

Talk by Walter E. Scott
Assistant to the Administrator
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Conservation
At Dedication of Memorial Plaque to Raymond T. Zillmer
Mauthe Lake--Kettle Moraine State Forest
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(Neville Public Museum)

Izaak Walton League
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RAYMOND T. ZILLMER AND HIS KETTLE MORAINES PARK VISION

It is most fitting and proper that we commemorate with a bronze plaque on a granite boulder the contribution made by Attorney Raymond T. Zillmer to the cause of conservation in Wisconsin and the nation. This memorial recognizes for all time his unselfish dedication to accomplishment of the vision he had for a permanent national scientific reserve in the kettle moraine region. The Wisconsin Division of the Izaak Walton League of America which erected this monument was the primary medium through which he worked and their history is woven into the record of his efforts in this field for almost four decades.

Ray Zillmer was born in Milwaukee in 1887 and he died there on December 13, 1960. In his earlier days as an attorney, he was prominent as a leader in that profession and at one time was Secretary of the Good Government League. From 1938 to 1940 he was President of the City Club of Milwaukee and he also served as Chairman of their Committee on Roadside Improvement. His numerous mountain climbing expeditions in the far West and Canadian Rockies are recorded in articles he wrote for both the American Alpine Journal and the Canadian Alpine Journal. This enthusiasm for hiking and camping in the out-of-doors carried over in his later years in a dream of what could be done to bring similar opportunities to the people who could not travel so far from home. No doubt his "vision" of hiking trails in Wisconsin was born at some lonely campsite in the Cariboo range or alongside the wild Fraser River. On one of these trips just 20 years ago, he was accompanied by his son, John Zillmer, who is carrying forward his father's dream.

The active way in which Ray Zillmer functioned can be seen through his early affiliation with the Sierra Club and many other conservation groups. We know he joined the Izaak Walton League before 1933 and served as President of the Milwaukee Chapter in 1943 and at that time he is credited with passage of Chapter 266 by the Wisconsin Legislature, a measure which increased the state's appropriation for acquisition and development of the Kettle Moraine State Forest from \$75,000 to \$150,000 annually. In fact, Governor Walter S. Goodland had threatened to veto the bill if it passed, but Ray Zillmer visited him in Madison and the Governor then allowed the measure to become law without his signature, reportedly out of "high regard and respect for sincere proponents of the bill" even though he disagreed with a principle of government involved.

The year before he became President of the Milwaukee Chapter, he formed a study committee of 12 members to work toward accomplishment of the Kettle Moraine State Forest goal. Later, in 1951, he served as Chairman of the State Division's Soil Committee and as one of their Directors. Probably most important was creation of the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation which he incorporated about a decade ago and of which he was first President until his death. Through this group he promoted what he at first called "The Wisconsin Glacier National Forest Park" with a basic purpose of assisting "federal, state and local governments in establishing and preserving a public park for future generations in the glacial formations of Wisconsin, 500 miles across the entire state." His appearance

Kettle Moraine
S. Forest,
Ice Age
Trail

before legislative committees in 1959 succeeded in getting a Joint Resolution passed giving the Legislature's support to federal legislation introduced by Representative Henry S. Reuss for an Ice Age National Scientific Reserve in Wisconsin. Passage of this Act (H.R. 1096) on October 13, 1964 fulfilled Ray Zillmer's vision and set the stage for more assured "protection, preservation, and interpretation of the nationally significant values of Wisconsin glaciation, including moraines, eskers, kames, kettleholes, drumlins, swamps, lakes, and other reminders of the ice age."

To further these goals, Ray and his sister Aimee contributed over \$2,000 to the Conservation Department for two trail shelter houses and several more were built with \$5,000 willed to the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation for this purpose. This good example of financial support was followed by others, including the sister of Representative of Henry S. Reuss.

A number of conservation-related groups honored Ray Zillmer for his accomplishments. In 1953 the State Division, IWLA, presented him with their coveted Broughton Award. The National Campers and Hikers Association gave him a plaque in 1959 "for outstanding efforts in conservation work and stimulating interest in the outdoors." He was honored posthumously by the Milwaukee County Conservation Alliance at a dinner on June 10, 1961. Also that year the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters gave him memorial recognition as a distinguished member. More important than all these, however, for the sake of his beloved cause, Ray Zillmer no doubt would have delighted in the three publications which appeared shortly after his death. One was an article in Let's See magazine for April, 1961 on "An Ice Age Park and Trail in Wisconsin." Another was a beautiful U.S.D.I. brochure in April, 1962, entitled "Ice Age National Scientific Reserve--A Proposal for Cooperative Conservation." And the third was the Milwaukee Journal's special "Picture Journal" feature of November 29, (1964) colorfully telling the story of "Kettle Country and the Ice Age Reserve." Earlier, on passage of the Ice Age Act, this newspaper editorially urged that when federal and state planners decide how the reserve shall be developed, "they might give special thought to honoring the man who conceived the idea...and worked zealously to make it a reality--Raymond T. Zillmer."

Something must be said here of the Kettle Moraine State Forest's history as related to the Wisconsin Division of the Izaak Walton League of America. This organization was formed here about 45 years ago and the Milwaukee Chapter started with 16 members the same year. Within five years that chapter was heralded as the largest in the country with over 4,000 members. At that time Haskell Noyes was Milwaukee Chapter President and former Conservation Comm. Chairman W.J.P. Aberg was President of the State Division which had about 12,000 members in over 100 chapters. In 1926 the Milwaukee Chapter purchased about 800 acres of land around what then was called Moon Lake (later named Mauthe Lake for the first Chairman of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission) for a wildlife refuge. They paid \$34,000 for this land four decades ago and it would certainly cost ten times that amount and more, today. In 1927--forty years ago--this group spearheaded the fight to pass a Conservation Act for a new Conservation Commission which would have broad powers including acquisition and development of state forests and other recreational areas. This movement was successful, but the same Legislature turned down a bill proposing a Kettle Moraine Park--probably because they could find no easily available source of funds to finance the proposal.

It was not until 1929 that the Legislature passed the Mill Tax Act assigning 1/20th of a mill tax on all property in the state for use in acquiring and developing forests of the state. About three-quarters of this money came from

the southeastern part of the state but the people received no benefits from it locally. This dilemma was spelled out clearly in the state's first comprehensive long-range "Regional Planning Report" of 1934 which pointed to the need for about 13,500 acres of recreational lands in this area where most of the people lived, but where they found almost no public lands. Possibly it was this report that led the Milwaukee Chapter to deed its Moon Lake refuge in the heart of the Kettle Moraine to the Wisconsin Conservation Commission on July 31, 1936--virtually as a gift, for the \$10,000 paid was to cover outstanding debts on the property. The Commission called this a gift for the "proposed Kettle Moraine State Forest." Later that year a Wisconsin State Planning Board report (December 1936) entitled "A Conservation and Recreation Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin" was published and a map in this shows this foundation parcel of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. The report also points out that there were only 5,829 acres of public lands in all of southeast Wisconsin in 1936--from Manitowoc to the Illinois line and from Madison to Lake Michigan. Significantly, a survey of the same area 25 years later revealed over 75,000 acres! This reflected a movement pushed by the IWLA for purchase of not only the Kettle Moraine State Forest lands, but also wetland areas such as Horicon and Sheboygan Marshes and additional state parks. For his important part in these early days a marker was dedicated near here about ten years ago in what is called the Haskell Noyes Memorial Woods. Similarly, there already is a Raymond T. Zillmer hiking trail established in this forest.

By February of 1938 the Wisconsin Sportsman magazine was predicting that the annual expenditure of \$75,000 for purchase of lands in sixteen southeast counties would make possible a forest stretching for 85 miles through the Kettle Moraine counties. The immediate goal mentioned was 5,000 acres in the very north and south parts. Then in a few years the State Planning Board report of 1939 on a "Park, Parkway and Recreation Area Plan" recommended purchase of a total of 35,200 acres for the Kettle Moraine and Point Beach State Forests--the latter was started in 1937 with a gift of land from the U. S. government. Mention already has been made of Ray Zillmer's successful efforts to get acquisition monies doubled in 1943 and the record shows he promoted this same doubling in 1959 when it was evident that too much of the funds were going for maintenance and development of the forest and not enough was left for acquisition of lands. In the final analysis, his greatest contribution well may have been in the form of constructive criticism in speeches and articles through which he pointed out the need for securing the lands while it still was possible to purchase. Passage of Governor Gaylord A. Nelson's Outdoor Recreation Act in 1961 did make more monies available through the cigarette tax and Ray Zillmer helped pass it.

Taking the Kettle Moraine and Point Beach State Forests together as a unit, it is fitting that we review the results to date because Ray Zillmer and the IWLA had so much to do with this program. The total area within the authorized purchase units is 59,270 acres and over 67% of the land--40,173 acres--already is in state ownership. Of the remaining 19,097 acres, 495 acres are in the process of purchase at an estimated cost of \$320,000. This average price of over \$600 per acre reflects not only the increased values of land in the Kettle Moraine, but also the fact that these are choice parcels. Often the most costly remain while those most available or cheapest are purchased first. To date a total of \$4,707,574 has been spent in purchasing these forest recreation lands. Public use in 1966 reflected their importance with about 870,000 visitors in 240,000 cars and more than 137,000 camper-days in the campgrounds. There is considerable use of the approximately 35 miles of trails available for hiking and nature study as well as special bridle paths and snowmobile trails.

It is evident that Ray Zillmer couldn't have accomplished so much single-handed. Through his sincerity and enthusiasm he enlisted the help and loyalties of many others besides such close friends and hiking companions as Clarence O'Connor, C. Stanley Perry, Henry S. Reuss and Leo Tiefenthaler. He also was a close friend of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, who came to hike the Kettle Moraine Trails in 1961 to urge passage of the national legislation. It is said that Ray Zillmer walked every foot of the Kettle Moraine Trails which he helped to lay out, and much of the remaining lands where he searched for the beauty of nature as well as its grandeur in big trees and unusual land formations. He discovered here the state record white birch and the third largest American beech trees for Wisconsin. Hundreds of young people--and especially Boy Scouts--responded to his invitations for hiking trips which also helped promote the need for more trails in the state. Wisconsin's new program of hiking trails calls for more than doubling the 254 miles of trails now available to hikers--to exceed by 43 miles the 500 miles proposed by Ray Zillmer about a decade ago. So far as the Kettle Moraine State Forest itself is concerned, the basic law which gave it birth was Chapter 332 (Laws of 1937) which provided for expenditure of \$75,000 annually in selected parts of 16 southeastern counties for land acquisition and development. This, therefore, is the 30th anniversary of the Kettle Moraine State Forest. It also would be good that we recognize as well, the 25th anniversary of service by Clyde T. Smith, who has been manager and now is the supervisor in charge of this public forest complex. Probably few people here met Ray Zillmer as often as did Clyde in both meetings on official business or by accident out on the trail or in the forest. Clyde Smith says Ray Zillmer had freedom to go wherever he wished on the property and was out on the trail whenever possible every weekend--rain or shine, summer and winter.

When President Johnson signed the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve act he predicted that it would help preserve Wisconsin's glacial beauties forever "while grass grows and water flows." Secretary of Interior Stewart L. Udall in recommending the project said, "It can protect and develop opportunity for true outdoor recreation--experience in the natural world which not only can provide the pleasure of healthful activity, but can help all Americans better to love their land through understanding." Unfortunately, since its passage, implementation of the act has been delayed because new federal aid funds have not been made available to carry out the plans essentially agreed upon by the National Park Service and the Division of Conservation of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. At the present time, the Department of the Interior is reconsidering the financing aspects of this act at the request of Governor Warren P. Knowles and it is hoped that revisions will assure up to 75% federal aid financing to help to accelerate and complete the Ice Age Reserve program.

The Milwaukee Journal in their 1964 pictorial section stated that the "Zillmer spirit still walks our drumlins." They certainly are correct--for the memory of what he did for the people of Wisconsin and the nation ever will be evident here. I'm sure you feel his presence with us today even as will others who hike the Zillmer trail or use his trail shelters and dream with him of the glaciers and man's destiny in this existence. Without a question, the beauties of nature and experiences out-of-doors with his Maker were a form of religion important to Ray Zillmer--even as it is to many others today and will be to future generations.

In closing, I'd like to quote a statement by Daniel H. Burnham which I believe symbolizes the life and spirit of our friend and fellow conservationist, Raymond T. Zillmer:

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably themselves will never be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram will never die but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with growing intensity. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order, and your beacon, beauty."

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