strong foundation developed by our predecessors during the past twenty-five years. Building on their achievements, we will begin to write the next chapter of EEAC that will take us into the new millennium. It's an exciting time for EEAC. Don't miss it!

On behalf of the EEAC Steering Committee and our members, I'd like to thank Con Edison for supporting EEAC almost from its inception! We are truly grateful for all they have done and continue to do for EEAC and environmental education through the years.

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

New Member

Renewal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If sustaining Organization, Name of Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone (     ) \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation (for categories other than Sustaining Organization): \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (for categories other than Sustaining Organization): \_\_\_\_\_

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Please check the appropriate calendar year membership category:

\$ 20 Regular      \$ 50 Sustaining Organization      \$200 Life Membership

Please make checks payable to EEAC. Thank you! EEAC is a 501-C-3 organization.

I would like to become involved in a committee.

Please provide me with information about the following committees:

Exhibits    Issues    Membership    Newsletter    Programs    Youth    Technology    Kominski Fund

Please complete the application and mail it, with your payment, to:

Joanne Dittersdorf, EEAC Treasurer, P.O. Box 408, Cooper Station. New York, NY 10276



**ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

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**“HAPPY 25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY EEAC!”**