

Geneva Lake Guardian



GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 412
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Summer/Fall 2006

The Association is dedicated to Conservation, Ecological Preservation and Education, and the General Welfare of the Geneva Lake Area.

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC. • PROTECTING GENEVA LAKE SINCE 1935

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YERKES??

GLA BOARD SAYS NO TO UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO NO TO NEW YORK DEVELOPERS

The following Resolution has been approved by the Board of the Geneva Lake Association and will be presented to the Williams Bay Plan Commission and the Williams Bay Village Board of Trustees:

"The Geneva Lake Association Board of Directors urges the Williams Bay Plan Commission and Village Trustees to reject the University of Chicago/Mirbeau development proposal. The current zoning regulations were specifically written to prohibit commercial development, high-density construction and undesirable environmental impact. The decision to consider changing zoning regulations for the benefit of the University of Chicago and Mirbeau Proposal would negatively affect the quality of the Williams Bay Community and, indeed, the entire Geneva Lake area."

The newspapers have been full of the events of this past summer since it was announced by the University of Chicago that it had entered into a proposed sale of the Yerkes Observatory Grounds and Building to a New York State developer, known as the Mirbeau Group. Based on informal conversations between the University of Chicago, the Mirbeau Group and Village of Williams Bay Board Members, two public hearings were agreed upon wherein the Mirbeau Group officials and the University of Chicago representatives would present their case. At that first hearing on July 13, 2006, the

developers gave a power-point presentation on a large screen, with comments by **Mr. Gary Dower**, of Mirbeau. The public was told they could submit questions in writing that would be answered at the second hearing held on August 3, 2006. At that meeting, Mr. Dower read answers that had been prepared in advance, and again there was no participation by the audience. Both these meetings were attended by more than 500 people. It was then announced that a third hearing would be held on Thursday evening, August 24, 2006, at which time citizens of the Williams Bay community could ask questions verbally to the Mirbeau and UofC representatives. As of this writing, this meeting has not yet been held.

Interestingly, following the first hearing described above, the Williams Bays Village Board had its monthly meeting on Monday, August 7, with again a record turnout (for the meeting room) of some 70 people. Here the public was allowed to orally present their questions or statements.

On Monday, Aug. 21, the Williams Bay Village Board again held its regular meeting, and again, the public was allowed to ask questions of the Board Members and make statements, all of which were in opposition to the Mirbeau/UofC Proposal. It was an amazing meeting, as the Village President and Board Members appeared to be in full support of the statements made by the public. For one, it was virtually declared that the proposal to create an "Exposition District" (a legal entity) was dead in the water. Since this financing concept was a principal feature of the



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DAVID B. WILLIAMS, LAWYER AND MUNICIPAL JUDGE ELECTED TO THE GLA BOARD

Dave Williams, long-time resident of Williams Bay and the third-generation owner of the family property, was elected to the Board of the Geneva Lake Association at its Annual Meeting on July 15, 2006. He succeeds **John Palmer**, long-time member of the GLA Board.

Dave is a graduate of Williams Bay High School, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the University of Chicago Law School. He practiced law in Delavan, WI for 30 years and then after merging with the Janesville Law Firm of Brennan, Steil, Basting & MacDougall in 1991, continued his law practice there until early this year. Effective August, 2006, he has retired from the practice of law. He continues, however, to hold the position of Municipal Judge for Williams Bay, a post he has held since 1979.

He and his wife, **Kathy**, of 35 years, are the parents of two sons, **Benjamin**, an Assistant Professor of Radiology at Dartmouth College, and **Frost**, who is a Senior Sales Manager at the Hyatt Regency Resort in Bonita Springs, Florida.

Dave has an illustrious family history. His grandfather, **Storrs B. Barrett**, was an Associate Professor of Astrophysics at the University of Chicago and pursued his

career as an Astronomer, primarily at Yerkes Observatory. Dave's grandfather entered the University of Chicago as a graduate student in 1892 and, in 1893, accompanied Professor **George Hale** to Williams Bay to assist in the selection of a site for the Yerkes Observatory. He became a Staff Member at Yerkes in 1900 and remained there until his retirement in 1930. It was David's grandfather who built the home adjacent to the Yerkes Observatory grounds in 1902 that Dave and his wife now reside in.

Prof. Barrett and his wife had three daughters, including **Emily Barrett** (married name Williams), who became the mother of our David Williams. Prof. Barrett was largely responsible for the construction of the Williams Bay High School and for its becoming a model small-town high school. He was the first President of the Village of Williams Bay and was instrumental in creating the library in Williams Bay, which bears his name at this time.

David Williams' personal interests center around the love of opera, and he has been and is an officer of many music-related organizations. We are delighted to have Dave on the Board of the Geneva Lake Association.



WHAT A GREAT SUMMER IT HAS BEEN!!!

With an abundance of rain and a corresponding period of bright, sunny weather, the summer season at Geneva Lake has been outstanding. Except for the heavy-duty construction in downtown Fontana (sewer work and road rebuilding on Hwy. 67), it has been a great summer for locals and guests enjoying our communities and summer activities.

This writer drives into Lake Geneva almost daily and has been amazed at the number of tourists in that community. Young people, young families with children, and tourists of all ages are filling the sidewalks and intersections with foot traffic. It truly is a gem of a summer resort and one that the typical tourist does not have to drive hundreds of miles to enjoy.

Unfortunately, for the City of Lake Geneva, there are never enough parking spots for the people arriving by the hour. When coming in from the west end of the city on Hwy. 50 and inching along Library Park, it often appears

that every parking space is taken. If one drives in several blocks, the cars are lined up solid in front of the gracious old homes of Maple Park. When approaching the center of Lake Geneva, one is struck by the view to the east of a solid continuous line of cars coming down the hill on Hwy. 50. Where they all meet and park is anybody's guess. The city has numerous parking meters that are reasonable in cost, but there simply are not enough of them. When tourists want to shop, enjoy the beach and/or take a ride on the Cruise Line from Riviera Beach, they must feed the meter in advance. The city is short of public parking lots!

This problem really needs to be addressed by the City of Lake Geneva. Both Fontana and Williams Bay with virtually no commercial districts to accommodate, have well-defined parking lots with and without meters. The City of Lake Geneva, with an extensive shopping district, and a shortage of parking facilities, needs to find a solution, and soon!



HAVE YOU NOTICED THE NEW BATH HOUSES AT OUR COMMUNITY BEACHES?

The three principal communities around Geneva Lake that have wonderful beaches now have wonderful bath houses. The City of Lake Geneva built a new facility several years ago, and it is architecturally attractive, with an observation deck on top and very functional. The Village of Williams Bay has just completed a new bath house that emulates the train station depot that stood across the way until the railroad was discontinued many, many years ago. The bath house "station" is an interesting throwback to that

era. Finally, the Village of Fontana has just completed a unique piece of architecture that will become a symbol at that end of Geneva Lake for many years to come. All three communities have established and maintained wide, sandy beaches with complimentary pier structures for enjoyment by the public.

The City Fathers of each community are to be congratulated!

DR. REBECCA SHERRICK, PRESIDENT OF AURORA UNIVERSITY HONORED AT GLA ANNUAL MEETING, JULY 15, 2006

Dr. Sherrick spoke at the GLA Annual Meeting and told of the great effort to upgrade the George Williams Campus of Aurora University. Aurora University acquired the Campus property several years ago and has spent millions of dollars in new buildings, painting and refurbishing old buildings and beautifying the Campus with fresh, new landscaping. Aurora University recently razed the old cabins on the East Campus, as they were no longer usable.

In recognition of Dr. Sherrick's personal leadership in the above effort, she was given a framed Letter of Commendation at the GLA Meeting that reads as follows:

**THIS LETTER OF COMMENDATION
IS PRESENTED TO
DR. REBECCA SHERRICK
FOR HER LEADERSHIP ROLL
IN RESTORING AND REFURBISHING
THE HISTORIC
GEORGE WILLIAMS COLLEGE CAMPUS
ON GENEVA LAKE**

Presented by the Geneva Lake Association, Inc.
Serving the Geneva Lake Community since 1935

The Board of Directors
James P. Hanny, President

Russell J. Hovde, Director of Operations
July 15, 2006

Dr. Sherrick was introduced by **Jim Hanny**, who cited the following biographical sketch:

“Dr. Rebecca L. Sherrick has served as the thirteenth President of Aurora University since July 2000. She was born in 1953 in Carthage, IL, and earned a baccalaureate degree in history ‘summa cum laude’ from Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, IL. Sherrick was awarded an honorary doctorate by her alma mater in 2001.

“Sherrick was awarded a William Randolph Hearst Fellowship to attend Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. She completed a Ph.D. degree in history in 1980 with specializations in United States and Latin American History.

“In 1980, Sherrick joined the faculty of Carroll College in Waukesha, WI. Subsequently she earned promotion to the rank of associate professor before joining the institution's senior administration in 1990.

“Sherrick is an active participant in community and higher education organizations and holds memberships in a number of honor societies as well as the Lincoln Academy of Scholars of the State of Illinois.”

The GLA has close ties with Aurora University and the George Williams Campus, as two GLA Directors are officers of Aurora and George Williams: **Bill Duncan** is Vice President of George Williams, and **Tom Stuhley** is on the Board of Aurora University.

As is known, Aurora University was active in negotiating for the purchase of the Yerkes Observatory and grounds, with a bid of \$4,500,000. This offer was later withdrawn before the bidding was completed.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS HONORED AT GLA ANNUAL MEETING

The following students were chosen for scholarships based on their desire to follow environmental studies. The monetary awards were granted by the GLA Environmental Education Foundation.

Local High School Graduates

Brian Wayne Adams
Allison Gaare
Natalie Elizabeth Church
Eric Ttarman-Ramcheck
Jeremy J. Wagner
Sean M. Hinzpeter

Thomas E. Reynolds Scholars (at college)

Chad Wipperman - UW Stevens Point
Ken Las - UW Stevens Point
Siegfried Gehrlein - UW Stevens Point

Nature Venture Camps, ages 10-13

Sarah Heyer
Angelina Hulman
Wyatt Byers
Nathan DeVries
Cherise White
Lindsey Worland
Sandra Wike

The GLA Environmental Education Foundation recently celebrated its 25th Anniversary. It raises funds from residents of the Geneva Lake community.

CONCERNED TAXPAYERS OF WILLIAMS BAY DISCUSS THEIR OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED YERKES SALE

At the Geneva Lake Association Annual Meeting on July 15, 2006, **Andy Hays**, Vice Chairman of the Concerned Taxpayers of Williams Bay, presented a talk on their approach to the proposed sale of the Yerkes Observatory by the University of Chicago. Mr. Hays is a recently-retired Senior Officer of the Tribune Company, Publisher of the “Chicago Tribune Newspaper.” He and his wife, **Carol**, have a lakefront home in Cedar Point Park in Williams Bay.

The Concerned Taxpayers of Williams Bay Group was formed during the negotiations by the University of Chicago with the New York State developer, and now has over 300 contributing members. The following is a summary of Andy Hays’ remarks:

“The Concerned Taxpayers of Williams Bay consider it a No. 1 priority to establish a long-term financial and operating plan to preserve the Yerkes Observatory and maximize its use for educational purposes. We accept that the University of Chicago considers the facility now obsolete and understand its desire to sell it.

“The scheme, however, that the University of Chicago, with its ally, a mall developer from upstate New York, is trying to impose on the Village, is in direct opposition to the Village’s long-range plan and zoning regulations. Even if the Village chose to remove these prohibitions, the financial plan that UofC proposes falls far short of the funds required for the Village to assume ownership of it. To accept the plan would encumber the 1,300 of us who pay taxes with unreasonable risks and burdens in the years ahead.

“The developer, Mirbeau Corporation, proposes to buy the observatory and its 73 acres, construct a 100-room hotel and spa on the nine acres along the 522 foot shoreline of what is now the undeveloped Yerkes Woods. In addition, construction would be made of 72 clustered town houses north of the Observatory on what are now the lawns of the facility.

“This construction aspect of the proposal, alone, would require that the Plan Commission and the Board of Trustees ignore the results of a Village survey that overwhelmingly concluded that citizens wanted as a matter of policy to

prohibit further commercialization of the Village lake shore. As a result of the survey, a long-range plan was published and zoning regulations changed to compliment it. The result is that hotels and related activity be conducted only in the lands zoned commercial, in what is now the “down-town” area of the Village. The neighborhood where Mirbeau’s development is proposed is zoned residential and institutional and should be denied.

“The second aspect of the proposal, however, is just as unreasonable. Mirbeau proposes to give the Observatory and 30 some acres to the Village if the zoning exception were granted. The UofC and the developer would then ask the Village to apply for an Exposition District authority under which it could tax the town houses and room use in the hotel. No Village has ever even applied for this authority, as best we can tell, and the only such authority created is in Milwaukee, next to the Bradley Center.

“The resulting governance requires extensive management personnel and an extensive table of organization.

“But even if such an authority would be granted, there is sound, objective concern that the resulting financing scheme would only begin to satisfy the millions of dollars required for both the significant capital repairs and upgrading required and the major annual operating costs of the 110-year-old facility. Neither Mirbeau nor the UofC would provide any guarantees to make up the financial short falls to support the Observatory under Village ownership.

“We are confident our Village officials will make the correct decision in this matter, and we will provide support for them as they do. Our ultimate desire is to save and make beneficial use of Yerkes. We will push for a reasonable plan to do so, one that provides equity for Village taxpayers.

“We call on all of our neighbors around the lake to support our battle against this major threat of commercialization to the Geneva Lake shore. Contributions to legal expense funds can be forwarded to CTWB, Box NO. 1314, Williams Bay, WI 53191.”





WILLIAMS BAY LOSES OUTSTANDING CITIZEN AND FRIEND CAROL ANN LOTHIAN

Carol Ann Lothian died at her home in Williams Bay on Wednesday, August 9, 2006. She had served on almost every Board and position possible by one person in her beloved community of Williams Bay. The local newspapers were full of quotations from citizens who had worked with her through the years, and it is our desire to quote from "The Lake Geneva Regional News" for some of them.

From **Bob Carlson**, Williams Bay Village Administrator: *"How do you replace someone like Carol Ann? I don't think you do. You get as competent people as you can, but you can't replace her. She really was one of a kind."*

From former School Board President, **David Weber**: *"As each of us goes through life, we hope that somehow, some way, something we do makes a difference. The uniqueness about Carol is everything she did made a difference."*

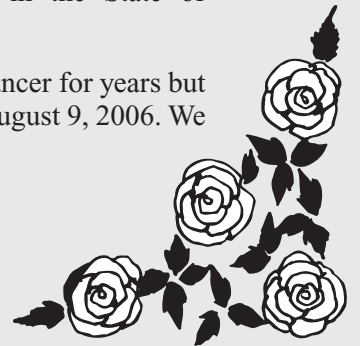
From **Art Larson**, Commodore of Lake Geneva Yacht Club: *"She was like a mother to everyone for years . . . she had a big heart and was just a wonderful person."*

From **Don Weyhrauch**, Williams Bay Village Board President: *"Anything to do with the school, kids, or the Village, she was always right there ready to lend a hand when needed."*

Over the years, Carol Ann was a part of the following organizations, including some 20 years as Clerk for the Williams Bay School Board. She was a member and Treasurer for the Williams Bay United Church of Christ in Williams Bay; Executive Secretary for the Lake Geneva Yacht Club; Secretary of the Williams Bay Harbor Commission; Member and President of the AAUW; and finally, Board Member and Corporate Secretary of the Geneva Lake Assn. Environmental Education Foundation.

Carl Ann is survived by her husband, **Tom**, and two sons, **Tom III** and **John**, and one granddaughter, **Elizabeth**. Her husband, Tom, is a well-known Representative, representing this District in the State of Wisconsin Assembly.

Carol Ann suffered from cancer for years but kept bouncing back until August 9, 2006. We shall all miss her.



YERKES?? . . . continued from page 1

Mirbeau/UofC plan, it would appear that the entire proposal was on shaky ground. At this date, nothing has been presented in writing by the Mirbeau/UofC Group, so there is nothing for the Williams Bay Plan Commission and Village Board to vote on in a formal way.

On August 24, the third hearing was held at the Williams Bay High School, with again a record attendance of over 500 people. For two hours, citizens of the Williams Bay

community were able to ask questions directly of the UofC and Mirbeau representatives.

Active in the opposition to the developer's plan is the newly created "Concerned Taxpayers of Williams Bay" with over 300 participating members. We invite you to read their statement presented at the GLA Annual Meeting and now quoted in this Newsletter.