

Dick and Marian Clowe Winter 2009

Sitting in the sunny kitchen of their old farmhouse, Dick Clowe said that he thought that the Arboretum was “a wholesome place”.

So much of the world is entertainment – TV, amusement parks, shopping malls ... Our children learned to entertain themselves. [The Arboretum] is a good place to bring families together ... to partake in the general wholesomeness.” His wife Marian added.

After Dick retired from GE in 1992, he volunteered at Landis, mowing the grassy area with Ron Needle, taking great care to respect the wildflowers, and cutting and rooting out the growth of sumac on the hill behind the Barn. The Arboretum, he said, encompassed only about a hundred acres at that time, and it was rapidly deteriorating. “But it survived. It’s unique because it survives ... because of volunteers.” Dick served as chairperson of the Building and Grounds Committee for fifteen years. The plant sale under his direction was the most successful in the Arboretum’s history, taking in nearly \$55,000 that year.

Marian pointed out that they are both “big volunteers,” giving their time and effort and talents to such organizations as Mabie Farm Historical Site in Rotterdam and the Hole in the Wall camp in Lake Luzerne, a facility for children and their families dealing with life-threatening illnesses. An alpine skiing enthusiast, Dick taught skiing to disabled children for more than a decade.

And, of course, they volunteer at the Arboretum. They are regulars in helping to set up for the two annual plant sales. “It’s a jewel,” Dick said, “a primitive jewel, but a jewel nonetheless.” “It’s serene, and the view is unbelievable,” Marian noted. And then she summed it up: “It’s the people and the knowledge” that make volunteering at Landis worthwhile – “and such wonderful people. You can’t beat Fred and Thom.” Dick added that the Arboretum led him to meet “comparable spirits with a general sense of environmental responsibility.”

They both expressed a concern that the current generation does not seem to value nature or places like the Arboretum. “It’s unfortunate,” he said, “and a very narrow spectrum of life.” But all too common.

The Clowes have a large collection of lilacs on their Pattersonville property and are enthusiastic vegetable gardeners. Last year, they put in 130 hills of potatoes: they admitted that they give a lot away! Their 19th Century home, in which they raised their three children, is decorated with the souvenirs of their extensive travels – China, Australia, Europe, Africa.

Dick and Marian have left their mark on a good many places and on many lives, too. They've certainly done their part to make the Arboretum a "wholesome" place.