

Dave Engleson Induction – Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame – April 20, 2013 - Thoughts by Dr. Dennis Yockers

Good morning – it is a true honor being here today to recognize Dave Engleson for all he did to educate and inspire others regarding the stewardship of Wisconsin and the planet.

I'm Dr. Dennis Yockers (Dave always called me Denny), retired Professor of Environmental Education with the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. My connection to Dave has been for 35 years through his friendship, teaching and mentoring.

In the fall of 1979 I took an EE position with the Department of Natural Resources and it took less than a month for Dave and me to meet. We connected immediately on both a personal and professional level. Dave became my **MENTOR** and we shared EE experiences for the next 35 years! It was Dave's philosophy that nothing in Environmental Education would really be accomplished unless one truly worked for it.

Dave was an amazing environmental educator and I always learned so much from the skills and passion he demonstrated for the profession. I thought about how I might best capture Dave's contributions to Wisconsin and the EE field. What came to mind almost immediately was the metaphor between Dave Engleson and Wisconsin glaciation. When I think of Wisconsin's natural environment and why it's so special is because of the impacts of glaciation. More than 15,000 years ago an immense flow of glacial ice sculpted a Wisconsin landscape of remarkable beauty.

Dave Engleson for over 60 years, starting as a classroom teacher, sculpted the Wisconsin EE landscape which has resulted in our state being known as one of the finest EE programs on the planet. Dave's long lasting impacts on Wisconsin's EE history is on par with Wisconsin's glacial heritage. It is fitting to connect Wisconsin's "Gifts of the Glacier" with the Wisconsin's "Gifts of EE from Dave Engleson"!

Dave's accomplishments and contributions to the field of EE would fill a text book and I would need at least a semester to cover them all. Dave was an integral catalyst in every major Wisconsin EE initiative over his 25 years as DPI's EE consultant. What I would like to focus on relates to Dave as a friend, mentor and an EE hero for 35 years. He guided me throughout my EE career with the State of Wisconsin.

Hopefully this list of qualities and traits captures Dave's impacts on me and the thousands of students and educators from around the world.

- Commitment to the growth and development of educators – he wanted to be a mentor - developing future EE leaders was always at the top of his “to do” list!
- Honesty, integrity and both respect for and responsibility for the earth's stewardship
- Established and maintained professional networks and relationships – helped with the navigation of politics and bureaucracy
- Role Model – Dave always walked the talk and lived by example
- Unselfish – accomplishments were the result of collaborative relationships and due to the efforts of many
- Strong work ethic – always showed the commitment of time and energy beyond what was required – I'm not sure if it was 24/7 but it was pretty close!
- Concern and care for people on a personal level
- Loving, kind, compassionate and understanding
- Sincere, open and honest
- Always willing to share - Partner, team-player
- Guided educators
- Desire to help others succeed – always spotted the potential
- Created opportunities and opened doors
- Always was hopeful and optimistic
- Respected by the EE professional community – local, state national and international

One of the most important pieces of Dave's EE **legacy** was his passion for the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education. Dave started the organization in the mid 70's and served as its executive director and newsletter editor for many years. Dave nurtured many future EE leaders through their involvement in WAEE. I was one of them. Dave got me involved within a couple of months of my arrival in Wisconsin and before I knew it I was on the Board. In 2007 WAEE renamed its WAEE Award to the Dave Engleson WAEE Award. The award recognizes individuals, agencies and organizations making significant contributions to the field of EE as exemplified by Dave Engleson.

After Dave retired from DPI in 1991, I followed in his footsteps as the 2nd EE consultant. We continued working on the revision to the Guide to Curriculum Planning in EE. An important component of the guide focused on a sub goal of EE dealing with developing an environmental ethic which involved the area of attitudes and values. This sub goal sets EE apart from other educational approaches. However, this area brings with it lots of controversy in the education arena. DPI administration wanted to take this section out of the guide and Dave's response was NO! and I mean NO! He said the guide would not be published without the section on ethics. The guide was published in 1994 and it has been translated into several languages. Dave was a "tenacious advocate" for EE – he never backed down when it came to advancing EE in Wisconsin.

Most of us in the room have heard of Aldo Leopold – a key Wisconsin conservationist and educator. Dave admired Aldo and often would refer to him when teaching. Aldo said that education is a function of the teacher's own excitement over the subject. Dave was definitely excited about EE. Leopold also said that we must return to the task at hand – enable the next generation of youth whose environmental challenges are not likely to lessen – how to see, understand and enjoy the world around us – that was, is and will remain the special privilege of educators. Dave was an environmental educator!

Dave's passionate work in EE on behalf of Wisconsin's environment promises to be enduring and will leave a **lasting legacy** on and for all of us. Dave is the **father and pioneer** of EE in Wisconsin. Dave was restless in his journey but always confident in the final destination. Dave had a broad mind, a big heart and a bigger mission. No doubt he has sculpted the EE landscape of Wisconsin on same scale as glaciers shaped the state's physical geography.

As a passionate and committed leader in this field, his influence has been felt by countless school children, teachers, citizens, industrial leaders, political leaders and governors. Those who know him best recognize him as "the father of EE in Wisconsin" and credit him with changing their lives while he also changed the world. Dave Engleson has made Wisconsin's environment a better place for all of us.

As a lifetime educator Dave had his greatest impact. For nearly 40 years, he touched the lives of thousands of students, teachers, and aspiring environmental educators. This legacy was perhaps most evident when he received standing ovations for the highest awards from state and national EE organizations (WAEE and NAAEE) and from the WCEE during its 20th Anniversary Celebration in 2011. Many in attendance clearly recognized him as "the father of EE in Wisconsin" and credited his leadership, inspiration and mentoring as reasons they themselves, became teachers, environmental educators, and leaders within the profession.