

Save the Pine Bush

January/February Newsletter

Jan/Feb 15 No. 129 • 33 Central Ave., Albany, NY 12210 • email pinebush@mac.com • phone 518-462-0891 • web <http://www.savethepinebush.org> • Circ. 600

Vegetarian/Vegan Lasagna Dinner Wednesday January 20, 6:00 p.m. **Timothy Nichols** *will speak about* **Clearing the Air**

Timothy Nichols served in the Albany County Legislature for 16 years and his loss in the last election is a loss for all of us. Some of his many accomplishments and the fact that he was the whistle blower about Dan McCoy and tobacco money did not make him popular with powerful Democrats. Tim sponsored the bill about pharmacies not selling tobacco products. This bill was passed by the legislature but vetoed by Dan McCoy. Tim led and won the fight against nursing home privatization. He also sponsored a resolution that the jail and nursing home should have a percentage of their food budget allocated to buying from local farms.

His contributions are too numerous to include here, but he has been asked to talk about them. Tim was Chair of the Health Committee. Also, in 2015, he received an award for Public Health Advocate of the year.

At the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY (people with cars can park in the lot near the door). All-the-vegetarian-and-vegan-lasagna-you-can-eat, garden salad, garlic bread and homemade pies. Only \$12 for adults, \$6 for students, and \$2 for children. People who make reservations are served first. For reservations, please leave a message for Rezsins Adams at 462-0891 or email pinebush@mac.com. Get It While It's Hot! We start serving dinner promptly at 6:00. Of course, we will be delighted to serve you whenever you get here as we always have. We greatly appreciate your attendance whenever you arrive.

People are welcomed to attend the presentation beginning at 7:00 for which there is no charge.

Save the Pine Bush January Hike

**A walkabout in Shaker Hollow and the Kaikout Kill
Be ready for any season any time**

Sunday Afternoon, January 24, 2016 at 1:00 pm

Meet at: End of Washington Ave. Ext. past the water tower, Albany, NY;

Leader: Mark Plaat • For More Information: 518-465-8930

We have litigated and lobbied for this parcel for many years. Now, thanks to Albany County and the Mohawk Hudson Land Trust, it has just been added to The Pine Bush Preserve. This parcel will afford improved access from Rte. 155 to the Preserve and is an interesting location.

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Ward Stone Speaks

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: Saying "I am very happy to be here," Ward Stone launched into a very interesting and wide-ranging lecture at the December 16th SPB dinner. Using deadpan humor, he said, "I spent a very environmental evening" last night watching the Republican presidential candidates. Later he said "These Republican candidates are not good for the environment . . . We need to educate the politicians."

Ward Stone, who is 77, was the NYS Wildlife Pathologist from 1969 to 2010. He was a rare New York State government employee competent to investigate the environmental impacts of toxic pollution and report what he found, no matter what it was, even if his conclusions contradicted official DEC policy. He said he met Rezsins Adams in 1970 at the first Earth Day, and Lynne Jackson when she was 19 at one of Lou Ismay's environmental classes at the University at Albany.

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Don Reeb – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

by Tom Ellis

ALBANY, NY: Retired University at Albany economics professor and McKownville Improvement Association president Don Reeb was the speaker at the November 18 SPB dinner. Don spoke about SUNY Poly -- formerly College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CNSE): The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.

Don is 82 years old. He said the neighborhood contain 900 houses and the neighborhood association has a \$300 annual budget.

He said only forty percent of registered voters in county legislature districts 3 and 4 voted in November. He makes strenuous efforts to get out the vote. "If you don't vote," he said, it doesn't amount to too much." He said many people do not know the difference between a primary and general election and there is very little civics education today in the United States.

Alexander Hamilton, he said, started the

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Ward Stone, continued from page 1

There were thousands of Karner Blue Butterflies (KBB) and Lupines in the Pine Bush in 1970, he said. Vladimer Nabakov personally named the KBB. He said without SPB, the Pine Bush would be “much smaller and the Karner Blue Butterfly might not exist.” He added, the Pine Bush Discovery Center is a great place to learn about the Pine Bush but that “we are going to have to keep it [our environmental advocacy] up” and “There will be more battles at the Pine Bush.” He said, “We need a lot more looking at flora and fauna in the Pine Bush.”

Ward mentioned two of his children, Montana, now about 18, who had made a brief appearance at the dinner, and Ethan Alan. He said Ethan Alan, his youngest son, found and identified a buck moth in the Pine Bush at age two-and-one-half.

Ward said he is a little bit worried about New York State. DEC, he said, is too prone to being led by politicians and people with money. The Rapp Road Landfill should be closed, he said, the sooner the better, and it may take 30 to 40 years post-closure to determine the dump’s long term impacts. He said, “most state workers buckle under. It is one of the sad realities of science being tied to government.”

Ward spoke about Monarch Butterflies saying their population has dropped from a billion or two or perhaps more to about 56 million. Their migration from the US to Mexico is multigenerational. He said their Mexican homeland is only a few hectares. The Monarch Butterfly has also been impacted by genetic engineering. He said Monsanto has genetically engineered corn so it can withstand weed killers “but at what cost to the 60 million acres grown in the United States.” He said there are millions fewer acres of milkweed for the Monarch Butterflies and “some genetic engineering may be useful but what about their total impact.”

Turning to bats, he said the ones he has observed in recent years are much skinnier than formerly. He said hard data on insect populations in New York are no longer being collected.

Now an avid gardener, Ward said he observed few insects and no Monarch Butterflies. He said this is a personal loss to him as well because he used to love seeing them. Regarding the KBB, he said it is not yet self-sustaining; some are being imported from New Hampshire. Their future is uncertain due to climate change, new pesticides, and genetic engineering.

Ward said honey bee populations are way down too. “Not too many insects are flying around any more,” he said. “These insects,”

he said, “are telling us we need to take a hard look at what we’re doing.” He said many crops in New York are sprayed with pesticides and asked, “Where have all the pesticide researchers gone?”

Ward said he is not yet finished looking at the Lafarge Cement factory in Ravena. He said Harvard researchers came and departed but not him. He found high levels of cadmium and mercury. During the Q&A he added that years ago he picked up dead wildlife and has good data. He first became familiar with the cement plant in 1969 when he flew over it in a Piper Cub. Fallout damages the paint on vehicles. “There never has been a good scientific study done on this plant yet,” he said. “Even if the rock has low levels of

*“Be a squeaky wheel.
We need many squeaky wheels”
—Ward Stone*

pollutants, if you burn hundreds of millions of pounds yearly, you put out a lot of pollution.”

He said, “We need a strong bureau of insecticides within DEC to see what these animals are doing. Insects are a good indicator of overall environmental health . . . We will have more endangered species in the future. We are really waging war. The most important battle is not with ISIS but that which mankind is waging with the world itself.”

Despite their advanced age, he said Jane Goodall and Jimmy Carter are still working. He said his daughter, Montana, wrote to Carter who wrote back saying he opposes fracking.

He said we do little about endangered species. “We need,” he said, “scientists with the power to speak up and act.” He asked, “What do we hear about Native Americans? Not much. They have suffered for hundreds of years and have gotten a raw deal that is continuing.”

He concluded his opening remarks sounding like the Ward Stone many of us remember, saying, “Now I am back and can get them again.”

During the Q&A, Ward spoke about the recently concluded Paris conference that “I am glad we had it but it does not have any enforcement backing it. It is a step in the right direction but a shaky step. Corporations will say, ‘We cannot compete if we take steps to minimize

climate change.’”

Lou Ismay asked Ward if he had any guiding environmental principles such as in medicine to do no harm. Ward responded that, “We must, more of us, live by the ideals we say we have. Indians are great role models on this. We must teach our kids to respect nature. Most of us do not do as much as we should.”

Many General Electric PCBs went down the Hudson River, he said. The Lake Champlain canal needs a cleanup. He said he took samples there himself. The PCBs went from the landfill into the canal. He said Monsanto produced the PCBs General Electric put into the capacitors. Former SPB attorney Lewis Oliver said people and towns who have lost the ability to use the canal would have standing to sue, but the costs would be very high to finance the litigation and expert witnesses.

One man asked about people who got eye cancers from PCB exposures. Ward responded saying more sampling is needed. He said, “Look at the deer.” Many PCBs evaporate and volatilize making the goldenrod oily. The deer eat the goldenrod. “This type of research,” he said, “does not fit into state work hours” He said he does not encourage people to work in government because workers will be told they can not form hypothesis and investigate to see if the hypothesis is correct. Brian Bush said PCBs are not being looked at by government any more.

Lou Oliver asked if DEC would be better off if split into a standards setting and a permitting divisions. Ward responded saying splitting is “absolutely necessary in some cases” and he was lucky to have an independent unit within DEC. “Government is lumping more and more things together,” he said, a step in “the wrong direction.” He said that after his experiences, DEC employees will be careful in what they do, making sure they get proper permissions.

Regarding nanotechnology, he said there are not enough studies yet to prove it is safe, as the industry claims it is. He said the way scientists ask questions has a lot to do with what they can find and often research questions are overly influenced by funders.

A final question concerned how do we get federal and state governments to listen to us. Ward responded, “Be a squeaky wheel. We need many squeaky wheels” He said he heard no environmentalism during the presidential debate the prior evening. The candidates “were all about Muslims. This will put Muslims on edge . . . These candidates say they are willing to kill children . . . I think we have done enough of that. We have to get along.”

Don Reeb, continued from page 1

first industrial park in the US in 1791 using water coming over a falls in New Jersey to attract business. SUNY Poly is an industrial park, he said. Former Governor Mario Cuomo brought in Alain Kaloyeros in 1988 to manage the CNSE on the corner of Washington Avenue and Fuller Road. Prior to that, the site had been a car lot, dump, and the proposed Times Union Center.

He said \$43 billion has been invested in the SUNY Poly campuses statewide. One machine that etches mirrors cost \$100 million. He said years ago, when IBM could no longer finance the work, CNSE became the center of shared research by multiple corporations. He said IBM has moved much of its downstate work into SUNY Poly and Tokyo Electric has invested \$1.75 billion.

Don said that no matter what one thinks of SUNY Polytechnic CEO Alain Kaloyeros, he has done brilliant work. SUNY Poly, he said, has 300 students; it is basically a research center but the students do not work in it., Don said none of the SUNY Ploy success is creeping over to the low wage sector of the economy.

Mr. Reeb graduated from high school in 1951. He said since then the United States has lost the ability to provide supplemental services for young people. World War Two, he said, changed everything. In 1950, the US had one-third of the world's gross domestic product but only 16.1 percent now. He said international trade has captured all of the low wage jobs in the United States and today we have many more people sleeping on the streets than in 1951.

He said Albany County Legislature Majority Leader Frank Commisso, Sr., asked him to investigate what is occurring on Loughlin Street (off Fuller Road) where SUNY Poly desires to construct dorms. SUNY Poly could care less, he said, that it is destroying a fine neighborhood. He said in 1951, ten of the eleven Loughlin Street homes were sold to black middle class families who could not live in any other Albany middle class neighborhood.

The developer for SUNY Poly (Columbia Development) bought these homes for between 2 and 2.5 times what they were worth and SUNY Poly ran its pipes in the wrong direction because it was cheaper. A recently appropriated \$2.75 million water project is designed at least in part to fix this problem. Don said Kaloyeros promised him to undertake environmental projects but then reneged and General Electric no more cares about PCBs in the Hudson River than Kaloyeros does about flooding on Western Avenue.

He said the three great economists of the world -- Adam Smith, Karl Marx (you must pay

people reasonable wages or they will revolt), and John Maynard Keynes (business cycles must be dealt with) -- all have had their ideas warped today.

Don said he wrote about the purpose of local government in a 1953 journal article, and the environment is much more than a butterfly; it includes aid to the people. Don said in the US, the focus is not on developing better citizens but on jobs that pay \$100K or \$150K a year. "The upper middle class and wealthier are what matters." He said there is remarkably little concern in the US for the poorest of the poor -- a return to the old idea of the deserving and undeserving poor.

"Where are we headed? He replied, "good jobs for the few, bad jobs for the many, no jobs for the many."

—Don Reeb

Public policy, he said, is a failure with its focus on "let's do more for those who can almost take of themselves and forget those who are poorer." He said we must begin providing services that we are now unwilling to provide.

Students today, he said, are less capable than in 1950. "We used to have two parent families and family meals together . . . We lost a sense of how a community functions."

SUNY Poly, he said, is the vehicle two Cuomos and Pataki are using to bring high tech jobs to upstate large cities (Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo) even though Syracuse has huge numbers of abandoned houses. Decades ago federal taxes on corporations brought in almost as much revenue as personal income taxes; today a tiny fraction. He said profits have soared while jobs moved off shore and jobs were lost in the US. Federal deficits are taxes that should have been collected.

He said if we lose our modest neighborhoods, we lose a lot. Houses in McKownville sell for about \$180K. He said he moved to the capital region in 1965. He learned it is easy to lose modest neighborhoods. He said turning out the vote was the only way to save McKownville. The Rosseville neighborhood in Colonie "was stripped," he said.

He concluded his presentation answering a question he posed; Where are we headed? He replied, "good jobs for the few, bad jobs for the many, no jobs for the many."

A Q&A followed. Don said oil storage tanks on Loughlin Street were being removed earlier this year from the ground at homes with-

out permits. The removals ceased when Reeb visited and questioned the workers. When he called, Albany city officials knew nothing about the removals then occurring.

Don asked why are for-profit businesses are not paying property taxes on their work at SUNY Poly, or the property owners.

Don said the homes on Loughlin Street are no longer occupied. He said "there is so much going on and we are such poor stewards of the public interest." He said four dormitories are either under construction or being discussed.

He said "Columbia Development has an unenviable reputation for being involved in political messes in New York State" and SUNY Poly is reissuing a request for proposal (RFP) for Albany work because it only got one bid, as occurred in Buffalo with another company.

Lou Ismay asked about the public health impacts of SUNY Poly nanoparticles. Don responded saying nanoparticles can penetrate the brain barrier but we have no way to know if they are harming us. The manufacturing process may be very dangerous but we do not know. He said nanoscale particles can also become airborne.

He said the Loughlin Street homes will likely soon be knocked down now that they are empty. Don said Kaloyeros joked in 2009 that he hoped to expand the campus all the way to Stuyvesant Plaza. He said Governor Andrew Cuomo can limit the expansion, and both Frank Commisso Sr. and Jr. of the Albany County Legislature and Albany Common Council, respectively, desire to limit the expansion but they have no strategy yet.

Tim Truscott said he believes Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan will be of no help in containing SUNY. Don said that if the Loughlin Street homes are demolished, he is not sure what is the best use of the land but he does not want a multi-floor dormitory there. Lynne Jackson and Sylvia Barnard responded saying they have no problem with a new dorm. Don said that adjacent to Loughlin Street are 17 acres with two high pressure gas lines -- land that can likely not be built on -- that the state owns.

Don said CDTA is planning a new bus route connecting Western Avenue, Brevator Street, across Route 85 to the Harriman Campus, SUNY Poly, the Crossings, and Crossgates.

Tim and Lynne said it makes sense to restore the Pine Bush on Loughlin Street. Lynne said SPB has not sued the nanotech campus because it is exempt from numerous environmental laws. Don concluded the evening saying a 2014 state law removed from the state comptroller the review of state contracts with universities.

A walkabout in Shaker Hollow
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The long abandoned old road on the property was a public road until about 1950, when, an old bridge which carried this road over the Kaikout Kill, collapsed. In 1936 a roaring noise in the sky awoken people in the farmhouse you'll see the ruins of . They all ran outside and were terrified to see a fiery big ball going over their house then a loud explosion. In the morning ; a dammed up pond was mostly drained and the bridge was knocked out. Some think it was a UFO but I and a few others think it was a meteorite. Then, there's the so far unidentified material of the bridge abutment still to be seen.

Much for participant to see debate, discuss and opinionate on and mull over, and get some good exercise at the same time.

Note: Please wear appropriate protective clothing for the danger of ticks, Bring deet or insect repellent to spray on you before beginning the walk. Check carefully for ticks right after the walk and again as soon as you get home. We have discovered that these ticks are subject to transmit a lesser known disease called erlichiosis. We want everyone to be safe as you enjoy the outdoors! **Free and Open to the Public!**

Save the Pine Bush January Hike
A Walkabout in Shaker Hollow
Sunday
January 24, 2016 at 1:00 pm
Very end of Washington Ave. Ext.,
Albany, NY

Editorial from the Times Union

A thorn in the Pine Bush

By TU Editorial Board on December 29, 2015 at 3:30 AM

When the city of Albany in 2009 convinced New York state to let it do one more landfill expansion, it knew the deal: In exchange for a bigger dump, the city would have to fund a substantial restoration of the fragile Pine Bush.

Now, here's the city six years later, asking for a new deal. That old one is more expensive than anticipated, Mayor Kathy Sheehan says.

Normally, we'd be skeptical. Albany for years has been using the landfill, and chipping away at the globally rare inland pine barrens, to balance the books. The city has had the benefit of tens of millions of dollars, and it's been in no particular rush to find a long-range solution to its trash.

But the Department of Environmental Conservation and environmentalists shouldn't dismiss the city's appeal out of hand. There might be an opportunity here.

The task the city faces certainly is extraordinary. The plan calls for turning the mountain of trash into one of North America's tallest sand dunes, some 440 feet high (the tallest is the Star Dune in Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, Colorado, at about 750 feet). Albany would accomplish that by layering between 18 inches and 2 feet of sand over the dump, and growing indigenous Pine Bush vegetation.

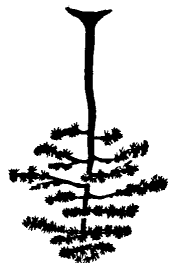
Part of the problem is keeping all that sand in place. That's not a problem with natural sand dunes, which endure precisely because they're in a place that allows them to exist. Nature didn't put a 440-foot sand dune off Rapp Road, nor may it want one there. Which could make sustaining it, even after vegetation takes hold, problematic, not to mention costly.

How costly? The city initially expected to spend \$18 million on the project, and it has already spent about \$9 million. The current estimate ranges from \$25 million to \$30 million. That's no small difference, especially for a city whose upcoming 2016 budget includes a \$12.5 million budget gap, which Ms. Sheehan is counting on New York state to close with an aid increase.

One option is to forgo the challenging restoration of the landfill site, and instead purchase other property to expand the Pine Bush preserve. The preserve is now 3,200 acres, considerably more than the 2,000 acres once considered to be the minimum necessary for a viable preserve. But there is nothing wrong with more than the minimum, particularly if land could be acquired to make the preserve less fragmented. Along with additional land, the city might commit some of the money to initial restoration of any new parcels to Pine Bush habitat.

Next Dinner:
Wednesday, January 20 at 6:00 PM
85 Chestnut Street, Albany, NY

Return Service Requested



Save the Pine Bush
A Project of the Social Justice Center
33 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12210

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