

The First Decade

***O**N A WARM AUGUST AFTERNOON in 1950 a small group of people met in Milwaukee to form a new conservation organization. They were angry because the State Highway Commission had cut hundreds of large trees along Highway 30 near Oconomowoc without any attempt to consider public opinion. No existing organization mobilized to stop this action.*

Several meetings later, the group had a name, a pledge and a constitution. Early participants were Wallace Grange, Owen Gromme, Chappie Fox, Trudi and Walter Scott, W.C. McKern, Albert Fuller, Aroline Schmidt, Alvin Throne, Emil Kruschke, and Fred Ott. The organizational meeting on December 16 at the Milwaukee Public Museum attracted 80 people and gained extensive newspaper coverage. Walter Scott chaired the meeting. The new organization was to be militant in nature, follow the principles of Aldo Leopold, and remain a small group of committed and active conservationists. Wallace Grange was elected president.

In its first few years, CNRA addressed issues in the Flambeau State Forest, protested hunting on the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Refuge, promoted new roadsides policies, and worked to establish the Audubon Camp near Sarona. It also lobbied intensively on numerous conservation bills considered by the Wisconsin legislature and had a significant impact on their outcome. The second half of the decade saw continued legislative activity. The group also took on additional preservation issues, both of fine old growth forests and CNRA itself.

Just as current members tell CNRA's story in their own words in the remainder of this booklet, so too the founders of the organization tell the story of CNRA's beginnings. We have reproduced their words and tied them together with a brief commentary. Listen carefully to their voices. They reverberate throughout CNRA's first 50 years.

Proposal for a New Wisconsin Militant Conservation Organization

*by Walter Scott,
September 18, 1950*

FOR THE RECORD, WALTER SCOTT summarized actions taken on August 18 and September 6, 1950—two of the five pre-organizational meetings of CNRA. The meetings were called in reaction to the cutting of trees on Highway 30 by the Wisconsin Highway Commission without any attempt to appease or consider public opinion. The group felt a new organization was needed to fight such battles. Three additional meetings followed before the organizational meeting on December 16. Scott worked for the Wisconsin Conservation Department, and after chairing these meetings and the organizational meeting took a low profile in CNRA. But for the next 20 years he was a major force behind the scene, offering information, providing advice and writing many of the letters, testimony and positions signed by others in CNRA.

FIRST GET-TOGETHER

Letters between some of these people (who felt a need for a new organization) resulted in a meeting on August 18, 1950 in the home of Mrs. Max Schmitt in Milwaukee with others in attendance being Owen J. Gromme, Albert M. Fuller, Emil P. Kruschke and Mr. and Mrs. Walter Scott.

At this meeting Scott outlined the inaction of present state organizations which should have fought this battle and suggested an Aldo Leopold Society with, as eventual related groups, a Foundation, an Institute and a publication: "Wisconsin Outdoor Almanac." The idea is to continue to define and publicize outdoor natural

values and ethics following Leopold's foundation ideas in his writings. Others in the group had visualized a Vigilante Committee and took this new larger plan under advisement.

SECOND GET-TOGETHER

On the evening of September 6, the group again met at the home of Mrs. Max Schmitt with others present including W. C. McKern, Owen J. Gromme, Albert M. Fuller, Charles P. Fox and Walter E. Scott. Scott reported on a letter from Mrs. Edward LaBudde and a personal interview with Commissioner W.J.P. Aberg to the effect that they generally recommend the use of present

organizations through which to fight these battles. Aberg felt the IWLA only lacked good leadership and otherwise, with the Wisconsin Federation of Conservation Clubs, would do the job. Mrs. LaBudde saw the battle in the small aspect of trees alone and suggested a Wisconsin chapter of a federal “Arborways for America” commission. Scott also suggested dropping the Leopold name for the group as reaction often was opposed to this idea, and read portions of a letter from Wallace Grange.

The group was unanimous in feeling that present organizations could not be used to accomplish the desired militant end for conservation—but most of the people also felt that the new organization should be formed first around the “vigilante” idea with larger and more permanent aspects such as Foundation, Institute or printed publication developing later and written into the constitution as a possible plan. McKern offered free Milwaukee Museum mimeographing service on first newsletters of the group—but the postage would have to be paid by the organization.

As an alternative to the Leopold name, Scott suggested something like “Wisconsin Naturalist’s

FRED OTT — Mrs. Prime

Mrs. Alice Prime had planted a whole alley of hackberry trees on Highway 30. The Highway Commission started to cut them when making Hwy 94 between Milwaukee and Madison. Big old trees. There were hundreds of them. She wrote to Washington, the Governor, the Highway Commissioner. Nothing. Sat under a tree with a shotgun. Put her body between the hackberries and bulldozers and stared them down with her blue, blue eyes. Oh man, icy blue eyes. Still cut them. The Highway Commission had a lot of power in those days with public domain: this is what we're going to do; no one can stop us. We were mad. Some letter writing, then get-togethers—all day sessions— then decided to become citizen watchdogs. We wanted something different from other conservation organizations. More militant. Ready to mobilize.

Association” with a possible publication called “Wisconsin Natural History” on a popular level. The use of “Natural History” or a name like the previous Wisconsin Natural History Association was not favored and a tentative name

FRED OTT — Conservation Vigilante League

We had a heck of a time picking out a name. It took four meetings to get it right. Walter Scott wanted The Aldo Leopold Society. Can you believe it—people objected because they thought in 20 years no one might remember Aldo Leopold! Scott proposed something like the Wisconsin Naturalist's Association or the Wisconsin Natural History Association. Not militant enough. Someone came up with Conservation Vigilante League until we could find something better. At our next meeting on November 7, no one wanted a name with “conservation” in it. Got down to three choices: Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin (NRA), Citizen Defenders of Wisconsin's Natural Resources (CDWNR), or Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin (CNRA).

NRA? Wouldn't that have been something!? CDWNR? Try saying that. CNRA? Perfect.

That was a defining day for CNRA. We picked a name, gave our okay to the Preamble, Pledge and Constitution and set a date in December to let the rest of the world hear about us.

“Conservation Vigilante League” was selected until something better could be found.

It was planned to meet next time some Saturday afternoon at the Milwaukee Museum for a work session on the organization’s purpose, program and proposed constitution with an evening gathering at Mrs. Schmitt’s home. Scott was elected chairman pro tem for future organization meetings and, besides individuals in attendance to date, it was decided to also invite the following people to participate:

- Wallace Grange, Babcock
- Fred Ott, Milwaukee
- Alvin Throne, Milwaukee
- Alfred Boerner, Milwaukee

Generally the group agreed to date on the following things:

- There is a need for another militant conservation group in Wisconsin.
- They prefer a name other than “Conservation” to state purpose.
- They want a paid Executive Secretary in Madison—part time at first and full-time later—to advise members on action.
- They favor a mimeo newsheet at first and printed bulletin later.
- They favor several classes of membership based on ability and willingness to contribute funds.
- They favor incorporation for protection and a constitution which would include a Foundation to handle funds and maybe an Institute to manage publication, land or other projects.
- They agree no public employees be permitted to hold office or act other than in advisory capacity on request so that the group cannot be controlled by any agency which might be subject to criticism.




In 1950, despite the valiant efforts of Mrs. Alice Prime of Oconomowoc, and other outraged citizens, hundreds of trees along Highway 30 between Sawyer Road and Hwy. 67 were removed by dynamite, chainsaw and bulldozer at the order of the State Highway Commission.

We could not save the trees, but their loss caused the fighting organization to become a reality.
— Chappie Fox



All photographs by C.P. Fox, Milwaukee

- They plan an “invitational” organization meeting at Madison or somewhere else outside Milwaukee to which certain people who have received copies of proposed constitution and bylaws will be invited. The idea is that this meeting will be the “organizational meeting” of the group with final changes in proposed constitution, if any made at that time.
- They want a monument and/or planting of trees where Hwy. 30 trees were cut. 

From Today's Perspective

THE PEOPLE ON THE PRE-ORGANIZATIONAL Committee who set the guidelines for a new conservation organization might have benefited from a crystal ball. They were right about some things, but dead wrong about others.

- They were *right* when they said they needed something other than an ad hoc “vigilante committee”—that an entirely new, all-inclusive organization to fight for conservation was necessary. In its early years, CNRA was often the first, and only, conservation organization to address important legislative and other conservation issues in a timely fashion.
- They were *right* in feeling that an organization formed around the conservation philosophy of Aldo Leopold would rally people from all parts of the state in an effort to realize some of his ideals. In a short period of time, membership reached 200, among which were the most active conservationists in the state.
- They were *right* to insist that no public employees should be permitted to hold office or act other than in an advisory capacity so that the group could not be controlled by any agency. Over the years, the behind the scenes help from agency people—including Walter Scott from early on—has given CNRA the advantages of an insiders view without the restrictions that may have been necessary had these people been in responsible positions in the organization.
- They were *wrong*, however, in thinking that they would need paid staff in Milwaukee or Madison for the organization to be successful. CNRA began with volunteer leadership and throughout the years—with intermittent periods when prevailing leaders feared dissolution because no new leaders were forthcoming—sustained itself successfully entirely through volunteer commitment. Often this commitment has been the equivalent of a full-time job.
- And they were *dead wrong* about the reason they decided against calling themselves the Aldo Leopold Society. Walter Scott suggested this name at the group's first meeting on August 18. The group felt it was too risky to name an organization for a man so soon after his death *because his work, writings and ideals may not stand the test of time!*

Getting Organized

CNRA'S FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING was held on December 16, 1950 in the Milwaukee Public Museum. The legwork for the new organization was accomplished during the preceding months. A preamble, pledge and constitution were drafted by Walter Scott and modified by the pre-organizational committee. A name was tentatively chosen. An extensive mailing was sent to leading conservation organizations in the state, inviting them to attend the organizational meeting. Afterwards, reports of the new conservation organization appeared in numerous newspapers, with a long article in the Milwaukee Journal by an unknown reporter who was clearly in attendance. The reporter skips over the portion of the meeting devoted to a film of the Highway 30 tree episode, the history of the pre-organizational committee, and the discussion and revisions to the preamble, pledge and constitution. Instead, he captures some of the contentiousness of the meeting, which is barely touched upon in the official minutes, but subsequently became the topic of correspondence among Council members. The gist of the correspondence was that Walter Scott, chairing the meeting, had done the right thing by allowing the Isaak Walton League "boys" to speak their piece.

Conservation Unit Formed

Milwaukee Journal, 12-16-50

A new conservation group was organized Saturday to work "militantly" for wise use of the state's natural resources. It is called the Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin.

Elected president was Wallace Grange, president of the Sandhill Game Farm at Babcock. Other officers are Dr. John Curtis, Madison, vice-president; Albert Fuller, curator of botany at the Milwaukee Public Museum, secretary; and Fred Ott, Chenequa, treasurer. Members of the Council, the group's executive board, are Mrs. I. L. Larkin, Whitefish Bay; elected to a three-year term; Jesse

Walker, Baraboo, two years; and Pat Wilsie, Boulder Junction, one year.

About 80 persons attended the organizational meeting in the conference room of the library-museum building. Ten Wisconsin cities, besides Milwaukee, were represented. Among those at after-

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noon and evening sessions were the organizers and members of other conservation groups.

Accent on "Fighting"

Accent throughout the sessions was on a "fighting" organization to keep "what remains of Wisconsin's natural resources" from being misused.

Discussion early in the meeting brought claims from representatives of the Isaak Walton League that another conservation group was unnecessary and would divide conservation strength. Others said the association would "bog down" and be unable to meet national conservation problems through a state setup.

"If you had taken the energy and enthusiasm you now exhibit toward this new organization; if you gave your vote and time to an organization already in existence as a vehicle of conservation, you would be doing better," said V. J. Muench, Green Bay. Muench is a past-president of the Wisconsin division of the Isaak Walton League.

William Voight, Jr. executive director of the League at Chicago said, "The League has the responsibility and potential for doing all that the new group could do. When it falls short, it is a failure of local chapters and state divisions."

"Millionaire" Plan Rejected

A count of hands showed that about 15 members of the Isaak Walton League were present. At least four of them indicated they were considering joining the new group.

W.C. McKern, director of the Milwaukee Museum, and organizers of the Citizen's Association and

president of the Milwaukee chapter of the Isaak Walton League, said he didn't feel "disloyal" to the League. McKern turned thumbs down on the suggestion that "the first thing this group should do is find a millionaire."

*It plans to ... cooperate
with other conservation
groups ... to get
Wisconsin citizens
conservation conscious.*

The proposal was made by O.L. Kaupanger of Minneapolis, secretary of the Minnesota Emergency Conservation committee, who came to the meeting as an adviser. He urged that a wealthy man or men "with a conscience" help finance the association, which would work as a liaison group among conservation organizations.

\$10,000 Need Estimated

The association estimates that it will need \$10,000 through voluntary contributions to start its program. It wants an executive secretary in Madison to keep an eye on state government agencies and inform a large citizen membership of matters on which they can act.

Although formation was prompted by the state highway commission's "arbitrary" felling of trees on Highway 30 in Waukesha County last August, its purposes extend far beyond that issue, it was stressed. It plans to keep an eye on possible misuse of all natural resources, cooperate with other conservation groups, and sponsor an educational program to get Wisconsin citizens conservation conscious.

It is interested in proper land use of soil and wildlife management, legislation on hunting fees, drainage and irrigation developments and many other issues.

Officers of the newly organized Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin ... in the conference room of the Milwaukee library-museum building.

Shown here are (from left): Jesse T. Walker, Baraboo, a member of the Council; Wallace Grange, Babcock, president; Mrs. F. L. "Dixie" Larkin, Whitefish Bay, a member of the Council; Albert Fuller, Milwaukee, secretary; and Fred L. Ott, Chenequa, treasurer. Grange is signing the pledge adopted by the organization.



(Photo—Journal Staff, 12-16-1950)

The Early Years

by Wallace Grange, 1954

IN 1954, FOUR YEARS AFTER the first organizational meeting at the Milwaukee Public Museum, Wallace Grange responded to a letter from Wallace Kirkland of *Life* magazine. Grange was once again president, following terms by Albert Fuller and Jesse T. Walker. Kirkland wanted information about CNRA for a possible article. Not one to tell a story in just a few words, Grange explained in detail why CNRA was formed, its purpose, its leaders, and its activities during the first few years. We have no better spokesperson than Grange to tell us about those early days, so we have reproduced most of the letter here.

CNRA IS A SOMEWHAT UNIQUE conservation organization. Many organizations using the word “conservation” are groups of hunters and fishermen primarily interested in their own sport, and generally speaking, their efforts even in this direction are quite misguided. Some or many of our members are also hunters and fishermen. But our approach to conservation problems is a very broad and basic one, representing the viewpoint that conservation of natural resources is a necessity not alone from the materialistic standpoint of maintaining adequate supplies of the resources we use, but including very prominently the idea that civilized man cannot retain his sanity and culture except by learning to preserve a large degree of naturalness in his man-modified environment.

We say that we have “the ecological approach,” or, in plain English, the viewpoint of man as part of the natural environment, and as a creature dependent upon natural environments, as opposed to the concept that man can successfully be a ruthless ruler who can go ahead blithely in

disregard to natural laws. We feel that people brought up in artificial environments, with little or no opportunity to renew contact with the realities of the natural world, cannot be happy; that the word “conservation” means providing opportunities for all types of contacts with nature. Consequently, many of our members also belong to such organizations as The Nature Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, The Audubon Society, The Izaak Walton League, Friends of Our Native Landscape, etc, each of which group stands for some of the things we ourselves sponsor. This suggests some overlapping, and of course, there is some, but we are virtually the only Wisconsin statewide organization that has a broad rather than a specialized approach. We are not active nationally except when a national policy affects our interests in Wisconsin.

A characteristic of CNRA is that we are “militant,” and do not hesitate to fight for what we believe in. In a practical world, we have learned from experience that more is required to get sound conservation ideas across than mere talk, passing resolutions or paying dues.

HOW CNRA WAS FORMED

In 1950, the State Highway Commission undertook to “improve” Highway 30 a few miles west of Milwaukee, and in doing so ruthlessly cut down hundreds of magnificent and scenic old trees bordering the highway. Removal of possibly 20 percent of the trees may have been necessary, but the balance ought to have been preserved. When the work was completed, the actual driving right-of-way was no wider than before.

Various landowners and other private citizens fought the tree destruction. One woman stood beside one tree until removed by force. The governor refused to act. He said he had no power. The Highway Commission speeded up its work and paid overtime in order to lay the last tree on the ground before the unorganized and ineffective opposition could marshal public opinion. In CNRA we now know this as “the battle of the trees.”

Almost immediately after the tree cutting, a number of citizens decided that since there was no organization in Wisconsin which could, or would, fight this sort of battle, it was time one was created. CNRA has its birth directly because of “the battle of the trees.” It so happens I was elected the first president, and am serving again now.

CNRA ACTIVITIES

The organization has played an important, but not single-handed, part in the following:

- **Establishment of the first “Wilderness Area” in Wisconsin** set aside by the State Conservation Commission, in the Flambeau State Forest and bordering the Flambeau River. This represents a new policy in Wisconsin, the idea being to restore a strip along the river to as nearly primitive

conditions as may be possible, such area dedicated to recreational rather than economic use. CNRA led the way on this.

- **Helped establish a “Scientific Area,”** also in the Flambeau State Forest, consisting of 320 acres of virgin timber, to be left natural, and to serve as a control or study area for the scientific observation of natural forest reproduction, animal relationships, etc. This was established by the State Conservation Commission. CNRA also helped secure passage of enabling legislation, which created the Scientific Areas Board, which has now set up some dozen Scientific Areas designed to preserve existing remnants of the original Wisconsin wilderness, including prairie samples.
- **Roadside and Right-of-Way Chemical Spraying.** Under CNRA auspices a beginning has been made in dealing with the problem of indiscriminate destruction and roadside and right-of-way vegetation. We sponsored a conference with the REA and contemplate further work on this very large problem. In largely open, non-wooded sections of the state, roadsides and rights-of-way are the few last sites upon which native vegetation can still grow, and add color and pleasure to the countryside. The objective of clean-up work by the highway and utility organizations is primarily against trees which endanger utility lines or encroach on highways. We believe that the practical needs of these agencies can be met by dealing with specific problems in specific manners. This will still leave a place for native shrubs, etc. rather than converting every such strip to grass alone.
- **Legislative Activity.** We successfully defeated a bill which would have opened State Parks to hunting. We have taken a firm

stand on some scores of bills considered by the Wisconsin legislature, and in 1951-52 made an impressive record in the legislature influence field. All officers serve without pay and at personal financial sacrifice. We have no paid lobbyists.

- **Opposition to Horicon Marsh Shooting.**

The litigation on this has been a private venture undertaken by my wife and myself, with some contribution from others, but CNRA contributed financially to the extent of \$100 plus the issuance of a *CNRA Report* on this subject. Thus far, we have not won the fight, but it is still going forward, and we expect it to come before the court in the near future.

These five activities indicate the general scope of our work, although they only present the highlights.

METHOD OF OPERATION

In urgent situations, the Council (seven members) is empowered to act. In non-emergency situations, policy is defined in two ways: (1) by discussion and vote at the Annual Meeting; and (2) ballot by mail of the membership following a written analysis of the issues. Majority vote of the membership establishes policy. Officers are bound to follow such policy in their official capacities.

This type of organization is somewhat unique, and the direct vote of the membership particularly so.

THE PEOPLE IN CNRA

These are some of the most active and experienced conservationists in Wisconsin. They are all individualists, represent many vocations, and are a highly interesting group—almost any one of them is a feature story in his or her own right.

Two former members of the State Conservation Commission are officers. One is our Secretary, E.M. Dahlberg. Mr. Dahlberg just retired this spring after teaching biology, conservation and sciences at the Ladysmith High School for 37 years. He is the author of *Conservation of Renewable Resources*, a high school textbook. Mr. J.P. Aberg, who served two consecutive six-year terms on the Conservation Commission, is a member of our advisory Committee. A third former member of the Commission is an active CNRA member.

CNRA has drawn heavily upon the Milwaukee Public Museum staff for officers. The director of the museum, W.C. McKern, an archeologist, is a member of our Advisory Committee, as is also the Curator of Ornithology, Owen Gromme. Mr. Gromme is the author of the forthcoming *Birds of Wisconsin*, a two-volume book. He is a skilled artist and painted the original of one of the Duck Stamps. Our second president to hold office, Albert Fuller, is the Curator of Botany and author of numerous technical works. His assistant is also a member of the Advisory Committee.

Chappie Fox, Vice-President, is a locomotive company executive, a skilled photographer (some of his work has appeared in *Life*) and is the author of *Circus Parades* (1953, Century House).

Harold Roberts, Treasurer, is a farm pump and irrigation dealer and farmer. He is an active member of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology.

Our third president, in order of service, is Jesse Walker, City Clerk of Baraboo, Wisconsin, and has long been active in conservation work.

The present president (myself) is a game farmer with 9600 acres devoted to natural propagation of wildlife and author of three books *Wisconsin Grouse Problems* (1948, Wis. Cons.

FRED OTT — Yeas & Nays

Wallace was president most of the first years. He spent a lot of time in Madison. He'd pick up bills the legislature was considering. Then he'd explain them in a way we could all understand, send out the list with a ballot and we'd vote. He'd go back to the legislature with this ballot and the yeas and nays. Never said how many people were in the organization or who voted, just the percentages of yeas and nays. It made an impact. No one else was doing it. Walter Scott would give him inside information, introduce him to people, committee chairs, department heads. Wallace wrote to everyone, was a good talker. Sometimes stuff never got out of committee.

Dept.); *The Way to Game Abundance* (1949, Scribners); *Those of the Forest* (1953, Flambeau).

One Council member, Fred Ott, is a paper salesman and has been active in conservation work for years.

Another Council member, Mrs. F. L. Larkin, affectionately known as "Dixie," is president of the John Muir Club (Ornithology), Chairman of the Audubon Camp Committee and has been exceptionally active in Wisconsin conservation work and in other civic activities. It was she alone who insisted that the camp must be obtained for Wisconsin; led the search for a donor of the campsite; and headed the Committee which

actually raised the funds, \$60,000, for the establishment of the Wisconsin Audubon Camp, near Spooner, which will begin operation in 1955. CNRA lent a helping hand and was one of the many donors, although our contribution was necessarily small. CNRA does not claim, or want, credit for the Audubon Camp, but it is true that our general program, our activity, and our members, helped to put it across.

Our members are scattered over Wisconsin, with the majority in the southern sections of the state, and include a cross-section of the state's more serious conservationists. Our membership is not large, about 200, I believe, but is very active.

CNRA PROBLEMS

CNRA faces many problems, foremost of which is how its officers can find enough time to do the organization's work. To conduct an active program requires a great deal of time, and all of us are up to our ears in our own work and must handle CNRA work on the side. We are also widely scattered so that it is difficult to hold frequent meetings. Furthermore, there is a great deal of public apathy to be overcome, and very limited funds with which to do it. Consequently, CNRA has necessarily had to concentrate on a few things, but it always springs into action as emergencies require.

Wallace Grange was first president and chief author of many of the early conservation positions taken by CNRA.

The Mid-Fifties: Preserving the Menominee Forest

by Harold Kruse

HAROLD KRUSE FOLLOWED WALLACE GRANGE's third term as president. When he took office in 1955, CNRA had behind it five years of conservation projects and controversies. The organization had significantly impacted conservation legislation, protested hunting on Horicon Marsh and fought to save the prairie chicken. It had conducted a campaign to establish a Wisconsin Audubon Camp, tried to get a permanent wilderness policy for the Flambeau, and aggressively promoted ecologically sound roadside policies. Still on the agenda was preservation of Dunn Lake Pines in Vilas County.

At the end of Harold's term as president, Dunn Lake Pines (today part of a large Nature Conservancy project) was still on the agenda and roadside policies were being promoted more aggressively than ever. Lobbying had been successful in the removal of wolf and lynx from the bounty list. Detailed legislative reports had been circulated among members. The Council was optimistic that a state park naturalist program was getting closer to reality. Stricter regulation of DDT spraying for Dutch elm disease was now a CNRA issue. But the activity that most defined Harold's presidency was his leadership in the widespread efforts to assist the Menominee Tribe as it faced termination of reservation status.

THE LAST TIME I WAS ON the Menominee Reservation was in 1965. This summer I had a chance to visit again, but cancelled because of the extreme heat wave we had in July. Our daughter Gretchen had invited us to go along on a tour provided through the International Sturgeon Convention in Oshkosh this year. Gretchen is a fisheries consultant for the Kootenai Indian tribe in northern Idaho, and is

studying the effects of chemical pollutants on sturgeon. I like to think her scientific bent and interest in the beauty and wonder of the natural world came from experiences Carla and I shared through CNRA and other conservation organizations.

This year, just as CNRA is celebrating its 50th anniversary, so Carla and I are celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary. We've seen some environ-

mental changes for the good and the bad in those 50 years and we have worked hard to keep the CNRA pledge. We've been CNRA members since the beginning. Walter Scott invited us to join. One of the things I learned from Walter is how to be a successful conservationist. First, call yourself a conservationist, not an environmentalist. Next, get a name on a letterhead. Then, get an issue and get it in the news. Finally, don't tell anyone how many members you have.

I followed his advice when I became CNRA president in 1955. I knew I had some large shoes to fill. Wallace Grange had been president immediately before me. Wallace had been in the forefront of conservation issues for two decades, was a prolific writer and speaker, and was able to spend considerable time in Madison keeping abreast of legislative matters. He led CNRA through the first flush of enthusiasm exhibited by a new organization, fighting half a dozen battles at one time.

I was a farmer with a young family and a strong commitment to land preservation. I had little time to travel to Madison. What I had on my side was my wife Carla, who was a charter member of CNRA and shared my interests. I also had experience writing conservation newsletters and a good understanding of how CNRA worked. I realized not every battle could end satisfactorily. Despite that, I could see that the kind of educational program CNRA carried on through special reports, legislative analysis, publications, tours, meetings and workshop sessions made CNRA worthwhile. And I took to heart Walter

Scott's advice to get an issue and get it into the news.

I chose my battle at the first meeting I chaired, at the urging of Aroline Schmitt, a friend of the Menominees—a study of the problems related to the proposed termination of the Menominee Indian Reservation. I knew it would not be an easy battle, and would probably take many more years than my presidency. I was right about both those things.

A short time before I was elected CNRA president, Congress had passed the Termination Act of 1954, which originally had been sponsored by Senator Joseph McCarthy. The Menominees were to be

one of the first tribes in an experiment to release tribes from federal supervision. The Menominees were selected because of their image of prosperity based on a long time commercial logging operation. On a reservation covering 235,000 acres, of which 223,500 were heavily forested, the tribe had successfully sustained their forests for generations. The reservation also had the largest single tract of virgin forest in Wisconsin.

The proposal to terminate federal supervision over the Menominee tribe raised serious questions about the future of the tribe and their rich forest resources. The Menominee forest was said to be one of the best-managed timber tracts in the nation at that time. Would it continue to be so, or was there danger that the termination of federal supervision would expose the Menominee forest to unscrupulous exploitation and eventual destruction? With the forest would also go the

First, you call yourself a conservationist, not an environmentalist. Next, get a name on a letterhead. Then, get an issue and get it in the news. Finally, don't tell anyone how many members you have.

Menominee tribe's chief source of income, as well as some of Wisconsin's best near-virgin forests.

I had always been sympathetic to Native Americans. The record of their treatment by the white man, with too few exceptions, has not been one to evoke feelings of pride or satisfaction in the minds of right-thinking people. The white man has often, and with good reason, been accused of having a "forked tongue" in his dealing with them. The Menominees have suffered their share of mistreatment, although they have fared better than many other tribes. By helping them find a satisfactory road to complete freedom from both government wardship and the depredations of unscrupulous whites, I thought we had a good opportunity to atone for past mistakes. It seemed we could set a good example in restoring to these descendents of the first Americans a fair measure of the freedom and dignity their ancestors once enjoyed.

Within a month of my taking office, CNRA began work on the Menominee issue. We wanted to be assured that if reservation status were terminated, the tribe had a good plan for the future. We were concerned about the forests, the Wolf River and other natural resources on the reservation, all of which were intrinsically related to the welfare of the tribe. We kept close tabs on the Menominee Indian Study Committee created by the 1955 Wisconsin Legislature. We met with groups on the reservation, and made friends with many. We received most of our information through them. We learned, for example, that the company managing the sawmill operation was suspected of mismanagement of Menominee resources. One of the people we worked closely with was Menominee historian Phebe Jewell Nichols (Mrs. Angus F. Lookaround).

CNRA also kept track of amendments to the federal act and proposed state integration legislation. In February, 1956, the CNRA Council voted to support a bill sponsored by Rep. Henry Reuss of Milwaukee in the U.S. Congress. This bill retained the goal of termination of federal supervision over the tribe, but provided that such severance of federal supervision should not take place until an adequate plan was worked out by the state to protect the interests of the tribe and ensure that the Menominee forest continue under a selective management plan. We felt this bill provided the greatest safeguards for the tribe and its rich natural resources.

In October of 1956 we held our annual meeting on the reservation in Keshena. We met under the big trees of the Menominee forest. We had a good discussion of the issues, toured the reservation, and talked to many of our friends. Shortly after the annual meeting, we published a special report we had been working on since February. The *Menominee Report* was a collection of papers on the history, forest resources, and social services of the tribe as well as the implications of the federal legislation and the problems of integrating the tribe with state and local government. We were lucky to get experts in the field to write it: the curator of the museum in Keshena, the chairman of the Menominee Indian Advisory Council, three staff of the Wisconsin Conservation Department, staff of the State Department of Public Welfare, and a UW-Extension professor.

The report was intended for educational purposes. We sent it to state and federal legislators and to the many other organizations that were interested in and working to help the tribe. We felt it was important that the citizens of Wisconsin be well informed on the history of the Menominees and the problems facing them so that they would be in a good position to judge Menominee legislation coming before the 1957, and future, legislature.

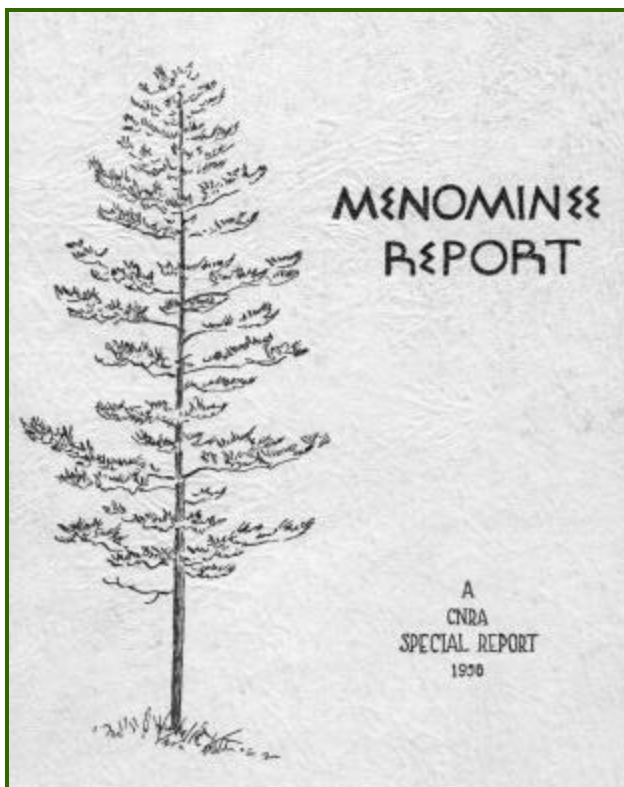
The tribe was looking at four alternatives to reservation status: (a) conversion to a national forest, (b) conversion to a state forest, (c) absorption by Shawano and Oconto counties and allotment of parcels of lands to members of the tribe, and (d) creation of a new county. Of those alternatives, the tribe chose creation of a new county.

In April 1961 the Menominee Reservation became Menominee County. Many issues still had not been resolved. Tribal officials contended they were not ready for self-government. We agreed. Termination still posed many serious problems for the people of the tribe and for the area where they lived. We felt the state of flux which resulted from creation of the new county gave the Menominee

people responsibilities and duties in which they had no experience. We feared the tribe and its resources might be subject to possible exploitation.

To address those concerns, at its annual meeting in October, 1961, CNRA approved a resolution that stated:

“CNRA, and the State of Wisconsin and the authorities which have been created to administer the affairs of the Menominee people and its lands, should give all possible sympathetic aid to help the Indians stabilize their economy and learn to manage and administer their economic and political affairs. It is particularly urged that every effort be made to help the people preserve the beauty of their area, the Dells, the Falls, the virgin timber, and that no sales or other use of the resources of the people be permitted which could cause permanent economic or esthetic injury, and that decisions of importance affecting all of the resources of the people should await formulation of long-range plans now under way.”



Hundreds of copies of CNRA's educational Menominee Report went to legislators and other decision-makers during 1956 and 1957.

Four years later CNRA held its March meeting on the reservation. We toured the reservation, looking primarily at the forestry management practices. Concern about forest exploitation was still on our minds. However, we were pleased to see the tribe continued to have great pride in its forests and, despite termination, retained its commercial logging operations using sustainable forestry practices. But it was apparent that the logging operations were not able to sustain the economy. By the mid 1960s when we visited the reservation, news reports were coming out about the poverty of the tribe. Family income in Menominee County averaged less than half that of the entire state.

REFLECTIONS — Carla Kruse

A Bunch of Greens

CNRA started out as a bunch of “Greens” who pulled some pretty radical stunts back in the fifties and sixties. I think about meetings on Menominee lands with a gang of dissident Indians, CNRA trespassing on a DNR administrator’s land, sneaking out to Dunn Lake Pines, the middle-of-the-night calls Aroline made to the Governor, Mrs. Prime with her shotgun under the trees in Oconomowoc when CNRA began, and all the long-distance phone calls from member to member over the years. And our reports were printed on recycled paper 35 to 40 years ago! We were most fortunate to be part of it all. It gave us the opportunity to network with some of the world’s nicest people, and all for a good cause.

Without governmental help, the tribal leaders began looking for ways to boost the economy. They initiated a program to develop and sell waterfront property on the county’s lakes and streams to non-Indians. CNRA followed their activities in the media. Negative reaction from local tribe members to selling off land spurred establishment of a new tribal organization in 1970. With public demonstrations, favorable media coverage and court actions the organization was able to delay development and sale of tribal lands. Washington noticed, and on December 22, 1973

Congress reversed itself, passing the Menominee Restoration Act. This was implemented on February 9, 1979 when the tribe formed a tribal legislature. Credit for this change in the status and fortunes of the tribe is due in large part to the efforts of long-time Menominee activist, Ada Deer.

All but three percent of the land was restored to reservation status. Today the area is both the Menominee Reservation and Menominee County. The forests are still there, playing a central role in the tribe’s economic and cultural life. Timbering remains a major tribal activity. New enterprises such as gaming have helped diversify the economy. The tribe now has the means and staffing to address housing, education, health, law enforcement and other issues.

CNRA again looked at Menominee County in 1966. This time the resource was the Wolf River. We joined in efforts to declare it a wild and scenic river. Today we continue to watch for potential impacts on the Wolf River from the proposed mine in Crandon. In its desire to protect the purity of the Wolf River, the tribe has been a major voice in opposition to this mine. CNRA has listened to that voice by supporting the Mining Impact Coalition of Wisconsin. That organization is vigilantly monitoring private, state and local activities to ensure that mine development will have no negative impacts on Wisconsin’s water or land resources.

Harold Kruse, an organic farmer from Sauk County, was CNRA’s president from 1955 to 1958.

The 10th Anniversary: Holding it Together

AROLINE SCHMITT'S INTENTION WHEN elected president in 1959 was to build up CNRA. Aroline had been an active CNRA member since the first pre-organizational meeting at her house in 1950. She was an experienced conservationist, belonged to numerous other organizations, and had a strong interest in forestry and wilderness areas.

One of her first actions as president was to purchase the legislative services of the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance. In February, 1960, she sent the Alliance's legislative summary and a ballot to all CNRA members, with an attached survey asking each member to join one of 13 committees. In March she sent the results of the vote in percentages of yeas and nays to state legislators. We have no record of how many responses she received: six or sixty.

We suspect it was closer to six, because by September she was writing Walter Scott about the lack of active members and the difficulty in getting officers for the next year. At the October annual meeting there was talk of disbanding. No officers came forth. Aroline sent her final communication as president in February, 1961, after new officers had been elected by mail. They were an impressive group: Tom Stavrum, president, J.P. Aberg, vice-president, Carla Kruse, secretary, Mrs. John Dahlberg, treasurer, and Fred Ott, Roy Gromme and Mrs. Aldo Leopold, councilors. Stavrum was president of the Madison Audubon Society.

Below, Aroline and others before her tell you in their own words what a struggle it is to hold an organization together. We are telling it here, even though throughout its 50 years, other CNRA members have had similar reactions. Fortunately, CNRA has had the luck, the resolve or the leadership to stick it out. Read what the founders had to say, then go on to the next chapters to see what their tenacity has wrought.

September 29, 1960: Aroline Schmitt to Walter Scott

We are having a heck of a time on our officer nominations. This is our 10th anniversary. What an organization, no one willing to do the job necessary to keep it going let alone make it a strong working body. Some days I would like to throw in the sponge and call it quits, but I guess I just wasn't built that way.

October 22, 1960: Minutes, Roy Gromme, Acting Secretary

A discussion on the pros and cons of disbandment of the organization was held. It is the feeling of

some that it should break up while it still has a good reputation before the organization dies on its feet. Others feel that a few worthwhile efforts a year such as the mourning dove petitions warrant our existence.

It was moved that the new nominating committee, to be appointed by the president, make a concerted effort to produce a new slate of candidates for office no later than December 1. If they are unsuccessful, the president shall call a meeting in December to discuss disbandment of CNRA, this motion serving as notice of such intent to the entire membership.

February, 1961: Aroline Schmitt to CNRA Members

As your president this will be my final communication. The delay was due to the difficulty in obtaining officers for this coming year. The minutes of the annual meeting of Oct. 22, 1960 will provide you with a graphic picture of the unhealthy situation existing at that time. I am of the opinion that CNRA and other conservation organizations need such a jolt to make them realize that money alone does not keep any organization going. Money we have; active members are among the minority.

It is not considered good taste for an officer to verbally spank its membership, but I believe that I am old enough in both years and conservation service to be able to rely upon your accepting it graciously and in the spirit it is rendered. . . . Although an organization needs money . . . it needs even more the time and vitality of its people. In this, CNRA has been sadly lacking. You rallied beautifully and successfully opposing an open season on mourning doves, but failed miserably in attendance at the one and only meeting at which your time was required. . . . I suggest that each member obligate him or herself to bring into the organization the most vital individual in the community. It does not matter whether that person knows the difference between a cow and a wren. In fact it would be a wonderful contribution if he didn't. We have exhausted too much of our vitality ourselves. We must seek out new blood.

AND BEFORE 1960 –

February 11, 1952: Wallace Grange to Walter Scott

I want you to know that we know that without your help the CNRA would have dissolved. I am sure that our survival is due to you. And I want to thank you for the effort and time you expended . . . There was no other possible outcome of the recent controversy which could have cleared the decks sufficiently for a new approach. Anything less would have left us impotent, if not dead, and worse off than when we

Aroline Schmitt receiving the Silver Acorn award from Walter Scott in 1961. Both were founding members who played key roles in holding CNRA together during the first decade.



held our meeting on the 12th. But without your intervention I am sure no one else would have seen the necessity of holding together. I sincerely hope we can go on to really important matters. I should hate to feel that something which “does not affect conservation,” and which involves, of all people, the warden leadership, had dealt a deathblow to the CNRA.

November 11, 1953: Walter Scott to CNRA Council

Just about the time that I was wondering whether the CNRA was going to keep alive, along comes Wallace's call for a Council meeting at Ladysmith and his outline of some very definite steps for action. I hasten to write this note to all of you to say that I'm personally very favorable to any program which will keep the CNRA a going concern. . . . We can't do everything—so let's do something reasonably well.

December 5, 1953: Wallace Grange: Call to Council Meeting

During the last year it sometimes proved difficult to secure a quorum at Council meeting. We must not let this happen. If it happens, it would indicate that the CNRA cannot survive. . . . I consider this Council meeting at Ladysmith a test of whether the CNRA is, or is not, a going concern, and of whether we, as a Council are long on talk and short on action, or can do both. May I urge each of you to be present and contribute your thoughts to our CNRA problems. 🐾