

Obituaries

Alfred Kronschnabel

1928–2009

I first met Al Kronschnabel in the early 1980's at a DVOC meeting. I didn't know anyone, and most people were congregated in small groups discussing their next birding adventure. I felt a little out of place, but Al not only made me feel at home, he invited me along on the annual DVOC Pocomoke trip. His van would have four bunks and five people, so I could come along if I agreed to sleep on the ground. I did, and it was the beginning of a long friendship and many memorable birding adventures.

Al was born on December 1st, 1928 in Philadelphia, the son of Alfred A. and Mildred Heller Kronschnabel. He became a longtime resident of the Holmesburg section of the city. During the latter stages of World War II, he was a paratrooper in the U.S. Army. He first became interested in birding in 1943. When counseling at a boy scout camp, he met former DVOC President Robert H. Sehl (Bob), who was an assistant camp director there. Bob and Al subsequently went on many birding adventures together. These trips often included DVOC members Ron Logan and Harold Jackson, among others.

Later, I was able to participate in these trips. We were to go on the Pocomoke trip many times. On one memorable occasion, we saw and heard a Black Rail on Elliot Island, Maryland on April 28th, 1989. It was cold, but when we got back to our camp site, we tail-gated off the back of Al's van. Al had prepared hot oyster stew. Nothing has ever tasted better, before or since, as we basked in the glow of our birding success. Another memorable trip was to Florida in April, 1987. We drove down in Al's van. Harold Jackson was with us. It was a wonderful trip. The weather was good, and we got most of the target birds. Our last stop was to Fish-eating Creek, where we were treated to a Short-tailed Hawk soaring in circles overhead. We drove all the way home to Philadelphia before Al realized he had left his scope behind.



Al joined DVOC in 1956. He performed various duties for the club. He was the field trip chair for a while. He used to cook prior to DVOC meetings at the Academy of Natural Sciences. Later on, he used to cook for us at his photography shop in Northeast Philadelphia. In addition to Bob and Harold, club members John LaVia, Robert Mercer, and Richard Mellon were regulars. The entrée was frequently steak, and there was plenty of beer. We would eat and laugh. It was a special time.

Al was a real character. He told a lot of ethnic jokes, including ones aimed at his own German heritage. Al liked people though, all people. He really enjoyed the camaraderie amongst his birding friends. One year on the DVOC Long Island trip, we ate in a restaurant on Shelter Island. Gregarious Al of course knew everyone in the place in five minutes. I remember him helping

a little old lady with a lit candle out the door. From watching Al, I learned to be more outgoing myself.

Al was a very talented person. In addition to being a chef and professional photographer, he was a cabinet-maker. One day, he showed me a piece he had made for his home. I was in awe at the level of craftsmanship.

August Sexauer

1923–2013

A painter by trade but a naturalist at heart, August Sexauer passed away on June 1, 2013 at age 89. His wife Sarah preceded him in death. Augie, as most people referred to him, joined DVOC in 1949 and later was elected a Fellow. Augie spent time during many winters with fellow DVOCers Charlie Wonderly and Ed Manners in their campers at Flamingo in Everglades National Park. In addition to his membership in DVOC, Augie was also a member of the Audubon Wildlife Society in Audubon, NJ and the Burlington County Natural Sciences Club. He was president of the Audubon Wildlife Society from 1958 to 1960 and again from 1968 to 1970. He enjoyed showing others the wonders of nature and led many field trips over the years. Augie was the driving force for utilization of the Audubon Wildlife Society's Ingersoll Fund for the acquisition of the Foote property on Hawkins Road — the site of Augie's Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes. Augie was also a strong supporter of the Unexpected Wildlife Preserve in Newfield, New Jersey.

The September 2013 newsletter of the Burlington County Natural Sciences Club contained a beautiful tribute to Augie organized by Nels Anderson. It contained a number of memories from a few of Augie's many friends. After reading these memories I think you'll agree that the phrase "kind gentleman" was invented to describe this inspirational naturalist.

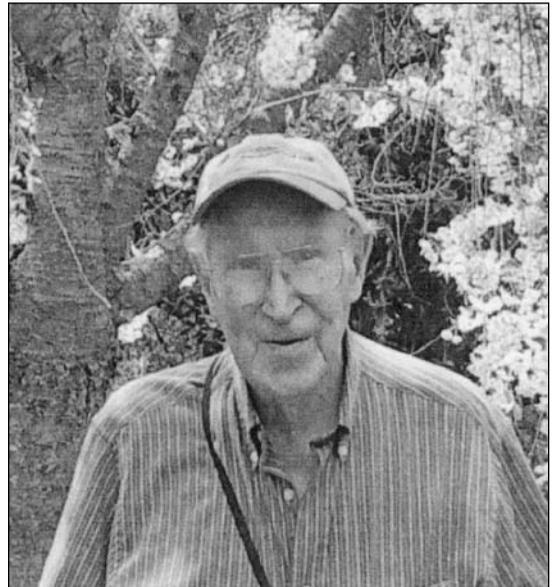
Pat and Margaret: Today the Prothonotary Nest Box trails remain much the same as when Augie began and maintained them through many years. As current nest box "caretakers" (along with Nels Anderson and Emily Kingsbury) my husband Pat and I are often struck at how beautiful — almost poetic — the loca-

He was the husband of Jacqueline Carr Kronshnabel, who died many years ago. He is survived by daughters Lisa and Gretchen. I miss him.

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tions are that Augie chose to establish each nest box and the care in how he placed.

The locations afforded protection: baffled and facing east to capture the morning warmth and protected from the afternoon heat. The results of these wise placements have proved to be successful through 18 years. From the first 4 boxes and 9 fledglings in 1996, to 15 boxes and 44 fledglings in 1998 to a high of 21 boxes and 47–51 fledglings in 2008, the latest season had a 16-box total of 57–59 fledglings for 2013! 10 of the 16 boxes were used for actual nesting (a 63% occupancy rate) and "false" or "starter" nests were in four of the other six boxes. This is an amazing legacy, wouldn't you agree? Thank you Augie!

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Dr. Emile DeVito: I was privileged to work closely with Augie, during the Bear Swamp acquisition of the Foote property in the mid-1990s. What a patient and kind man, a true gentleman! Augie expertly guided the Audubon Wildlife Society, as their generous assistance with the Ingersoll Fund was absolutely crucial. And all the while, Augie kept his eye on the prize — the expansion of preserved habitat for the Prothonotary nest box trail! To me, Bear Swamp at Red Lion will always be “Augie’s Swamp.” His quiet, steadfast spirit will be there every spring, when the ringing song of his golden birds bursts from the thickets of sweet pepperbush and swamp azalea.

Nels Anderson: There are not many ways to describe Augie that do not include birds and nature. He would willingly withstand whatever the elements would throw his way including wet, wind, cold, hot, snow with an extensive hike through the same, always looking for the special bird or unusual view of nature. In the past twenty-five years I have walked many miles with Augie and seen many interesting things.

One year the first creature we saw on the Christmas Bird Count was an otter. In 1996 Augie called and asked if I would watch over his Bluebird Trail for the summer as he was going on a trip to Alaska with Sally in their camper. I experienced a steep learning curve minding the nest boxes that summer. Interesting though, he never took back the reins of that twenty box trail which has grown substantially over the years. He wanted to focus on his Prothonotary trail in Bear Swamp. I would sometimes help him there to spruce up and relocate nest boxes.

One spring morning we were in the swamp fussing with a nest box when we heard a male Prothonotary singing. We were trying to spot it through the leaves when suddenly a flash of yellow appeared and perched not a dozen feet away. That male sat displaying himself in his brilliant golden splendor and looked us over. I’d like to think it was his way of saying, “Thanks Augie.”

We participated in the Pinelands CBC for many years. I recall one count with rain and then snow with all our stuff so fogged up we were lucky to see the road when Augie’s admission, “I think I have had enough” was welcome to me although I did sense this was more than the end of a day for him. He was in his early 80’s

then. He has opened many doors for me and at times the “feelings” are so elusive it is difficult to put them into words. He is still out there roaming around but we won’t see him with his heavy coat, hat, gloves and favorite bins. We will see him in the sunrise, wind pushing through the pines, ripples on the water’s surface and so forth. He is gone but not forgotten. I would like to think his spirit and love-of-nature continue on somewhere, somehow; perhaps within so many of us that knew him well, each in a special way.

Don Jones: My favorite recollections of Augie were during a study of Prothonotary Warblers or “Golden Swamp Warblers” as Augie referred to them. These studies were carried out in April through July from 1998–2002 at Augie’s nest box trail off Hawkins Road. One object of the study was to determine if individual Prothonotary Warblers could be identified by song. To do this each individual male had to be captured, color-banded, and its song recorded and analyzed. Only about 37% of the males return in successive years, the remainder likely perishing on their long journeys or during their winters in the tropics. A favorite visual image of Augie was of him holding a “Golden Swamp Warbler” in his hand. He was always mesmerized by the wonder of the bird and its journeys whether it was holding one the first time in 1998 or the last time in 2002. He described the experience best in a report he wrote titled Big World-Little Creek: “We all know about migration but to actually stand on the bank of Little Creek and witness first hand the arrival of this individual back to this tiny spot on a vast planet; well, that is something else again! I cannot describe the feeling I experienced at that moment except to say, welcome back old friend!” Augie was the ultimate witness to nature. All of us who were privileged to share in his passion are poorer for his passing.

Jean Gutsmuth: When I think of memories of Augie, I guess the best place to start is at the beginning. About thirty years ago a friend invited me to an Audubon Wildlife Society meeting. The upcoming field trip was mentioned; we decided to go. Guess who the leader was. Right, Augie. It was a trip to see snow geese (which I had never seen.) Many years later, I started attending the meetings and field trips. Augie invited some people on trips during the week. Over the years, I spent many enjoyable trips with Augie, Ed Manners, and Howard Boyd, learning about birds and plants.

One special learning experience with Augie was when he did a study of black vultures. We would go into old buildings, climb to the second floor, and sure enough one day we found a place where they were nesting. He did a photo study which he submitted to DVOC. My, those young vultures are so ugly! Another special find was barn owls in a box. The only way to reach the upper loft was to climb atop of Augie's car and take a peek. Yes, I have many fond and treasured memories of the times we spent in the field. In more recent years he turned to carving, turning out his favorite Golden-swamp Warbler, White-breasted Nuthatch, and Woodcock to name a few. Each year he made Christmas ornaments of some favorite bird for all his grandchildren. The most treasured memory I have and one for which we are all so grateful, was Augie's push to buy the land we now refer to as "Hawkin Road." Augie spent years with his Prothonotary Warbler boxes there. Thanks to faithful friends those boxes are still providing homes for his favorite "Golden Swamp Warbler." Also, Augie spent many years on his bluebird trail; it too is still being continued by his friends. Each year as we visit there and see and hear the Prothonotaries, we will continue to remember and thank Augie.

Steve Greer: The singular, zweet, zweet, zweet, sound from a male Prothonotary Warbler was like a beautiful dream come true. I owe that first introduction to this brilliant yellow bird and Bear Swamp to Augie. He taught me to slow down and sharpen my senses between navigating over the waist high fallen logs in our hip waders. He tuned my ears to the subtle nuances of life thriving in the deep shadows. And as much as I looked forward to the occasional staring contest with the resident Barred Owl, it was Augie who held my attention as he described the language of Bear Swamp that only a keen observer of this environment can decipher. Augie was philosophical about his skills as a naturalist. It was through a series of ideas and understandings that could only be gotten out of experiencing the natural world first hand. He showed me the visible design of the invisible that we call Nature. Thank you Augie.

Nancy Tinucci: It was a winter day in the mid 80's and we recently moved to Shamong. While driving along our road toward home one day we saw a gentleman standing in the roadway. He was wearing a cap

that included flaps to cover the ears and his eyeglasses were spotted with water and speckled with debris. He was dressed warmly in winter garb. We stopped to see if he needed assistance. "No", he said. After introducing himself as Augie, he asked us directly whether we could hear the call of a particular bird and he immediately imitated the sound. The bird call was an Evening Grosbeak. Not knowing this sound, we informed him we had several grosbeaks on our property. Augie's face lighted up and he requested that he be able to come see for himself. When he did, he was thrilled to see the many grosbeaks at the feeders. After that, Augie was a regular visitor to Bear Pond. We often watched from the window to see Augie and Nels drive up the driveway on a weekend day. Armed with binoculars and bird guide (to help us learn about the birds we saw) he spent time on his weekend route identifying birds and waterfowl. He invited us to ask questions and he helped us to identify various birds. We did not become experts, nor are we today. However, Augie was instrumental in making us aware of the Earth's creatures and the beauty they can add to one's life. I'm sure his birder friends, on seeing or hearing a particular bird, think that Augie has "sent" something special to them that day.

Emily Kingsbury: My favorite memory of Augie, my guide and mentor in Bear Swamp where he shared his Prothonotary trail with me, took place one April morning on Hawkins Bridge Road. Augie arrived at the bridge early and while waiting for me witnessed a pair of Louisiana Waterthrush mating. He was bursting with pleasure at this unexpected early morning treat, excitedly saying that he would have to write this up for the Burlington County Science Club which he did. My treat was to witness and share in his excitement that morning and many other mornings walking with him in Bear Swamp. I remember the morning when he spotted the Black and White Warbler pluck a tuft of deer hair from the trail and head for its nest site, when he spotted the Hooded's nest in a low shrub, or a tiny pile of lichen on a branch which turned out to be a Blue Gray Gnatcatcher nest under construction. Augie, a lifelong birder, retained the enthusiasm of a novice birder as he shared with others his favorite spots for Woodcock courting, Nighthawk booming or Whip-poor-wills calling. These forays are among my very best memories in the world. Thank you Augie.

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Sara Summerville: I met Augie on June 3, 2000. He sat in on Unexpected Wildlife Refuge's Board of Trustees meeting that convened for my initial interview. He was quiet and thoughtful and asked if I liked to go birding. And although I am more an administrator than a birder, we formed a friendship that lasted a decade. When Augie came down to the Refuge, we always got into something. He would ask what I was up to and then he would find himself in the thick of it. On a warm spring Saturday, he was mere minutes ahead of a group of children that, unbeknownst to him, would be his class out in the woods. They gathered around him and listened to him explain nature, one piece at a time. One day we were standing in the barn, and the next thing you know we were turning and old door into a workbench (which is still there today). On days we couldn't go out and get into something, we would sit on the porch and watch the pond. He always kept a running list of the birds he saw. He usually wrote them down, but sometimes he would just say the name out loud. But he counted other things too, like otters and beavers and snakes, collecting them as memories of our time on the porch out of the rain. When I told

him that I would be moving into the old Miller House and taking up residence, he told me he used to have a painting company. You don't say! The next thing you know, Augie offered up his services to paint with all enthusiasm and sincerity. When we walked through the old dump, his shoulders slumped and I could see that he was so very sorry for making the offer, even if he did not say it. As we ambled through the debris and trash strewn about the rooms, he would quietly note the patch, repair or limitless sanding and spackling that would be necessary before we even opened a can of paint. I put my hand on his shoulder and explained that time was of the essence, and all we were going to do was paint — the rest could wait until another day. His smile reappeared, and once again, Augie was in the thick of it.

Special thanks to Nels Anderson for permission to use the recollections from Augie's friends that Nels collected following Augie's death.

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Freda Rappaport 1920–2012

Freda Rappaport, a DVOC member from 1989 to 2003, passed away peacefully at her residence in Ithaca, New York, on May 30, 2012. She was preceded by her husband, Herman Rappaport, and is survived by three children, Saul, Eric, and Carla Rappaport Golden. Freda was born on October 28, 1920 in Philadelphia, and worked as a medical laboratory technician at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

Freda was an avid birder. I first met her on a Wisahickon bird walk with our mutual friend, the late DVOC Honorary Member Charlie Wonderly. We enjoyed close looks at a Pileated Woodpecker, and later watched the same bird hitching up a tree limb closer and closer to an increasingly concerned Broad-winged Hawk; both birds started and flew when the Pileated got within five feet of the hawk. Freda was thrilled by the encounter, and sightings like that made the Wisahickon one of her favorite places to bird. Other frequent



destinations included Hickory Run State Park, the Delaware Bayshore for shorebirds, Chincoteague, the Militia Hill Hawk Watch, and Cape May Point. Freda was a volunteer with the first Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas, participating with a group that covered blocks in Montgomery, Philadelphia, Bradford, and Sullivan counties. She was active in the Wyncote Audubon Society, the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, and the Barnes Foundation.

Freda spent much time afield with former DVOC members Ruth Pfeffer and the late Evie Kramer. After Evie's death, Freda arranged to have the birding notes of Evie and her late husband, DVOC Fellow Quintin Kramer, archived at the Cornell University library. Ruth remembers that in addition to birds, Freda was knowledgeable about marine life, shells, rocks and minerals, and botany. On a trip with Ruth and others to Chincoteague, while the group was halfway through sliding under a chain link fence (in place to control pony roaming), Freda spotted an interesting flower and instantly delivered an impromptu, belly-in-the-dirt botany lecture. Freda was interested in DVOC his-

tory, and her and Ruth sometimes spent an afternoon looking through old issues of *Cassinia*. One of Freda's favorite DVOC memories was a meeting that featured a slide presentation about the club's early days. Freda was also an artist who drew, painted, worked with ceramics, and played the piano.

Freda moved to Ithaca in 1999 to live near her daughter, Carla. A *Larus* notice at the time referred to Freda as "one of the DVOC's most enthusiastic members," and she certainly was that, as well as a real lady and a wonderful field partner. She is interred at the edge of a birdsong-filled meadow in Greensprings Natural Cemetery Preserve just outside of Ithaca.

The author wishes to thank Bert Filemyr, Carla Rapaport Golden, Jane Henderson, and Ruth Pfeffer for information and reminiscences used in the article.

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Kate Brethwaite

1926–2010

The DVOC lost an outstanding birder and a pioneering female member of the club with the death on December 17, 2010 of Catherine "Kate" Brethwaite. Kate was born on August 1, 1926, and lived most of her life in Villanova, PA. She graduated from Moore College of Art and worked as a textile fabric designer. Kate's passing left behind her husband of 61 years, Joseph, children Deborah (d. 2011), John, and Sandra, and two grandchildren.

Birding was Kate's passion, and she was a fixture on the Cape May birding scene for many years. The Brethwaite house in Cape May Point is two blocks from the one Alan Brady bought in the 1950s. The two families were friendly, and Kate used to affectionately call Alan "Pops," despite being only a few years younger than him. They did a lot of birding together, and, representing the DVOC, were part of the winning team in the second year of the World Series of Birding in 1985. Kate was on board for many of Alan's famous pelagic



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trips, and he described her as “a great seabirder.” Brown Booby (seen with Alan), Western Tanager, and Painted Bunting were three of Kate’s records noted in David Sibley’s *The Birds of Cape May*. Kate birded the Higbee’s WMA fields during fall migration, and could often be found there in late morning, long after most of the other birders had moved on to other locations; she knew that interesting birds could still be found then, and she enjoyed the quietude after the maddening rush of birders had departed. Kate maintained and monitored Eastern Bluebird trails and Purple Martin colonies in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and she was a member of several wildlife-related organizations, including Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, the Academy of Natural Sciences, the National Audubon Society, and the Cape May Bird Observatory.

Once the DVOC began admitting women as members in 1983, Kate was part of a group of the first women to be admitted to membership. She was made a Fellow in 1991, and was a member through 2006.

Pete Dunne passed along another interesting “first” for Kate: she was the first birder he met at Cape May Point, on the first day that he was conducting his inaugural fall hawk count in 1976. Kate, as she usually was when he saw her thereafter, was riding her bicycle to some Point birding location, and she stopped to say hello. Pete remembered that Kate was always “brimming with life, armed with a smile that looked like it was forged from sunbeams. Kate had a gift for making everyone around her feel better.”

Clay Sutton also remembered that he and his wife Pat used to often see Kate on her bicycle. He said,

William R. Stocku

1940-2011

William R. Stocku, whose preferred nickname was “Bill,” was someone that our club was proud to call a Fellow, a Life Member and a friend. Bill lost his 3½ year battle with prostate and colon cancer on September 21, 2011, passing away in his sleep.

“Even in her later years, Kate was far more full of life and energy than most people a third of her age. In fact she was ageless, her enthusiasm never waning in all the years we knew her. We remember we once lovingly remarked that her name should be ‘breathless’ due to her bursting excitement about the natural world. We would always look forward to, and fondly remember, her whirlwind visits, usually by bicycle, as we birded around Cape May Point.”

Dale Rosselet recalled Kate as “warm, cheery, and always thrilled to see you,” and Dale thinks of her every time she sees a Black-throated Blue Warbler — Kate’s favorite. I visited the Brethwaite house in Cape May Point a year after Kate’s passing, and noticed her little green Wellington boots sitting against the wall, as if they were just waiting for Kate to come along and put them on for a Higbee’s hike. I personally will never bird the Higbee’s fields again without half expecting to come across Kate and her beaming smile somewhere around the next corner. That smile brightened our day on countless occasions while she was still with us, and its lingering glow still plays on our lips whenever some association of Kate with a place or a bird calls to mind our departed friend.

The author wishes to thank Sandy Brethwaite, Pete Dunne, Bert Filemyr, Dale Rosselet, and Clay Sutton for information and reminiscences used in the article

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A handsome, steely-gray haired man of Polish descent, a union carpenter that lived in Ridley Park, PA; Bill started birding after taking his family to Chincoteague and on a boat ride witnessed birders identifying birds as they went along. Afterwards he bought a field guide and a \$25 pair of binoculars and started

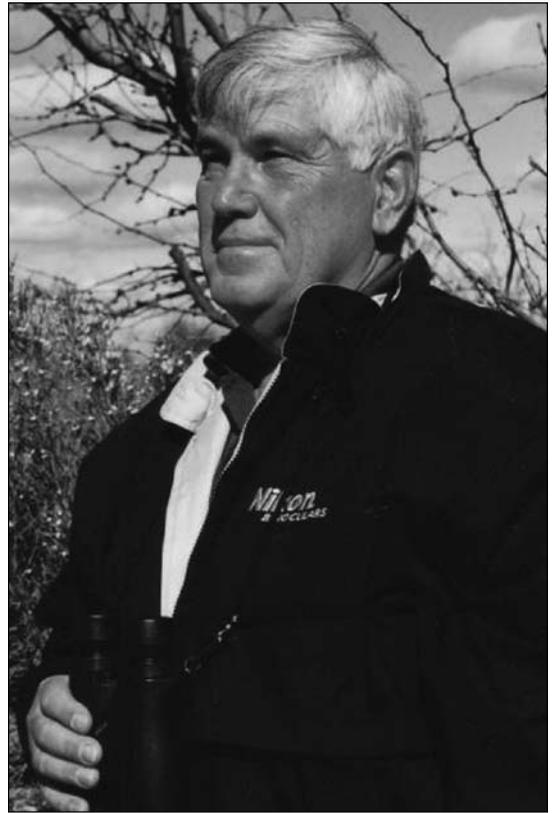
to learn the birds. It was something he could do alone, and with his children, and wife, and he found it very interesting.

Bill was a devoted father, a husband and a true friend. He loved his Golden Retrievers like children. Joyce, his wife, sometimes stayed behind while Bill went birding, but jokingly stated she wasn't worried about his fidelity because "if it doesn't have feathers, I have nothing to worry about." This was very true. Bill chased birds not just for the thrill of the chase; he did it for the enjoyment of seeing the birds. His favorite birds were shore birds, and he collected carvings of shorebirds for many years.

In 1987 four DVOC members embarked on the "Holy Grail" trip of Attu, Alaska and the Pribilofs. The other trip participants — Bill Stocku, the late Serge LaFrance, Brian Moscatello, and Paul Guris — were dubbed "the DVOC Mafia." They stayed in a World War II Quonset hut on Attu Island and birded together as much as possible. The trip increased Bill's ABA life list which ultimately surpassed his goal of 800.

Bill was on two World Series of Birding teams, both with good friend Paul Guris. First they belonged to the Rancocas Nature Center team along with Brian Moscatello, and in 1988 they joined the DVOC team with Captain Rick Mellon. Bill participated in the World Series of Birding for DVOC for 13 years before retiring. He only missed two World Series runs during that time period, both due to his children graduating from college. Bill always contributed to the team with his eagle-eye vision and bionic ears. He was an asset and kept coming back year after year, first to reach 200, and then to win!

I thought of him as "the DVOC Chase Master." Quite honestly, my most rewarding times in the DVOC were the years I was able to spend with him and my boyfriend-turned-husband Paul Guris, chasing birds. Bill was to me, the father I wished I'd had. Paul and I both called him "Dad" or "Daddy" affectionately. He was like a teddy bear, and the kindest, sweetest soul you could ever be fortunate enough to know. Bill lost his own parents at a very young age but he knew how to love and he loved the DVOC. He joined the DVOC in 1978 and became a life member, and then a fellow of the DVOC.



One chase in particular, our first chase, the three of us, Paul, Bill and me, piled into my Mazda 626 on a Friday evening after we all got home from work, and drove to Florida to see the Bananaquit that had been seen in a Miami Park. Taking turns napping in the back seat and sharing the driving, we had packed the car with sandwiches and snacks to keep us going, and only stopped for gas and potty breaks. I would listen to Paul and Bill telling stories of Attu, and other fun times they had shared over the years and we bonded over those long hours of entertaining regalia. We always celebrated getting a chase bird, by going to Dairy Queen and getting strawberry sundaes, this was our ritual, and it meant the world to me. We even went to Dairy Queen when we missed a chase bird, but that's okay, it was comforting to go with him anyway.

When his children were grown and on their own, it was time for Bill to retire, and in 1995 he did just that! He retired and then moved to Arizona, with his wife

General Notes

Joyce. They were now considered to have the DVOC Southwest Bed & Breakfast. DVOCers flocked to their home for Joyce's cooking, and Bill's AZ bird knowledge and guidance. Bill also worked for Geronimo Educational Foundation as their Elderhostel birding tour coordinator and guide. He loved it, and all the participants loved him. We often teased him that he was a "Hostel elder, guiding an Elderhostel," and he'd fire back some equally sarcastic comment, and we would all laugh long and hard together. We miss that laughter and the chases. He never stopped chasing birds. Joyce recalls one of Bill's last lifers being a chase bird. They both flew to Sacramento, CA to see the Falcated Duck at Colusa NWR.

Bill was very proud of his list totals, and he still holds my title as the "DVOC Chase Master" then, now, and forever.

Bill exceeded his lifetime ABA list goal of 800, and ended with 809. Bill was cremated wearing his DVOC hat, his favorite cargo shorts, tee shirt, and sandals. If you ever birded with this full of life DVOCer, then you know that was his birding uniform in Arizona. DVOC has lost a great treasure in Arizona, and he will be remembered always especially when celebrating a life or chase bird at Dairy Queen.

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