

Dick Goodwin – A Memorial Reflection

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It is indeed a huge honor to be here today and to share a few memories and reflections about Dick with so many of his friends, colleagues and family members.

I have known Dick for nearly 35 years since my undergraduate days when I was a student in one of his last classes. I transferred to Connecticut College from the University of Pennsylvania and, being scientifically inclined by nature but disillusioned by the limited insights provided by the scientific method, I had taken up Religious Studies as a major at Conn. Fortunately, I was persuaded by my closest friend, who ultimately became my wife, to take a taxonomy course to assist me in identifying plants on my frequent long walks. This fortuitous recommendation ended up placing me in Professor Goodwin's capable hands. Dick, along with Bill Niering in Ecology and Francis Johnson in Old Testament Studies, became my inspiration for academic achievement and the pursuit of a deliberate and meaningful life. Consequently, I ended up majoring in both Religion and Botany.

My first vivid memory of Dick is, I believe, a quite appropriate and characteristic one. I and my taxonomic classmates were ankle deep in a bog and, while Dick was instructing us on plant identification on one side, Esther his wife was cajoling us from the other to find a plant that she hinted was *really* different, even *bizarre*. When I took her rather obvious hint and located a pitcher plant lying at her feet she beamed and exclaimed "Well, what do we have here?" Meanwhile, off in the distance I could see Dick's eyes light up on witnessing our interaction and I experienced my first view of his delightful twinkling smile. Even as a self-centered and obtuse college sophomore I could appreciate that this couple made a remarkable team.

My first reflection on Dick's accomplishments is that his career and life were so diverse, so wide-reaching and so darn long that few people came to know more than even a small percentage of his greatness. For example, one day when he casually referred to his studies on the hybridization of goldenrod to our class, it dawned on me that before his work in conservation, ecology and taxonomy that we knew so well, Dick had already lived out an entire career as a highly successful plant morphologist and physiologist. In similar fashion, by the time I joined The Nature Conservancy board in Massachusetts, Dick had quit most of his visible activity with TNC and the vast majority of TNC staffers that I encountered barely knew his name. Consequently, they had no inkling of the

absolutely critical role that he played for over four decades as president and organization activist in making TNC into the globally important organization that it is today. Meanwhile, the Harvard research assistants working with Dr. David Orwig in the woods at Burnham Brook largely knew Dick as a dedicated land protectionist and landowner who was phenomenally knowledgeable about the more than 1000 acres of beautiful landscape that he and Esther had assembled and protected around their home with the help of their neighbors and friends.

Dick's life was remarkably large and those of us who came into contact with any one part of it were awed by what he accomplished.

My second reflection concerns the deliberate but highly effective way that Dick supported individuals and organizations. Those of us associated with the Conservation Research Foundation know that he never supported an effort in its entirety -- CRF and Dick sought to provide seed monies and to serve as a catalyst to galvanize additional activities. Dick assisted people to help themselves and to build momentum.

Having said that, my own experience underscores how important that little bit of help from Dick could be and how strategically placed he was in the world to provide such support. I only truly sought his assistance once -- when I was applying for my first position as Assistant Professor at Harvard University's Harvard Forest. Some time after my application packet with CV, writings and recommendations had been reviewed and I had become a finalist on the short list of three interviewees, it struck me that it might be especially useful to have someone who knew Harvard botany as an additional reference. So, I called Dick who I had not spoken to for some time. He agreed, while cautioning me against high expectations, wrote a letter, and some months later, I received the job offer that led to my present position. Only years later would I come to appreciate how incredibly well positioned Dick was to assist my particular request -- his Great Uncle Will (Farlow) had established Harvard's Farlow Herbarium and his cousin David Linder had eventually served as one of its great directors. Dick, of course, had all his degrees from Harvard, and moreover, he had served on a committee to renovate the Herbarium with Professor John Torrey, another plant physiologist. John just happened to be the Chair of my search committee and occupied the position of Director at the Harvard Forest before me. Adding to all of this, just a few years earlier, for his 50th year class gift to Harvard College, Dick had established a modest but important endowment at the Harvard Forest to support ecological and environmental studies along exactly the same lines that I was seeking to promote there.

My final reflection concerns Dick's healthy pessimism of people and large institutions -- the federal government, large conservation entities like The Nature Conservancy, and Harvard University, to mention a few that he knew well and admired and mistrusted in equal measure. Dick had an extraordinarily shrewd business mind and he was careful to apply his resources efficiently and to employ tight binding terms in all of his philanthropic and conservation activities. Great examples of this include the well crafted conservation easements that he helped to forge on lands surrounding the Burnham Brook Preserve and the wording in the deed for Mamacoke Island that Dick and a group of conservation minded supporters of Connecticut College inserted when they transferred

the land to the college. Dick was clearly proud of the Mamacoke deed and on one occasion he described it and its underlying purpose to our class in detail. The terms of the deed required that the college should keep the land undeveloped and in a natural state. If this stewardship proved to be onerous and the college sought to sell it, the deed required that it first be offered to TNC or the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association for \$500. Dick did believe that Connecticut College was conservation minded and well intentioned — he just wanted to make sure that future administrators would remember this as well, and forever.

My lasting memory of Dick will always be our final lengthy conversation – on a crystal clear day when he had driven up to the Harvard Forest in the old Volvo station wagon. The back of the car was filled with cardboard boxes containing photographs, notes and clippings from his life, including a big collection of old letters from his Boy Scout Troop, all of the materials that had gone into the production of his wonderful autobiography – *A Botanist's Window on the Twentieth Century*. We talked about Connecticut College and the Goodwin-Niering Center, Harvard Forest research and its considerable conservation and land protection activity, Esther, family vacations at Squam Lake, and Dick's concern for the future of the globe. We ended by reflecting on the persistent importance of the many issues that he sought to touch on in his book: growth in the human population, the need to engage a larger segment of the population in environmental issues and land protection, ecological research and education, world tensions, and the ability that individuals have to make a difference with regards to each of these issues.

In Dick's autobiography we can begin to appreciate the breadth and relevance of his life and the sweep of his passions; we can recognize the remarkable outcome of the many seeds that he planted in education, conservation, and assistance to humankind; and we can appreciate and share his concern for holding institutional feet to the fire.

Ultimately, we come away from the book, as I do thinking of both my first and last memory of him, inspired by the warm, but dedicated twinkle in his eye.