



Larry Aquadro (left) walks through a wooded area near Landenberg with his friend, naturalist Charles Gift.

## Memorial preserve to be dedicated

A 10-acre plot of land across from Brandywine Creek State Park, to be called the Clayton Hoff Memorial Preserve, will be dedicated Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. at the park, Adams Dam Road and Delaware 100.

The triangular-shaped property, bordered by a split-rail fence, was purchased from Winterthur Museum by Forward Lands Inc., a non-profit corporation that acquires and

preserves open land for public use.

Hoff, who founded Forward Lands, was an ardent conservationist and environmentalist who died in 1986 at age 94.

Since there is no parking at the actual plot, the stone and plaque honoring Hoff have been erected in the park, on a hill near a nature trail; benches flanking the stone will be installed later.

## Preserve honors conservationist with a vision

By EDWARD L. KENNEY  
Staff reporter

Clayton Melvern Hoff, "Mr. Outdoors" to many who knew him, spent the better part of nine decades without a roof over his head. It wasn't that he was poor or didn't own a house, he just preferred the outdoors.

That love will be remembered Wednesday when the Clayton Hoff Memorial Preserve is dedicated in ceremonies at Brandywine Creek State Park.

Love for nature came naturally to Hoff. To protect it, he proposed such radical ideas as burying unsightly electric lines and stockpiling junked cars in abandoned quarries. The latter proposal was expressed in a letter he once wrote to President Lyndon Johnson.

Hoff, who died in 1986 at age 94, was a conservationist with vision, often involved with environmental concerns that did not become part of the national consciousness until years later. Consider:

■ In 1954 he expressed the need for "a declaration of war on litter bugs." Beyond the obvious aesthetics, he pointed out that litterers were costing the county \$98,000 a year in clean-up costs.

■ In 1955 he advocated the creation of a Delaware Council of Natural Resources and asked for legislation that would require permits for burning grass and brush.

■ He took on the Wilmington Water Department in 1962 for letting "bad taste and bad odor get into the city's water supply." Hoff thought the department should install a water-quality monitoring system.

■ And in 1963 he castigated the State Highway Department for its roadside spraying of herbicides. An "excessive fish kill in the Brandywine Valley occurred simultaneously with the spraying," he noted.

Hoff, who helped get Delaware to pass a law against water pollution, was perhaps best known for his work with the Brandywine Valley Association, dedicated to preserving the water and land within the valley.

But his influence on environmental causes grew far beyond the Brandywine.

Hoff, who grew up in Ohio, moved to Wilmington in 1937 after the Grasselli Chemical Co., for which he worked as a chemical engineer, merged with the Du Pont Co. In 1945, after 30 years as a

chemical engineer, he turned his conservation hobby into a job. He quit Du Pont to help organize the Brandywine Valley Association, the first small association of its kind in the United States.

Hoff enjoyed bird watching, canoeing and photography, and his love for hiking and skiing led him to found the Wilmington Ski Club in 1938 and the Wilmington Trail Club in 1939.

He was a fit man who enjoyed many of these activities into his 80s, even though he had an artificial hip.

In 1964 he launched a third career, forming Forward Lands Inc. Its function was to acquire open land and save it for future public use, such as parks, museums, nature centers and wildlife conservation areas.

During his long and busy life, Hoff was active with many worthwhile organizations, such as the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, the Delaware Commission on Interstate Cooperation, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Soil Conservation Society of America.

He was director of the Delaware Nature Education Center, the Society of Natural History of Delaware and the



Clayton Hoff was known by many as "Mr. Outdoors."

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and was vice president of the Society of Natural History of Delaware.

Hoff and his wife, Thelma, whom he once described as "Mrs. Brandywine" (she lives in an Ohio nursing home), were longtime residents of Wawaset Park. They had two children and nine grandchildren.

## Hoff was one of the 3 WTC founders.

Clipped By:



bhardam253

Sun, Jan 17, 2021